

**Music Therapy and Music Education**

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Music 9586: Music Education in Inclusive Contexts

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The practice of music therapy in a music education context is new to me. As a music educator, I currently view my teaching approach as adhering to standards of technicality, musicality, creativity, and presentation. However, my approach is being reformed in theoretical ways that I hope will become practical in my area of teaching. As I continue to process the influence of music therapy within music education, I anticipate several challenges in the merging of these two fields of study in my practical context.

There is ambiguity in assessing the personal growth of each individual student. It is much simpler to assess a student solely through presentation, where we have clear evidence of their ability to play an instrument or perform in front of others. It is far more challenging to assess an individual's journey from point A to point B in their personal growth - learning who they want to be and why. This requires a significant amount of listening and learning about who a student is at the beginning of the year or semester. In contrast, it requires knowing who they have become at the end of that same time period. This is far more work than checking off all the right boxes when a student performs at recital. My goal is to combine varying levels of these two methods of assessment into my teaching approach.

There is seemingly never enough class time to address technicality and individuality. I will admit, I am more task-oriented than individual-oriented during class times. I must learn to limit the number of concepts and the amount of information within each lesson or class, and instead, learn who the individuals in the class truly are. Perhaps my students are going through really tough times and the most significant thing I can contribute to their personal growth is listening to who they are. This may require me to limit the amount of students I have in order to better serve them.

Finding a balance between emphasis of technicalities and emphasis of the individual will be ongoing. The repercussions of trying to find this balance is that parents often want to see the results of what their child is learning through performances. They also can be competitive in comparing their child's abilities to other children's. In addition to these, a therapeutic and participatory approach may not yield immediate technical results.

The participatory approach may, however, reap more significant long term benefits to students and to society. We can cultivate in students a love of learning, a building of confidence, and a deeper relationality they may not experience at home or in other classes. By valuing individuals rather than their abilities we are communicating that what our students have to offer the world is themselves and not just their abilities. As children grow up and are integrated into society, they will be more aware of their passions and their abilities because they will know themselves better. They will have been taught the value of relationships in a positive learning environment. They will have been taught that their abilities and passions do not define them, but they can choose to use them to help others and to contribute to society.

References

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