

**A Synopsis of
My Graduate
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This project gives me the opportunity to refresh my memory of the classes I have taken at Queens College and to set down on paper the aspects I wish to bring into my professional endeavors. This paper will focus on some of the non-music courses and my plans to reflect the acquired knowledge into my teaching.

From my Educational Foundations course (SEYS 536) I will remember that in general, school culture promotes passive rote learning because schools are institutions which must maintain orderly environments. For example, when I posed a critical thinking question in a rehearsal Long Island City High School the silence was deafening. Depending upon the school in which I work, I may have to overcome some mental inertia with my students. In terms of embracing cultural diversity, I should understand the cultural dimensions of my immigrant students. In Mexico, for example, parents are considered to be interfering with their child's schooling if they become too involved. Chinese students may fear making mistakes which would bring shame to the family. Because Chinese students may feel inhibited, I should make sure that these students ask questions. When a teacher genuinely attempts to view the adolescent's world as they view it, the reliance on artificial substances can be reduced. Gang membership fulfills a need for attention, affection, and power. If a student confides in me that he or she is contemplating suicide, I should ask questions about why he or she feels unhappy.

Although EECE 711 was essentially a course on childhood development, I feel that much of the course content was applicable to high school teachers. Professor Reich-Shapiro had us read portions of Lisa Delpit's Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict

in the Classroom. Delpit reported that that research studies show that working-class parents use more directive statements than do middle- and upper-class parents.¹ I found in my student-teaching at Long Island City High School that students seemed more comfortable when simply being told what to do. Yet asking critical thinking questions is fundamental to my philosophy of education. The solution, I feel, is to teach parts of my lessons with direct instruction and other parts with a more process-oriented approach. I have also done some additional reading to address the issue of using Black English versus White English speaking styles in the classroom. My reading of John McWhorter's The Word on the Street has provided me with clarity on that subject. McWhorter believes that Black English is a separate language and should be respected as such, thus, "the language of schoolroom teaching and lessons must be standard English exclusively."² Practically applied, if I am rehearsing a Broadway musical, I should insist on standard English in the dialogue sections, but I should not correct an African-American student's grammar if he or she has a question regarding a stage direction.

During my student observations of Miss Jeannie Kim's elementary school chorus at P.S. 59 in Manhattan, the teacher stressed meaningful singing as opposed to rote singing. I will adapt this technique to my high school chorus by first having them recite an English text written on a sheet of plain paper and then have them discuss their proposed inflections and then compare their responses with the composer's setting.

While my studies in general music were valuable in teaching students to appreciate listening to music, my studies in adolescent psychology (SEYS 710) helped

¹ Delpit, Lisa. Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom. New York: The New Press, 1995. 34.

² McWhorter, John H. The Word on the Street: Fact and Fable About American English. New York: Plenum Trade, 1998. 250.

me to gain a broader perspective on the cultural influences affecting teenagers overall. I felt that the research I did for my term paper, "Adolescents' Attitudes Toward Sexuality and Their Popular Music Interests," was helpful to me in penetrating the inner world of a typical adolescent. Music videos can act as behavior models for young people who express their individuation from their parents through their listening preferences. During my student teaching, the students seemed to react positively to the idea that I might know something about the music of their generation. Controlled studies showed that if boys listen to gangsta rap music they might become sexually violent towards women. Girls should be told to stay away from such boys. In addition, teachers should discourage students from watching videos which portray or imply sexually aggressive behaviors. This warning even applies to listening to Christian heavy metal or rap music. MTV portrays women as "sex objects." Teachers should encourage students to engage in reflective thinking, asking the question "Do the sounds and images I am absorbing truly conform to reality?" Teachers should help put an end to the idea of a romantic relationship as a barter-type arrangement "If I give you sex, you will give me love," and replace that notion with the concept of love as a dynamic evolving process. There is a lot more to teaching than content delivery.

Altogether, I feel that my non-music courses have been very relevant in providing me with the confidence to act as a full-fledged professional and not merely as a narrow-minded specialist. In a school environment where music teachers are not always recognized as being as important as teachers of other subjects, I feel that I will be able to hold my head up high among my peers in the knowledge that I have undergone the same rigorous preparation as any of my colleagues.

Some ideas I have regarding professional development that were not covered in the Queens College curriculum might be: providing a format/protocol for applying for a job as a substitute teacher or taking over for a teacher who is going on maternity leave, planning learning objectives to be carried out over the course of an entire term/year, planning a syllabus for teaching an AP Music Theory course, and suggestions for collaborating with other teachers (using, for example, Interdisciplinary Curriculum: Design and Implementation by Heidi Hayes Jacobs as a resource).³

³ Jacobs, Heidi Hayes, ed. Interdisciplinary Curriculum: Design and Implementation. Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1989.