

Chapter 1

What is your role as a music teacher?

Instructor Insights

Chapter Overview

The primary goal of this chapter is to help class members explore the differences between the social roles of *teacher* and *professional educator*. It is our hope that at the conclusion of this exploration, class members have a basic understanding of the need for—and primary goals of—professional teacher education. Class members begin this exploration by examining the varieties of contexts in which they have taught before. Some of these contexts may be more formal than others. For example, some may describe teaching private lessons while others may describe a time they helped a sibling learn to tie a shoe. Regardless of the context, class members are asked to examine if something was taught, and something was learned. Through a comparison of their classmates' experiences with their own, class members come to understand that teaching and learning occur in many different ways.

The chapter then moves to a discussion of the professional status of teaching. This topic is first addressed through the application of an attribute model (Sumpter, 2008) to the common practices within music education. Each of the five points within the model are explored and class members discover that while common practice in music education can support the first three points, the last two are largely not supported. The status of music education as a profession is brought into question through this exploration.

To help resolve the issues brought to light via the attribute model, we present a case to consider a teacher's social role in terms of *teacher a technician* or *teacher as professional* (Runte, 1995). The goal is to help class members consider the differences between how subject matter, pedagogy, assessment, and social impact can be addressed in a classroom and that this comparison may better define the differences between a *teacher* and a *professional educator*. A table is provided to help present these differences for a side-by-side comparison.

The qualities of a professional educator are explored in the next section of the chapter. The goals of this portion are to help class members (a) discover that excellent teaching qualities can be learned and (b) understand that while talent may have some impact on acquiring these qualities, effort and desire can often be greater determinates of acquisition. A metaphor using drivers and speed limits helps class members explore these concepts. Class members are led to an important concept that recurs throughout this text. We believe it is possible to learn how to become an effective music educator and that each person's path to acquiring the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions is unique. This means that each person must develop a personal plan for professional development.

The next section of the chapter presents active learning as an important principal of effective instructional design. This idea is important to present here because of the active nature of this text. There are several learning activities linked to the *sidebar boxes* throughout the chapter. Class members are given information in this section concerning the authors' philosophies as they relate to experiential learning. This section also introduces another feature of the text. There are times when class

members are informed about the pedagogy we are using in the text and why we have chosen to use it. This content is not only informative but is a direct attempt at proving class members with *insider* status to a music educator social reference group.

Preservice teachers need to be constantly aware of the approaches and methods employed by their professors in each of their courses. Such a mindful approach to their professional education will help them take the initial steps in their social role development as teachers.

The final two sections of the chapter introduce class members to two other philosophical foundations of the text. The first is that teaching is performing. While music teaching is often set in opposition to music performing, class members are asked to consider music teaching as performance and, as with developing any performance-based skill, one learns to teach best by teaching.

The authors' philosophies concerning active learning are specifically applied to music teacher education in this discussion.

Reflection is introduced as a means through which one learns from experience. Kolb's (1984) reflective learning model is presented so class members can gain a clear understanding of how this process works. While reflection takes time, class members are urged to move away from *mindless practice* where they continue replicate past action simply because it is what has been done before and engage in *mindful practice* through critical reflection.

The ideas and concepts in this chapter lay the foundation for the remainder of the text. These ideas should be firmly established before students move forward with their social role development process.

Chapter Activities – General Descriptions

This chapter includes eight activities you can use to help your students begin to explore their roles as teachers and professional educators.

- a. Discussion board: *name, hometown, and instrument* (p. 8)
- b. Class Activity 1.1: *Questions to consider (Clump)* (pp. 8/19)
- c. Class Activity 1.2: *A tale of two classes* (pp. 15/19)
- d. Discussion board: *My most influential teacher* (p. 15)
- e. Class Activity 1.3: *The reflective practitioner (Hoop reflections)* (pp. 17/19-20)
- f. Class Activity 1.4: *Telling the story of you* (pp. 17/20)
- g. Blog on... *Teacher introduction* (p. 18)

There are sidebar boxes interspersed throughout the text with associated activities at the end of each chapter that allow students working in small groups to share thoughts and to encounter a broader spectrum of ideas than they might when working individually. There are also several types of individual writing activities (i.e., blogs and discussion board) that allow students to express their ideas both privately and publicly.

Blogs are electronic journals that are a typical feature on most web-based course management systems (i.e., Blackboard, Desire 2 Learn, WebCT, etc.). Preferences can be set so instructors are able to view posts of individual students and provide feedback without class members seeing each other's work. Blogs provide a great forum for students to express their thoughts in detail. There are also online journaling sites that

can support this feature. Similarly, students can simply email their blogs/journals as word documents or print them and submit them in class.

Discussion board is also a feature common to most web-based course management systems, allowing instructors to post a question. Students then respond to the question and to each other's posts. Discussion board activities facilitate engagement in course material and ideas well after the class period has ended. This is often an open forum where students can read each other's posts. We highly recommend that course instructors do not allow anonymous posts and that they monitor postings regularly.

What follows is a description of each activity in the order they appear in the chapter. Our purpose here is to share important logistical considerations, including materials, goals, and procedures. More importantly, we describe each activity's purpose and how it can be used to facilitate class members along some aspect of their journey toward becoming professional music educators. We hope this information can help you to make these activities become transformative experiences.

Discussion board: name, hometown, and instrument (p. 8)

Instructions in the text: Log onto your class discussion board and list your name (use a nickname if that is what you prefer), your hometown and your instrument. Then give a brief statement about why you want to teach music. After making your post, take some time to read other posts. This is a first step toward getting to know your colleagues. See if you can learn something new.

Goals: This activity is a formal reinforcement of the informal information students shared in Class Activity 1.1. It can also provide the course instructor with the necessary information to construct a class roster with all this information. Sharing the information regularly reinforces the initial development of a social reference group within the entirety of the class. Such development is critical for pre-service teachers as they work through their professional development.

Procedure: Standard discussion board procedure is for the instructor to post the prompt and allow students to post their responses. We suggest that standard procedure be followed on this discussion board. Because this is the first posting required of students, we highly encourage instructors to take time to post replies on all student responses. By having an instructor presence on the board, students are likely to post more thoughtful responses than they might otherwise. The instructor presence also reinforces the idea that professional decorum is expected. Such reminders are important, as many students are more accustomed an informal online presence. An effective 'follow-up' activity might include gathering this information with on a single PDF, adding snapshots of each student's face inserted with his or her information, and posting the PDF on a course website. You should use this information when calling on students in class. [e.g., "Sally Jones from (her hometown) who is a soprano, what did you think of today's reading?"]. Students will notice and appreciate instructors for holding themselves just as accountable for learning this information as they do the class members. You might want to hold daily impromptu non-graded quizzes by randomly asking 3-5 students in the class to stand and then asking the rest of the class to identify each standing student's information. Eventually, this could lead to periodic graded

quizzes in which all students are given a sheet containing pictures of at least half the class members and are asked to fill in blanks for first name, last name, hometown, and instrument. These follow-up activities reinforce the idea that class members will eventually be responsible for knowing the names and other information of *their* future students, and that they will likely encounter those future students in large numbers. Implementing strategies for knowing students and calling them by name will go a long way toward establishing trust and rapport in the classroom (see Chapter 8 for more ideas on this topic).

Class Activity 1.1: Question to consider (Clump!) (pp. 8/19)

Instructions in the text: Your instructor will call out a category by which you should sort yourselves into groups (eye color, shirt color, birth month, etc.). Once you find all the other class members that share this attribute, introduce yourself to your group with your name, your hometown and your primary performance instrument (yes, voice is an instrument). Work to learn this information about your colleagues. You will do this several times and be in several different groups. Each time you clump and after everyone has been introduced, address one of the following questions:

- Clump 1— Are you a teacher? Why or why not?
- Clump 2— What does it mean “to teach?”
- Clump 3— What does it mean “to learn?”
- Clump 4— Are there differences between a teacher and a professional educator?

If so, what are they?

After you have had an opportunity to discuss these questions in your clumps, your instructor may ask you to share your thoughts with the full class. It is important that as many ideas as possible are shared. Make sure you speak up and share your thoughts with the class.

Goals: The first goal of this activity is to help class members get to know each other. Names are obvious, but there will be many discussions sparked by information on hometown and instrument. Even if the students in the class think they know their colleagues, new information is always uncovered with this activity. This leads to the second goal of beginning a foundation for developing social reference groups anchored in music education. The third goal of this activity is to help class members explore their ideas about teaching, learning, and the differences, if any, between a *teacher* and a *professional educator*.

Procedure: After students enter the classroom, invite them to put personal belongings in an out-of-the-way place. It is best to have an open area where the students can gather. Ask the students to organize themselves into groups according to eye color. Once they are in their groups, have them share their name, their hometown, and their performance instrument with the group, reinforcing the information they are learning about each other from the opening Discussion Board prompt. Once they have accomplished this, ask them to address the following question with their group:

- *Are you a teacher? Why or why not?*

Instructor(s) should move from group to group and begin to learn name, hometown, and instrument for each class member if that information is not already known. Learning this information will also facilitate reference group formation later in the semester. Ask

groups to share their ideas with other groups in the room. We recommend that you allow only 1-2 minutes for discussion in the groups. It is better to stop discussions in progress than to allow them to dissipate. If there is good energy in the room, group members will be more likely to share ideas openly.

The next clump could be by shirt color. The instructor should work to get smaller groups with each attribute chosen which allows for better participation, as less demonstrative class members tend to hide in larger groups. Once group members have introduced themselves with name, hometown, and instrument, have them address the following question:

- *What does it mean, “to teach?”*

The procedure after this discussion is the same as it was with the previous question. Encourage students to connect these answers with thoughts from the previous question.

The next attribute for sorting could be birth dates. You can group by pairs or months (i.e., January/February, March/April) or by individual months to get smaller groups. The procedure is the same with name, hometown, and instrument. At this point, as students become genuinely interested in learning this information about their classmates (colleagues), it is not uncommon for class members to be asking for clarifications from each other as they discuss issues. The question for consideration this time is:

- *What does it mean, “to learn?”*

Your final groups should be the smallest to date in this activity. Once introductions are complete, address the following question:

- *What is the difference between a teacher and a professional educator?*

As groups begin to share their ideas with the other groups, invite everyone to get their materials and find a place to sit in the classroom. Likely, there will be a comfortable climate in the classroom; class members should be open to sharing their ideas about the differences between a *teacher* and a *professional educator*.

Class Activity 1.2: A tale of two classes (pp. 15/19)

Instructions in the text: Take several minutes to read Scene I and Scene II in the “Active Learning” section (p.15). Try, by yourself, to write down the differences between the two classes. From the short descriptions, how effective would you judge the two classes to be? Are the learning goals the same in the two classes? Describe the differences in the classroom management techniques in evidence. Which classroom would you prefer to be in (a) as a student, and (b) as the teacher? Once you have written your thoughts, pair up with one other person and discuss your results for several minutes. Then, come back together as a full class and have one member of each pair summarize their findings, leading to a full class discussion.

Goals: The first goal of this activity is for class members to begin developing skills necessary to analyze classroom instruction critically. While contextualized to the music classroom, the list of questions could apply to any teaching and learning context. The second goal is for students to examine some differences that can be found between passive learning and active learning. The final goal to help class members begin to understand in what type of learning environment (passive or active) they are more comfortable and how this might affect their instructional decision-making.

Materials: Other than a means for class members to make personal lists, there are no materials required for this activity.

Procedure: We recommend instructors make use of a *Think-Pair-Share* strategy for this activity. Ask the students to respond to these questions individually. After sixty to ninety seconds, have class members pair with another class member and share ideas. This will likely start some conversations as they discover the similarities and differences of their answers. Using the energy from these paired discussions, start a class discussion asking pairs to share their ideas with the class. This technique is usually effective for stimulating responses to a class discussion. The paired discussions will also help empower some class members who may not speak up in an open class discussion.

Discussion board: My most influential teacher (p. 15)

Instructions in the text: Log on to the class discussion board and post your response to the following: *Without using names, please describe your favorite teacher. What made this teacher special? What traits did this teacher exemplify that made him/her stand out from others? What impact did this teacher have on your schooling and life in general?* Feel free to read the responses of your colleagues and add your comments to their responses.

Goals: As students begin to explore their personal educational histories, they can uncover the qualities of excellence exemplified by a teacher that impacted their lives. This is the first step in deconstructing excellent teaching so it can be examined. Through such critical examination, pre-service teachers can identify the knowledge,

skills, and dispositions they would like/need to acquire to become the teacher they desire to be, thus, laying the foundation for the development of a personal plan of professional development.

Materials: There must be some media used as an electronic discussion board. This can be accomplished through most course management software that has this feature or course instructors can build closed discussion sites through services such as *Yahoo* and *Google*. These sites must be available only to class members, and the course instructor must have administrative capability. We recommend no anonymous posts be allowed.

Procedure: Most discussion board sites allow the administrator to post the initial discussion question on the top of the page. As class members respond, a discussion thread is developed. You may wish to require that class members post their initial response and a reply to at least one other response on the thread. This may help ensure that class members are reading some of their colleagues' responses as well. You should monitor responses and once again, select some as possible discussion starters in your next class meeting.

Class Activity 1.3: *The reflective practitioner (Hoop reflections)* (pp. 17/19-20)

Instructions in the text: A class member will attempt to throw a flying disk or paper plate through a hoop from a distance. After the first attempt, stop and address the questions below:

1. Did the disk go through the hoop?

2. If so, how can we ensure that this can be done again? What does the thrower need to replicate from his/her first attempt?
3. If not, what does the thrower need to change to be successful on his/her second attempt?

Make a second attempt and note if this was successful or not. If necessary, you can go back to the questions above and continue to adjust until the thrower successfully gets the disk through the hoop (or you run out of time and patience.)

Goal: The goal of this activity is to help class members discover the importance of reflection as a means of learning. This idea is critically important during activity-based instruction, because without reflection the learning goal often becomes the completion of the activity. Additionally, a case can be made for reflection as a distinguishing characteristic of a *teacher as professional* compared to a *teacher as technician*. Class members also should recognize that reflection is helpful in both success and failure. While people are often prone to reflect when something fails they do not often reflect during success. Reflection on success may help to ensure the ability to replicate this success in the future.

Materials: This activity requires the use of a hoop (i.e. *hula hoop*) and a plastic flying disk or plate that can be thrown. There needs to be ample space for the thrower to be 6-15 feet from the hoop. One class member will need to serve as the thrower and one as the hoop holder.

Procedure: Once the holder and the thrower are set, have the thrower make a first attempt. Should the disk not pass through the hoop, use the questions above to reflect on why this may have occurred. Make necessary adjustments and make a

second attempt. Should the disk pass through the hoop, use the same questions to discover the reason for this success so that it can be replicated. Other class members can serve as instructors for this activity as well.

Class Activity 1.4: *Telling the story of you* (pp. 17/20)

Procedure: This activity will guide you in constructing a timeline of the life events and people who have influenced your teacher's perspective.

- Create a timeline beginning with your earliest memories of interacting with music.
- Continue to add events as you remember them all the way up to your beginning of this course.
- List the rough dates (exact if you know them) of the events, people who are influential at that time, and how this event may have impacted your decision to become a music educator.

After compiling your timeline, compare yours with a colleague in the course. Are there elements that are the same? Are there elements that are unique to each of you? If you were to compare timelines in the entire class, would you find similar influences on all of them? What impact has access to quality music education had on yours and your colleagues' desire to be music educators? How might these understandings impact your development as a professional music educator?

Goal: This activity will help class members to understand the trajectory of their musical lives and the impact of that trajectory on their present endeavors. They will learn of the differences others have experienced in their musical lives and perhaps explore how these differences have impacted current outcomes for each of them.

Ultimately class members will come to value and respect the potential impact they might have on a future student's trajectory. This lays the foundations for developing a personal professional development plan so that the impact on future students will be as positive as possible.

Materials: None, other than a writing medium.

Procedure: Theses should be written outside of class time. They can be shared during a class period or this can be accomplished through an electronic means outside of class time. Class time should be allocated to reflecting on the experiences and ideas that class members have gained or questions they have because of these exchanges. Beyond the exchange of experiences, some may uncover elements in their musical lives they had not previously considered as an impactful event in their development at a music educator.

Blog on... Teacher introduction (p. 18)

Instructions in the text: Take turns in class getting up in front and announcing the following:

Hello class, my name is Mr. or Ms. (Use your last name) and I will be your teacher today. I look forward to helping you learn more about (choose any topic you wish.)

After you have had an opportunity to publicly announce the statement above to the class, take time to blog about your thoughts. Here are some questions that may help you get started. Feel free to address other ideas as well.

- How did it feel to claim the role of “teacher” out loud?
- On what were you most focused as you made this claim?

- What surprised you the most as you stood and made this statement?

Goal: The goal of this activity is to help class members project themselves into their roles as teachers. While this may seem simplistic, it is most likely the first time class members have claimed, out loud, their role as a teacher. Using the gesture of a formal teacher name (Mr. Jones) reinforces this process. Blogging about thoughts after this activity often helps class members begin an internal discussion about their professional development and the role that their professional education will play in this process.

Materials: There needs to be some means for blogging. This can be done electronically via course management software or on-line blogging sites. Most sites allow for personal blogs, and it is suggested that access is limited to the blogger and the course instructor. The same can also be accomplished in a notebook, journal, or by emailing word-processed documents. These can be submitted to the course instructor for review periodically throughout the semester.

Procedure: Have each member of the class stand and introduce him/herself as the teacher. A few reminders may need to be made to use their “teacher name” and to use their “teacher voice” so they can be heard. It is suggested that this proceeds in some random order. Simply “going down the line” allows this activity to become pedantic. Starting with volunteers often works and can usually set up some effective models for the remainder of the class. After all class members have completed the activity, remind them of the blog prompts and ask them to blog about this within the next 24 hours. If it is possible, it can be effective to blog during the class

period. The course instructor should review these blogs, making comments to reinforce or clarify points that are being discussed.

References

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