

# ***Building Community Through Music Education***

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*“Absolutely nothing reaches the human spirit, no matter in what country or society, like the power of music. Nothing builds bonds of friendship and respect across language, race and cultural barriers faster than music.”*

John. E. McLaren

## **1. Staying in touch with our personal histories and philosophical foundations**

*“I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”*

Maya Angelou

- < what inspired us to be involved in music as children and inspire us to pursue university studies in music
- < who are the teachers, mentors and role models that inspired us the most; how did those people make us *feel*
- < what did we learn about ourselves, others and the world around us from these role models
- < what attitudes, values and philosophies are rooted in our relationships and experiences with our mentors
- < what early musical experiences still resonate with us and how have they impacted the experiences we desire to give our students

## **2. Know and consider your “audience”**

*“We teach **people and life** - the subject happens to be **music**.”*

Bill Kristjanson

- < what are students seeking when they participate in music programs; what keeps them coming back (the ones that do)
- < what personal morals and values can we teach through music; do these serve the students as equally as the music and teaching process
- < what are the students' individual needs (outside of the music) and can we help them find a sense of belonging in our music program; do they feel like a valued individual or “a number”
- < at the end of the day what would you want to hear your students say they learned from you
- < is the music education you are offering your students valid or have a place in their bigger picture
- < if the students feel valued they will in turn *value*

### **3. The power of relationship**

*“Both busy streets and empty country roads are empty without good friends.”*

Xue Tao

- < by nature we are relational beings and desire to be in close relationship in various capacities
- < most students seek this sense of community and relationship; it helps frame some of their identity
- < it is crucial that we open doors and create an environment that values and nurtures the formation of relationships
- < be in relationship with your students - *really!* Take time to know them as a person first and musician second; get to know their world beyond the music room doors
- < don't hide who you really are; be honest, approachable, genuine and real - students will recognize and appreciate this

### **4. Intimacy, trust and respect in the music room**

*“Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all.”*

Aristotle

- < creating a sense of family in the music program ought to be high priority; the music making will have enhanced purpose, meaning and beauty
- < music is very personal - how can we possibly make music effectively with walls and inhibitions
- < a safe, open and tolerant learning environment leads to trust which leads to respect which leads to confidence which leads to intimacy which promotes relationship; the students will perceive themselves all as equals with a common purpose
- < frequent, open and expressive dialogue is one of the most powerful and empowering things we can incorporate into our music rooms (descriptions, personal reflections, interpretation, idea - sharing, etc.)
- < a classroom that is safe, open, accepting, supportive, respectful and empowering will ignite students' willingness to take risks, think independently, express their thoughts and ideas, and personalize the music-making process

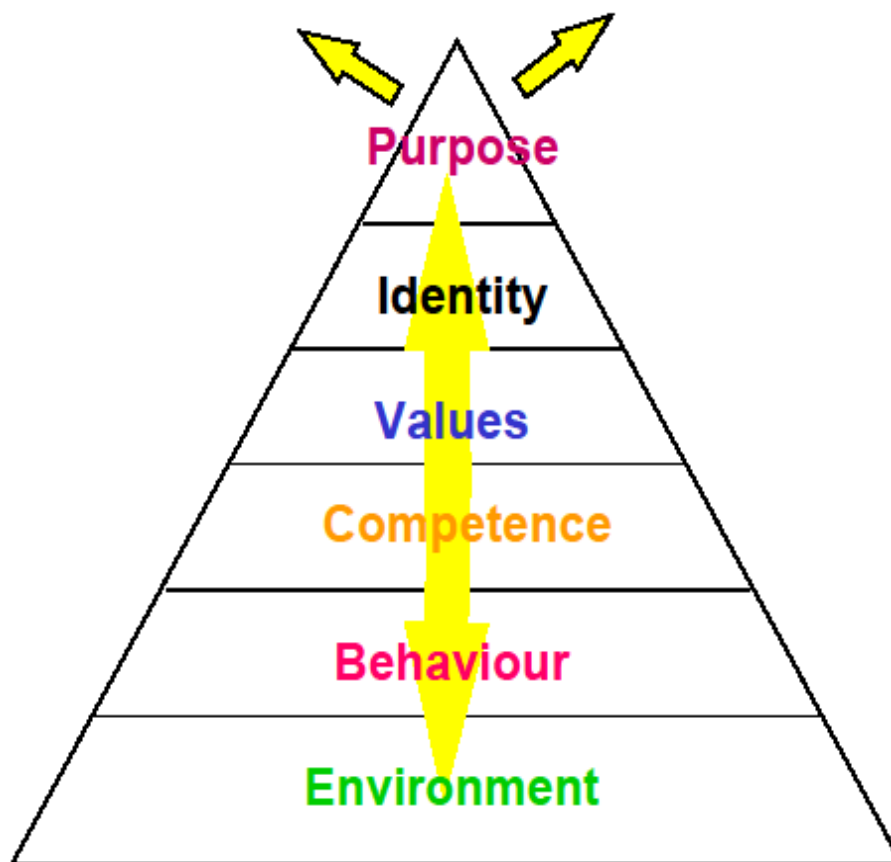
### **5. Building citizenship through music**

*Contribution & Service - actively participating in the music making process;  
contributing to the growth and well being of a community*

- < once a safe environment, respect and trust are well established and relationships are strong throughout a program, the students will commit to ownership and responsibility
- < once the students recognize and value the notion that making music is more about *giving* than *receiving* they will find joy in contribution
- < students want to be part of something that is meaningful, purposeful and rewarding - create *meaning* on a daily basis
- < provide the students with opportunities to develop leadership, interpersonal and organizational skills
- < acknowledge students for their efforts, achievements and contributions on a regular basis

## NEUROLOGICAL LEVELS

Robert Dilts' Neurological Levels model helps individuals and teams align their environment, behaviours, competencies, beliefs/values, identity and purpose, challenging them also to consider a higher purpose – whether work-based, family, social or spiritual in which they make a contribution outside the day to day demands of life.



This is a really useful model for studying organisations. It can be used for collecting information, identifying lack of congruence between levels or between organisations, for deciding the most effective place for an intervention to achieve change, or for preparing a specification – e.g. a job description or mission statement.

## What can stifle or jeopardize a sense of community?

1. Lack of flexibility
2. Not listening
3. Lack of/ineffective communication
4. Failing to value what is beyond the music room doors
5. Failing to see the bigger or whole picture in students' lives or the life of the school community
6. Not putting the students' needs first and foremost
7. Simply not being a *team player* with colleagues, students and parents
8. Not modeling community as a value
9. Not providing opportunities for the students beyond the structure of the classroom
10. Negativity.....and more negativity.....

## What can we do to build community?

1. Establish a music parent council and have the parents actively involved in program activities
2. Appoint/elect student representatives to the music parent council to serve as liaisons between students and parents.
3. Have students "meet and greet" new students to the program. This can be something as small as a class visit or an organized pizza lunch.
4. Establish student music committees.
- 5. Hold annual out of town/or school workshops and retreats.**
6. Encourage students to organize post-concert gatherings or weekend music outings (ie. Symphony)
7. Incorporate student led/facilitated sectionals into course requirements.
- 8. Create opportunities for self-evaluation and peer/group assessment.**
9. Arrange peer-helpers and tutorials between senior and younger students.
10. Encourage peer mentorship by having older students sit in on rehearsals of younger students.
- 11. Get staff and administration as involved in the music program as possible. Invite staff/admin. to chaperone on trips, accompany you to festivals or come visit retreats.**
12. Take every opportunity to build and inspire citizenship through volunteerism, tasks, etc...
13. Have students assist with administrative tasks such as event planning, library maintenance, equipment organization, inventory, etc....
- 14. Create/incorporate opportunities in class for the students to reflect on, re-visit and share their beliefs and values**
- 15. Appeal to the students *senses* and *sensibility* every single day.**
16. Get the music program into the community (feeder school visits, performances at seniors homes, fundraisers, outdoor performances)
17. Take time to offer public acknowledgment of student achievement - both in music and elsewhere (class announcements, school newsletter, memos to staff and admin, school sign)
18. Get students/classes involved in global/community support/relief efforts. Big picture!!!
19. Teach the students to say "thank you" and to own that responsibility.
20. Come down to the student's level. Let them see that you care about them enough to be goofy, fun and willing to get lost in the moment.

## **Some Students' Perspectives on the Connection Between Community and Excellence in Music Education**

***In your opinion, is there a connection between a strong sense of community and musical excellence?***

*"Yes, because in order to make music from a manuscript, you have to have a connection with those that you are sharing that experience with. Having a connection with the other members of the band motivates you to play better and encourages a deeper connection with the music."*

*"Ensemble musical excellence does not come from one person - it comes from a group, which is a community. The those people go into different groups/communities and bring the same level of personal excellence and connection. The two are parallel, yet one in the same."*

*"Yes, because excellence comes out of learning. Without a strong community and a safe place to experiment and make mistakes, it is much harder to learn and develop."*

*"Yes, absolutely! If you can't enjoy your environment and don't have a desire to be there, the mood of the group is affected. Also, success is so much better when it is shared."*

*"A strong community gives everyone an environment where we can try, fail and try again without the fear of being laughed at. Without trying, failing and trying again, there is no growth musically or otherwise."*

*"Yes; musical excellence thrives on drive and enthusiasm. Community builds and fuels that enthusiasm."*

***In your opinion and experience, what are the things that create community in a music program?***

*"Love! You need to enjoy your company and have mutual love and respect for each other."*

*"In our band program we care about each other. When one of us isn't feeling well we would try our best to make that person smile again."*

*"The things that create community in a music program are listening skills, mutual support, sense of purpose and responsibility as a team - not just as an individual."*

*"People who are open to both teaching and being taught; people whose belief in others is as strong as their belief in themselves; people who can openly accept the band nerd in all of us."*

*"The camps, trips, sectionals and talking with the band about what the music means to us personally."*

## **Organizing an Out of Town Music Retreat: Considerations**

### **Purpose**

- what is the philosophy of the music program and how does the retreat enhance this
- does the retreat experience tie in with school philosophy and values
- is there support for a retreat from administration, staff and parents
- what are the goals of the retreat
- how do these goals tie in with the overall curriculum and learning outcomes

### **Location**

- how many students are you trying to accommodate (sleeping, meals, etc..)
- what kind/size of spaces do you need (sectionals, full ensemble, etc..)
- how far does your schedule and budget allow you to travel
- do you require recreational resources or are acoustics a consideration

### **Date**

- what is the primary purpose of the retreat
- what groups/grades are you taking
- how does this retreat fit into the overall school calendar
- weather!!!
- is the retreat reliant on previous fundraising

### **Clinicians/Guest Conductors**

- book clinicians and special guests early!
- what is your budget/where does this funding come from
- does the school support you charging students full fair for the retreat
- consider age group and their needs when choosing clinician
- what are the session priorities (small vs. large groups); where do you want to spend your money

### **Equipment**

- do you need multiple rehearsal spaces for large ensemble
- does the facility have working and tuned pianos
- do you need multiple sets of percussion equipment; if so, where can you borrow from
- how will you transport equipment to and from the retreat facility
- do you require AV equipment

### **Scheduling**

- how many days is the retreat
- how long should the sessions be (age level to be considered)
- what is the balance between clinics, rehearsals and recreation time
- what kind of recreational activities enhance the philosophy of the retreat experience
- do you want to provide opportunities for multi-grades/ensembles to interact musically

**Band 40S  
Final Reflection**

**Please complete one of the questions below (or another topic of your choice). The reflection should be approximately two pages double-spaced, typed. Be creative and include anything from personal stories, to poetry to musical examples. This is YOUR statement and should reflect upon how your experiences in the band program have shaped your thinking, perceptions, values and beliefs.**

1. Describe how your experiences in a school based music program have shaped the person you are today and how those personal attributes have prepared you for/will assist you in the future.
  
2. Scenario: You know a grade 8 band student who is determined to drop band entering into grade 9. Argue as to whether or not this student should continue with band and back with evidence based on your personal experiences.
  
3. How has your experience in a school based music program changed the way you listen, perceive, interpret and experience music of any form? Give specific examples.
  
4. Describe how your involvement in music ensembles (specifically bands) has affected the way you perceive the world, yourself and the people around you. Be VERY specific.

\*If you have another topic or idea you would like to reflect on, please see me.

Thanks and have fun ☺