Integrating Literacy Into the Band Ensemble Classroom

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Introduction

- After 8 years of formal music education, students still have limited literacy skills that help them express their ideas about their musical experiences
- Without the skills to articulate their ideas about music, student interest in K-12 music programs diminish causing attrition issues

- While the music education profession has made great strides in integrating literacy strategies into the band ensemble, we still need to further support student literacy skills so that they can have a more comprehensive musical education experience

What is literacy

- Literacy is about so much more than just reading and writing. It is about approaching knowledge of all sorts critically, being able to engage with the thoughts of others, and creating meaning through all types of media. When viewed this way, literacy applies to all disciplines, including music. Approaching music study through literacy provides a rich way of knowing, understanding, and experiencing music in ways that are different from traditional music education. Literacy does not replace traditional approaches to music study; rather, literacy enhances music learning and creates new ways of knowing. (Brian Weidner)

Today's Session

• Today's session is about:

1. **Identifying** several PRINT literacy strategies and concepts

2. Explaining how to **adapt** these print strategies into the band ensemble classroom while still maintaining the integrity of the rehearsal

3. How to improve students' **music reading** abilities through literacy strategies

4. Introducing basic **audiation** concepts by Edwin Gordon

How Do You Teach Students to Read Music?

• Everyone come up with 2 methods of teaching music reading

• Share your strategies with a person next to you

• Group Session: Share your ideas with the entire group
  • How many use these strategies?
  • Let's identify 5 – 7 effective strategies

Music Reading Question #1

• Visualize a half note on the 3rd line of the treble clef in 4/4 meter

• What information does this one symbol represent to the student?

The Key Principle to Music Literacy

- How and when does the child learn to read?
- Despite our awareness of this progression, band directors typically do not develop their students' music reading skills using this sequence
- We need to embrace the concept that music is a **sound-based** discipline

- **For your consideration –** some examples from Gordon
- Exercise #1: Write down this sentence that I'll dictate to you

- Exercise #2 – say aloud the following sentence:
  - "The tempo marking at rehearsal number 8 is allegro con brio"

Sound Approached Strategies

- Our goal should be to develop the same level of literacy in music reading as expected in print reading

- "What you hear, you can write"

- What you see, you can hear"

Some Examples to Reflect Upon

- Sing exercise #1 on your hand-out "Musical Examples"
- Sing exercise #2
- Why were we not very successful with #2 compared to #1?
  - #2 is beyond our **vocabulary**
- Now let's use typical rehearsal strategies in reading exercise #2
  - Rhythmic Accuracy: Count and Clap
  - Fingering Accuracy: Play trumpet using a pencil / pen
  - Play note-by-note
- Do any of these strategies help develop the students reading skills?

Audiation

- Audiation is the ability to **hear the sound** of the music **when reading** the symbols on the page. (Gordon, Ed - Music Learning Theory)
- We need to use a sound-based approach to music literacy in order to develop the students' audiation skills
- But we typically focus on the mechanical elements of producing the sound (i.e. fingering, embouchure, etc.) and also simple identification of musical symbols (rhythmic values and note names). Neither of which impacts the students' skill in music reading.
- We need to change the sequence of reading music from:
  - Read the symbol > Think the mechanics > Play the note (sound)   to
  - Read the symbol . Hear the sound > Produce the sound

Developing their "Vocabulary" thru Patterns

- To develop audiation skills, focus on tonal and rhythmic patterns
- Examples of tonal patterns: (a partial list)
  - Circle of 4ths or 5ths
  - Major and minor scales and arpeggios
  - Tetra Chord
  - Mi-Re-Do patterns
- Examples of rhythmic patterns (a partial list)
  - Short-short-long
  - Long-short-short
  - Short-long-short (syncopation)
  - Dotted and Tied notation

Developing their "Vocabulary"-part 2

- Students need to identify these patterns both **visually and aurally**
- An effective method for building your students' recognition of patterns, is to include them in your daily warm-up
  - Include a **variety** of exercises: playing & listening and reading & writing
  - Model more and use less verbal instructions
  - **Make it relevant** by using patterns included in the music you'll be rehearsing that day
  - Finally, show **application** by having your students find these patterns, or derivatives, within that day's music

A Comprehensive Look at Vocabulary - Reading Musical Symbols

- Our musical vocabulary is based upon symbols, along with the English language and foreign language
- Consider what students should be able to do when reading symbols
  - See the symbol > Provide a label > Define / Describe the symbol
  - Example: Crescendo

- But in order for music reading to be a comprehensive experience, we should also consider the students' ability to **produce (play)** the meaning of the symbol AND the skill to **listen, evaluate, and discriminate** the meaning of the symbol

Literacy Strategy #1 - Modalities

- Music is a multi-modal discipline that aligns to the multi-modal element of literacy.
- Music is a multiliterate, multimodal discipline. The study and practice of music involves reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and visually representing. These strands of literacy are present in the music classroom and strongly support what many people associate with the outcome of learning music, musical performance through singing or playing an instrument. They also support less traditional music literacy pedagogies that move beyond technical skill and supports broader musical knowledge. (K. Lyke)

Modalities and Music Teaching

- We can plan for and deliver effective instruction if we follow the following pattern of differentiating instruction based on modalities
  - Hear It / Say It
  - Read it / Write It
  - Find It / Play It
  - Synthesize It / Create It

- In many ways, this pattern aligns itself to Bloom's Taxonomy

Literacy Strategy #2 – Print Reading thru Phonics

- One common print reading strategy for readers is Phonics

- **Phonics** involves ***visual AND aural*** processes; it is the recognition that letters of the alphabet (symbols or signs) represent sounds; symbols are combined to form words. It's emphasis is on the technique of producing a sound based on the interpretation of the symbol

- Sounding out CAT or DOG
- Sounding out non-sensical "words" like BLUD or FRISH

Literacy Strategy #2 – Music Reading thru Phonics

- Let's look at a musical example from a beginning band book (see #3)
- First notes are concert D – C – Bb
- The book focuses on visually identifying the letter name and then the fingering
- What's missing – no emphasis on the sound (unless the student fails to play the correct pitch)
- As in Print Reading, music teachers can use a Phonics strategy, which emphasizes the technique of producing the sound of the symbol
- Nothing wrong with Phonics. It aligns to the modality pattern of Hear It / Say It

Literacy Strategy #2 – Print Reading thru Whole Language

- A second print reading strategy for readers is Whole Language

- Whole Language is reading instruction that focuses on the use of authentic and complete texts to assist student skill development

- Dr. Seuss books would be an example of Whole Language texts
  - Hop on Pop (practices sound technique using words and phrases)
  - Baa Baa Black Sheep (how many B's or b's can one find)

Literacy Strategy #2 – Music Reading thru Whole Language

- Beginning Band books predominantly use authentic and intact texts for the development of playing patterns
- Early instruction includes a long list of 3-note or 5-note songs
  - Hot Cross Buns
  - Au Claire de la lune
  - Mary Had a Little Lamb

- The key is to use **both** Phonics and Whole Language strategies with your beginners
- Finally create your own Phonics-based exercises when the band book stops including them

Literacy Strategy #3 – Positioning Literacy Activities

- Also, known as BDA Instructional Sequence
  - Three components: Before – During – After
- BDA strategies allow you to organize the literacy strategies at different points with in the learning activity
- **Before strategies** can create student interest; learn what your students know; and it's also a good use of prior learning
- **During strategies** help over-all student comprehension; and guide student learning
- **After strategies** help student summarize concepts of the text (music); build potential connections with other texts; and trigger reflection

"Before" Strategies

- Today's presentation will only address several typical "**before**" strategies. While some strategies should only be used in one of the three positions, many are fluid and equally effective in any position

- We'll look at the following BEFORE strategies:
  - Anticipation Guides
  - Annotation
  - Comparison / Contrast
  - Pre-Reading

"Before" Strategies: Anticipation Guides

- Anticipation Guides are **handouts** that have a series of questions for the student to complete prior to playing the text (music).
- The purpose is to help the student develop a connection with the music prior to sight-reading or early reading of excerpts
- Either **general or specific concepts** can be addressed such as key signature, time signature, composer information, title implication, tempo, articulations, and dynamics
- Also, general questions such as "Do you know of any other pieces written by this composer?"

"Before" Strategies: Annotation

- Annotation strategies typically are comments, notes, observations, and questions that the student creates during a silent reading of the composition

- These annotations can be written on to the music or using post-it notes placed onto the music

- The comments and questions can be answered during initial rehearsals

"Before" Strategies: Compare / Contrast

- Compare / Contrast strategies help with student comprehension. It also is a good analytical process
- Similarities and differences within a text (music) or between texts are identified
- Examples: Compare major sections of a single composition for tempo (fast – slow – fast), dynamics, style, tonalities, etc.
- Students can compare two compositions of the same genre
- Compare / Contrast is one strategy that can happen before, during, or after

"Before" Strategies – Pre-Reading

- Pre-Reading = Pre-Teaching strategies
- Matching text to students' reading skills
  - Also, the students' knowledge of the concept
- "What the reader brings to the page is more important to comprehension than what is actually on the page"
  - Speaking Italian example
- Pre-Teaching strategies are very helpful to the teacher for it will identify what students already know and what gaps need to be addressed
- As with other "before" strategies, the students should focus on concepts, not the technical challenges

Pre-Reading Examples: Measures of Success

- See example from *Measures of Success*, *Book 1*. (2nd page of packet)
  - Notice all of the Pre-Reading Strategies included by the arrangers

- The text boxes highlight new information, review material, and other musical concepts. Don't focus on accuracy or difficulty.

- The purpose is to provide a foundation for learning and to Introduce the composition or excerpts to be rehearsed through highlighting, defining/describing, reviewing, and performing

Pre-Reading Example: *Arabian Dances*

- This format from Measures of Success could easily be transferred to concert literature. However, it's not financially feasible for publishers.
- The SOLUTION: you provide your own Pre-Teaching examples

- **Handouts**: Two pages of score and one worksheet
- Use the worksheet to write concepts you or your students could highlight and then discuss before sight-reading the composition or rehearsing these excerpts
- Remember to focus on key concepts, vocabulary, major themes, etc.

Summary and Goals:

- **First goal** is to elevate music instruction to the level of traditional academic courses
- **Second goal** is to recognize what literacy can do to help your students' learning:
  - Initiate student critical thinking
  - Assist in developing comprehensive musicianship
  - Gain support for your program by participating in school or district initiatives
- **Third goal** is to be able to adapt typical literacy strategies in the band ensemble classroom that impacts student music reading skills

Resources

- Brian Weidner's website
  - http://bnweidner.wixsite.com/home/presentations

- Broomhead, P. (2010). (Re)Imagining Literacies for Music Classrooms. In R.J. Draper (Ed), (re)Imagining Content-Area Literacy Instruction, (pp 69-82). New York: Teachers College Press
- Gordon, E.F. (2007). Learning Sequences in Music: A contemporary learning theory. Chicago: GIA Publications
- Schleuter, S. (1997). A Sound Approach to Teaching Instrumentalists. New York: Schirmer Books