

**Philosophy of
Music
Education**

My Philosophy of Music Education

The purpose of education is to help students discover, value, and nurture all their talents and to develop them to the fullest extent possible. I am interested in helping students develop as whole people. Music study is an essential part of education because it provides a unique confluence of knowledge, skills, and expression.

The study of music is valuable in and of itself because at its core, distinguishing it from other experiences, is its use of sounds to “make special” in a way that only sounds can do. Music provides a means of expressing deep rooted feelings in a way that words cannot. Music study gives us forms of imagination and forms of feelings inseparably; that is to say, it clarifies and organizes intuition itself. Throughout the course of history, music continues to say something universal, essential, and native to even the humblest of involved seekers. Music education, therefore, must stand alone as an important and necessary part of the total learning and growing process.

The utilitarian goals of music education involve the activation of multiple neurobiological systems which integrate motor, listening, feeling, thinking, sight, and memory skills. Music study is a whole-body experience which requires aesthetic awareness and instantaneous decision-making as the brain organizes and consolidates a vast amount of information. This holistic, dynamic totality develops mental agility, morality, emotional intelligence, teamwork, physical control, vocal communication, initiative, and efficiency. In addition, music history naturally interfaces with general history and helps to instill the positive virtues of good citizenship.

I wish to be a teacher because I want to share the knowledge I have gained over many years with young people, helping them to develop themselves as whole individuals. My plan is to create a choral music curriculum based on the use of high order thinking skills in order to solve musical problems. I believe that process in education is more important than product. In my view, the goal of music education is to engage the student in life-long learning after formal education has been completed.

I believe that students learn best through the use of metacognition, an active monitoring of the thought process. For example, if I am teaching a particular choral piece, I might use a tape recorder during the rehearsal process. When students listen to the playback, I will plan, lead, and moderate discussions for the purposes of having students devise goals for themselves and strategies to achieve them.

The goals I set for my students will be the acquisition of basic singing techniques, an appreciation of the value of choral discipline, an exposure to the choral literature from various historical periods, a foundation of musical literacy (e.g. note-naming, rhythmic notation), and an awareness of how choral studies relate to other subjects (e.g. languages and social studies). For example, a social studies lesson on U.S. immigration might be nicely fused with a lesson of Irving Berlin’s Give Me Your Tired, Your Poor. This collaboration might, in turn, interest an English teacher since choral piece is a setting of

Emma Lazarus' poem "The New Colossus," the text of which graces the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty.

I wish to assess student work through the use of a music portfolio, a series of documents generated from individual performances, recordings of rehearsals, ensemble critiques, compositions, structural dictations, and journal entries. When a parent examines a student portfolio, they are provided with a rich and detailed account of their child's ability to generate music, listen discerningly, and think critically about the events which have taken place in the classroom. If necessary, however, a portfolio grade can be turned into a letter or number grade.

The atmosphere I would like to establish in my classroom is one of the group as a community of learners, with each student progressing at his/her own level, with an understanding that having permission to fail leads to success.

I bring a rich background of educational and professional experiences to my work. Although I have both the skill and the desire to have my students win competitions, I believe that my ability to engage students in processes of reflective thinking will bring them the longest lasting benefits, regardless of the paths in life they choose.