

Chapter One

Introduction

The purpose of this project was to develop curriculum for a high school music class that encompasses the philosophies of alternative education. This course is geared toward an alternative student population, yet it would not necessarily need to be taught in an alternative setting to be meaningful or effective. I believe this topic is of great importance because there is very little information available regarding music education based on philosophies of alternative education. As a music teacher in a public high school, I constantly encounter students who spend a portion of their day in our nearby alternative charter school. These students express feelings of relief, safety, and immense satisfaction from their experiences in the alternative setting. While I may not be teaching in an alternative school now, I still feel it is important for students to have the option to take a course taught in a different manner than many of their other courses. At some point, I would like to teach in an alternative school, and creating this curriculum will equip me with knowledge and a well-constructed plan to reach my students. The curriculum designed for this project is appropriate in a variety of educational settings, including both traditional and alternative schools, and it will consistently focus on the needs of the student. As indicated by much of my research in the field of alternative education, curriculum in an alternative program must be directly applicable to the real world (Zemanick, 2009), thus it was important for students and their realities to be the focus of the curriculum.

To create curriculum, I used a combination of tools, including the model of Backward Design, described in detail in *Understanding by Design* (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998) and The Multiple Menu Model for Developing Differentiated Curriculum (Renzulli, Leppien, & Hayes,

2000). Essentially, these curriculum development guides provided a great deal of insight into the process of creating curriculum, in general and for music courses. They also allowed for flexibility and individualization throughout the units, including an emphasis on the search for essential knowledge that is encompassed by the philosophies of alternative education. Backward Design requires the curriculum developer to begin with the end in mind, determine curricular priorities, and get to the core of the subject matter, asking the question, “What is essential knowledge?” This model has several positives, including its versatility, its focus on the heart of the discipline, and its procedure. It also allows the big picture to be kept in sight at all times, eliminating the idea of creating a series of activities or figuring out how to cover a single topic on the way to an ambiguous goal (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). While my research indicated the design model is of great importance, it also seems the model must be appropriate for the content, student population, and desired outcomes. Based on these criteria, using *Understanding by Design* and applying its model was appropriate and was well-aligned with the student-centered approach used in many alternative schools. In terms of music curriculum standards and expectations, I adhered to the National Music Education Association (MENC)’s National Standards for Music Education, ensuring that I was meeting the curricular needs of music classes as outlined at the national level. Ultimately, this gives the course the flexibility to be taught anywhere since all of the state standards are based off of the national standards. Finally, the Multiple Menu Model for Developing Differentiated Curriculum played an important role in my project because of its focus on flexibility in terms of student needs, abilities, and situations (Renzulli, Leppien, & Hayes, 2000). In alternative settings, many students require a distinctly different approach to learning than in the traditional school setting. A differentiated curriculum is not specific or unique to this type of environment, but it allows for individual student needs to

be considered constantly, which is in line with alternative education philosophies.

The actual curriculum is titled *Music: Reflecting or Shaping Society?* and was organized with the end at the beginning, in line with the Backward Design Model. The final question students are supposed to be able to answer is also the first question asked of them in this course. Students are continually asked to evaluate musical performances, consider the role and importance of music in their lives, and create music using a variety of modes of communication. The course is focused on individual needs and allows flexibility in terms of the study of specific musicians. It also relies heavily on honest and open dialogue between all class members, including the instructor, which is congruent with Freire's (1990) philosophies of education, highly respected in the alternative field. Overall, *Music: Reflecting or Shaping Society?* draws on students' real experiences, musically and otherwise, to create a meaningful and academically challenging educational experience, speaking specifically to students in an alternative educational environment.

Evaluation of this curriculum was difficult as I was not actually able to implement it due to my current teaching assignment in a traditional high school. I relied on feedback from two advisers with a background in alternative education, as well as a variety of other educational professionals. Asking for feedback from teachers in both regular and alternative settings, as well as counselors, provided insight into both perceptions, expectations, and challenges of educating students with diverse needs. The entire design focuses on the individual, as well as his/her experiences uncovering the essential knowledge and important ideas at the core of music. Primarily, this includes asking, evaluating, and delving into the question of whether music defines or shapes culture, since that idea is central to the discipline. In terms of student evaluation, there is a great deal of focus on self-evaluation; students are expected to evaluate

their own work, primarily for evidence of higher level thinking, effective communication skills, and knowledge of the central concepts.

Overall, this project helped enhance my professional experiences and voice by challenging me to think critically about what is most important for students to learn, as well as who decides what is necessary in terms of curriculum and student performance. By thoughtfully considering the needs of the students for whom this curriculum was designed, I created a model of teaching general music that applies to students' realities, requires them to ask difficult and essential questions of this content area, continually focuses on the individual, and emphasizes the importance of dialogue between all class members. To determine how best to create this curriculum, it was necessary to review relevant literature in the fields of alternative education and music education.

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

It is common to hear educators, administrators, and politicians declare that all children can learn (Lehmann, 2007). It is not as common to hear what happens when children do not learn as anticipated; while we may receive the information about low test scores, among other measures, we do not often hear what is being done to help the children who struggle or consider how and what they can learn. For many of these students, traditional schooling is not the answer. Alternative schools operate under the beliefs that a single unified curriculum does not always provide an equitable or sufficient education for all and that some students learn better in a non-traditional school setting (Kim & Taylor, 2008). Since their inception in the 1960s and 70s, alternative schools have experienced a great deal of criticism and praise, as well as success and failure.

Brief History of Alternative Schools

Alternative schools have been in existence for nearly fifty years, greatly reshaping the American educational system and challenging beliefs. According to the U.S. Department of Education, alternative schools are public or private schools that address the needs of students not typically met in a regular school, provide nontraditional education services, and/or serve as an adjunct to a regular school (Carver & Lewis, 2010). This type of school aims to meet the goal of educating all children without exception. Alternative schools could not have developed and found success without individuals who challenged some of the traditionally accepted assumptions of education, including the ideas that school should continue as it has always been, what worked for us is good enough for our children, and statistical analysis can provide all of the

pertinent information needed for solutions (Hixson, 1993). Alternative schools became popular in the late 1960s and 70s, providing education for students who struggled to find success in traditional settings, and emerged largely because of the social crises occurring at that time (McKee & Conner, 2007). Unfortunately, due to financial and structural difficulties, along with growing pressure to provide factual evidence of accountability, most of these schools failed to operate for very long. During the 1980s, the definition of alternative schools changed significantly, as the expectation of alternative schools was to educate students who were at-risk of failure (McKee & Conner, 2007). This marked a crucial turning point because, for the first time, the need for alternative education models became viewed as a solution to a problem with students; initially, these models were implemented due an inherent problem with the system. This transformation largely affected the success of alternative schools. However, in the mid 1990s, largely due to public and private voucher programs, charter schools, and magnet programs, alternative schools became a new, hopeful solution to a growing educational dilemma (Kim & Taylor, 2008). During the 1997-1998 school year, the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) reported 3,850 public alternative schools in the United States; as of the end of 2004, there were over 11,000. As a result, there has been a significant increase in legislation on alternative schools; 48 states currently have legislation in support of alternative education programs (Lehr, Moreau, Lange, & Lanners, 2004). There are many factors that have affected this growth, and the increasing need for alternative schools is clearly a reality.

In general, alternative schools are lauded for their adaptability, durability, and flexibility, yet these same benefits create frustration (K. Simes, personal communication, August 8, 2010). Largely viewed as schools on the fringe of the education system, most alternative schools do not receive the legitimacy and respect they deserve (Raywid, 1998). However, statistics may

provide some of the greatly anticipated answers, as researchers work to determine what draws students to alternative schools, what keeps them there, and how the success of these schools can adequately be measured.

Framework

Philosophies of alternative education vary greatly and represent broad cultural, social, and educational expectations. John Dewey, an educational reformer, philosopher, and psychologist who lived from 1859-1952, viewed education quite differently than his contemporaries in the early 20th century. He truly believed that traditional methods imposed on students, while progressive models allowed for emphasis on the individual, experiential learning, and the opportunity for students to be acquainted with a changing world (Dewey, 1938). Dewey also believed that continuity of experience was essential to true learning and eliminated in most schools due to organization and mandates set by outsiders. Of significant concern to him was the idea that growth should be measured repeatedly. Dewey believed that growth for the sake of growth was, essentially, meaningless, and the end toward which growth occurred was of incredible value (1938). Thus the argument over traditional versus progressive education began, and nearly a century later, Dewey's ideas resonate with alternative education supporters worldwide.

More recently, a book called *Savage Inequalities* (Kozol, 1991) addressed the inherent inequities of the American educational system, proposing the creation and implementation of alternative models. Kozol's writings are based largely on his visits to urban schools around the nation, and his findings consistently indicated that children were being educated differently based on their race, culture, socio-economic background, and other factors beyond their control (1991). While Dewey's ideas about alternative education stemmed from philosophical dilemmas

and theoretical quandaries, Kozol's beliefs address the multi-faceted inequalities that children face and proposed alternative methods of instruction to better educate all American children. Public debate arose over Kozol's report of his experiences in urban schools, and he continues to advocate for a large-scale overhaul to even the playing field.

It is of great significance to mention Paulo Freire's work in the field of alternative education, notably his philosophies that have been embraced by the alternative education community. Freire (1990) emphasized the role of dialogue between teachers and students, devaluing the role of teacher as sage dispenser of knowledge. He believed that learners must be active in their learning experiences, indicating that sitting and digesting information was not sufficient to empower, educate, and transform individuals and societies. In explaining meaningful and true teaching as it pertains to helping individuals find freedom, both physically and mentally, Freire described three ideas that should continue to drive all educational practices: there is no teaching without learning, teaching is not just transferring knowledge, and, perhaps most significant, teaching is a human act (2000). Finally, Freire (2004) articulated that wishful thinking and optimism were not enough to educate effectively, explaining that true transformation involved "technical, scientific, and professional development as much as it does dreams and utopia" (p. 43). Overall, Freire's philosophies envelop many important aspects of the creation of and education within alternative educational settings.

The final philosophy of alternative education addresses the concern of educational integrity within an alternative school. If a program is not rigorous and challenging, how great can its impact be on students? Kim & Taylor (2008) asked this question in a study that attempted to evaluate equity and rigor within alternative schools and their curriculum. This qualitative case study evaluated knowledge, performance, and student expectations in one

alternative high school over the course of 3 months in early 2006. A recurring theme in student expectations was that nearly all students had post-educational interests, primarily four-year colleges (Kim & Taylor, 2008). Due to the student population's lack of previous success, the principal supported a curriculum that taught only math and reading, explaining to researchers that he believed alternative school students had no interest in pursuing demanding academic careers, such as nuclear engineering (Kim & Taylor, 2008). Two potential career paths specifically identified by students were medicine and architecture. As Kim & Taylor pointed out, due to the minimal number of course offerings and low curricular expectations, students would not be prepared to enter college, let alone pursue careers in those fields. Another technique utilized by this school to help struggling students is some form of credit recovery program. In the case of this alternative school, students could use a computer software program to receive credit for semester-long courses they failed when they were enrolled in the traditional high school. The entire process of earning, or recovering, this credit takes course in a matter of days (Kim & Taylor, 2008). There appeared to be a lack of integrity, as well as an inequitable educational experience for students. Despite students' academic success (straight As were reported for a majority of the students enrolled in this school), the system was most likely not serving the students' best interests. Overall, Kim & Taylor (2008) believed alternative education must provide a caring environment for students, gain and maintain student trust, and offer meaningful, equitable, and challenging education. Without any portion of that equation, the integrity diminishes and student experiences become less credible.

Systems, Policies, and Curricular Approaches

In terms of systems, policies, and curricular approaches in American alternative schools today, there is much variety. One aspect of alternative education that is addressed often is the

significance of the individual, including emphasis on catering programs to each student's needs, as well as establishing a caring and positive environment. Small class size is consistently identified as a necessity in alternative settings; core components of successful alternative schools include small teacher-student ratios, well-trained, creative, experienced teachers and counselors, and constant connections to the real world (Zemanick, 2009). These are some of the qualities that draw students to alternative schools and contribute to the success they experience as a result of enrollment. Zemanick (2009) elaborated on this list by explaining that it is essential to change students' negative self-images, help them build and maintain confidence, and provide numerous, varied, and frequent opportunities for success. Likewise, Wilkins (2008) reported a great deal of research after surveying students in alternative settings, finding that the factors which motivated them to attend school regularly included a positive, supportive school climate and good relationships with the teachers. Similarly, students described their relationships with teachers, counselors, and administrators as open and real, explaining that they received personalized attention, instruction, and guidance (Wilkins, 2008). When asked to describe his alternative school, one student described feelings of belonging, acceptance, and happiness. He further explained that students in the alternative school acted like a family, accepting everyone and creating a safe setting, (Coyle, Jones, & Dick, 2004). Because of these feelings of safety and belonging, students came to school consistently. Emphasis on creating a positive learning environment and focus on the individual are common priorities in many alternative schools.

In terms of curriculum and instructional methods, discrepancies exist throughout alternative schools. Researchers Kim & Taylor (2008), conducted surveys, made observations, and through extensive qualitative research concluded that alternative schools may focus too

heavily on positive environments, neglecting the necessity to educate children. If students are motivated and interested in pursuing higher education, they must be well-equipped and prepared to do so. Because the results of their study indicated minimal standards and an unchallenging curriculum, Kim & Taylor (2008) asked the questions, “Does this constitute integrity?” and “Is this an equitable educational experience for students?” Clearly, there are several significant factors to consider when implementing a program in an alternative setting. Alternative schools usually provide a somewhat individualized curriculum, which is designed with each student’s particular needs in mind (Hughes-Hassell, 2008). This offers flexibility while limiting consistency in terms of what is taught and how it is evaluated. Likewise, Zemanick (2009) indicates that well-developed, broad-based curriculum is essential, including the use of computer software programs for remediation and supplements, as well as lessons and units with real world applications. Overall, many curricular concerns stem from a lack of accountability and consistency, perhaps due to the fact that alternative education allows for a great deal of flexibility, thus making it easier to stray from standards and curricular expectations.

Music Education

Since students with non-traditional needs deserve an education to meet their expectations and offer them skills, experiences, and knowledge to pursue additional educational opportunities and rewarding and challenging careers, it is important to create curriculum that is appropriate, challenging, and meaningful. The field of music typically offers traditional performing ensembles and general music appreciation or history courses in high schools. Students in alternative settings deserve music, and curriculum must be designed with the non-traditional learner in mind. To better educate these students, the following must be considered: the struggle to establish and maintain credibility in alternative settings, the standards set by the U.S.

Department of Education, and the advice of prominent music scholars. The National Association for Music Education, MENC, indicates the concepts that must be taught in music courses, and developed a list that contains singing, reading/writing, moving, listening, performing, and composing/improvising, among others (MENC, 2009). Reimer (2005), a music educator and philosopher stated that valuable, meaningful academic experiences with music are only achieved through direct contact with significant and relevant sounds. His recommendations about how to teach music ultimately include active learning, with students engaged in making music and creating. Likewise, Scott (2008) emphasized the importance of student involvement in the creative process, asking students to construct musical meanings themselves instead of acquiring the activities and knowledge from the teacher. This process requires students to be engaged in learning, specifically critical thinking and analyzing. Finally, general music curriculum today must include current music trends and philosophies to maintain student interest and foster active learning. An excellent example of this idea in practice is Germany's system for general music education. It is a fusion of classic and modern ideas and music, notably including "Pachelbel Meets Coolio" (Kertz-Welzel, 2005). These programs are developed based on specific music guidelines established by German educational agencies, yet allow for a great deal of student input, as well as the constant inclusion of pop culture.

When considering curricular design and reform it is important to respect traditions while contemplating progressive ideas. The rationale for including music education in all schools is broad and based on significant research. For instance, Rauscher (2003) points out that music instruction improves spatial-temporal abilities, yet cautions educators to be aware of the fact that scientific goals should not displace developmentally appropriate music instruction. This is important to consider when implementing music instruction and curriculum; students should be

taught music for the sake of music, not because it will enhance their test scores or achievement in another subject area. Southgate & Roscigno (2009) also point out that participation in music generally increases achievement levels elsewhere. Interestingly, they also explain that “music involvement is a form of cultural capital that seems to provide cognitive and social tools that help students successfully navigate the educational terrain” (p.19). While specific evidence certainly speaks to these statements, it also seems important to consider the fact that studies are continually being done to determine how, why, and to what extent music instruction positively impacts children. Certainly music’s ability to positively influence their experiences and performance in other areas is notable, yet this is not reason enough for its inclusion in all schools.

Curriculum Design

The Multiple Menu Model for Differentiated Curriculum is a resource for educators revising or creating curriculum and represents a current trend toward differentiation, or personalized, individualized instruction (Renzulli, Leppien, & Hays, 2000). This is a crucial concept to consider because of the variety of students educators see daily; gifted and talented students deserve a challenging education, as do students with disabilities. Renzulli, Leppien, & Hays (2000) indicated that a focus on differentiation allows for students to exist, learn, and prosper in the same room despite their differences. Typically, this is a priority in alternative schools, where students from a variety of backgrounds and with a variety of experiences are learning to co-exist and thrive (K. Simes, personal communication, August 8, 2010). When designing curriculum, it is especially important to consider the intended audience. In general, the Multiple Menu Model requires that instruction relies heavily on student imagination, creativity, and active involvement, and very little on textbooks. Collaboration between students

and teachers is also crucial, and this often involves a shift in attitude and perspective, as many teachers are taught to believe they are in charge, on a podium, in front of the classroom, or dispensing information on a regular basis (Renzulli, Leppien, & Hays, 2000). Differentiating to meet the needs of all students is essential for all students to experience success.

Another important resource for curriculum reform is Backward Design, as described in *Understanding by Design*. The focus is always on essential knowledge, beginning with creating a definition of that term (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). They emphasize a constructivist approach, asking students to take charge of their learning, and remind educators to keep the big picture in mind at all times. Their research and recommendations require an open mind, as they depart from many cultural norms and trends, and the idea of working from the end toward the beginning yields incredible results (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). Overall, the creation of meaningful, relevant, current curriculum involves a paradigm shift in terms of teacher and student roles and expectations.

Both models addressed here place great emphasis on educating with purpose and taking careful measures to reach all students. While not specific to alternative educational environments, the research behind their philosophies is in line with alternative principles.

Music Curriculum Reform

In terms of curriculum reform specific to music, it is important to note that relatively few philosophies of music education emerged in the 1970s-1990s, leaving an immense void and challenging educators significantly (Jorgensen, 1990). Also of significance is the timeline in terms of alternative school development; at the same time alternative schools were being organized, there was nearly a void in music educational philosophies. Jorgensen (1990) described music education as a cross-disciplinary field, explaining it had connections with music,

education, psychology, sociology, anthropology, and philosophy. Furthermore, there are a variety of philosophies of music education that exist, each with specific techniques and implications, thus, designing music curricula is difficult and multi-faceted (Jorgensen, 1990). Jorgensen also indicated that it is a necessity for music teachers to consider their own philosophies of music education, as well as collective philosophies. Reform requires careful contemplation of the subject matter, the audience, and historical philosophies and perceptions.

The Pennsylvania Music Educators Association (PMEA, 2003) described some of the aesthetic powers of music education, explaining that curriculum design must incorporate experiences that allow students to understand and appreciate these attributes. For instance, curriculum cannot be designed solely to encourage students to pursue college majors in music or sing or play instruments as a lifelong hobby. Similarly, music cannot be approached as a subject that is fun and relaxing; it is a challenging academic subject. Curriculum must support the belief that experiencing music helps students recognize beauty, learn sensitivity, develop compassion, and create something that is influential in spite of its lack of words. Thus, the task of creating curriculum that meets the needs of non-traditional students requires careful and deliberate work. As described by the National Association for Music Education (Hedden, 2000), determining a philosophy of music education is foremost in curriculum design. The United States' standards for music education require a set of skills and experiences for all students, including singing, reading, composing, and improvising, among others (Hedden, 2000), and it is essential for teachers to consider their personal philosophies and identify what is essential for students to know and experience.

Finally, in terms of music curriculum reform, it is important to consider the power of music from all time periods, cultures, and genres. Development of new curriculum must

encompass a variety of skills and experiences for students (MENC, 2009), and it is essential to educate students on the significance of musical evolution throughout time. Music has been present in all societies throughout history, and to fully understand the current state of music, one must examine its roots (Grout & Palisca, 2001). This is not to suggest that curriculum needs to address all topics briefly, but to serve as a reminder that curriculum developers have an obligation to their students to prepare and present an accurate and well-constructed framework from which to teach music. Overall, the task of developing curriculum for music courses presents challenges because of the breadth and depth of information required by state and national organizations and necessary to understand the greater picture.

Chapter 3

Curriculum Development

A course titled *Music: Reflecting or Shaping Society?* was designed to embody many of the ideals of both alternative and music education, as well as challenge and revise some of the current teaching methods and concepts in many traditional schools.

Thought Process Behind Curriculum Development

In order to develop appropriate, meaningful, and effective general music curriculum, I first researched existing music curriculum for alternative schools and found there was virtually nothing. Because the number of students seeking alternative educational options is increasing (Lehr, Moreau, Lange, & Lanners, 2004), it is essential to provide thoughtfully designed curriculum in all subject areas, notably music. Long-lauded not only for its inherent value, but also for its impact on spatial skill development and reasoning, music plays an important role in the growth of the whole child and is undoubtedly a critical subject of study (Rauscher, 2003). Additionally, in my traditional high school setting, there is a growing population of students who are at-risk, many of whom spend a portion of their day at the local alternative high school and come to the traditional school for music and/or another elective course. Throughout the past four years as a high school choir teacher, it has become apparent that there is not only a need for alternative settings, but that there is also a need for subjects to be taught that are of interest to students. Typically, the subjects alternative students return to the traditional high school to participate in are non-core classes; it is therefore essential to understand this diverse population and create instruction that meets their needs. Thus, when designing this curriculum, my alternative education students are representative of not a single class or group of people but rather a combination of all the students with whom I have had contact. In terms of

administrative expectations and logistical concerns, I approached the project with a mixture of realism and optimism. Scheduling, budgeting, and personnel concerns are certainly real issues in schools today, and while there are several necessities to effectively teach this course, it can be done virtually anywhere with few physical tools. My hope was that the final product could easily be adapted to teach in any school setting, and that it would touch the alternative population most significantly.

Research-based Information that Affected Curriculum Development

There is a great deal of research-based information that affected curriculum development. The Multiple Menu Model (Renzulli, Leppien, & Hays, 2000) helped create curriculum with a wide variety of levels and differentiated activities, allowing students to learn in a way that meets their needs and holds their interest. Likewise, the use of backward design, or beginning with the end in mind, helps students focus on the most significant issues throughout the class and makes student involvement a key part in the learning process (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). Finally, in terms of what musical elements to incorporate, I consulted the National Association for Music Education's (MENC) set of standards, which allowed for varied learning experiences, including composing, and analyzing music (MENC, 2009). Overall, because alternative education models stress the importance of an ongoing dialogue between all class members (Horton & Freire, 1991), this course was created on the premise that students would play an active role throughout, uncovering material and increasing their understanding of critical and essential knowledge (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998).

Scope and Sequence of Curriculum

The scope and sequence of this course were designed to equip students with necessary real-world skills. Musicians in the real world are faced with performances, and should thus hone

their presentation skills; therefore students in this class learn to perform, present, speak, and articulate effectively. Beyond these real-world skills, students are exposed to a varied musical repertoire and continually asked to think critically about the role of music in society and their lives. Cross-curricular activities are inherently present as students grapple with questions of authenticity, legitimacy, intent, voice, and power in music. Incorporating each of the 9 National Music Standards, students in this course receive a musically balanced educational experience. They learn to play an instrument, vocalize, analyze music, arrange and compose simple songs, evaluate performances, understand the relationship between music and other disciplines, and understand music in relation to history and culture. There is also a large emphasis on popular culture throughout the course because it relates directly to students' current experiences. Freire & Macedo (2001) explained the importance of curriculum that accounts for pop culture by saying that if educators are unable to expose themselves to the popular culture across the board, their discourse will hardly be heard by anyone but themselves (p. 239). Analysis of music can occur whether it was written in 1700 or 2010, and by carefully studying current music, it is evident that despite evolving and morphing, music today has many similarities to music from different generations. Each of the 7 units requires students to critically evaluate an important facet of music as it pertains to their lives.

Based on the Backward Design Model (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998), the sequence of this course requires beginning with the end in mind. The final activity expects that students will be able to create a Public Service Announcement debating or answering the question, "Does music define culture, or shape culture?" This is the very first question students are asked at the initial class meeting. By beginning here, students are able to uncover knowledge and create their own opinions throughout the entire course. Skills are continually built upon in a logical manner,

establishing groundwork on which to grow. Because of the need for flexibility within an alternative setting, the sequence is structured to allow for student input at any point in the course. Days are not scheduled strictly, as in some syllabi, but loosely to make time available for student interests. The sequence repeatedly encourages active uncoverage of information, which is crucial to real and meaningful understanding (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). Overall, the sequence presented in *Music: Reflecting or Shaping Society?* begins with the end in mind and requires students to peel back the layers of meaning, representation, and definitions to create their own description of music's significance in their lives.

Implementation of Curriculum

Again, due to my current teaching assignment, it was not possible to implement the curriculum in a traditional way. Instead, I sought the advice of professionals in the education field who are accustomed to working with students who are at-risk and/or are in alternative settings. By asking these professionals to review the curriculum and consider the presence of alternative philosophies, legitimacy of musical content, and probable interest of high school students in an alternative setting, I was able to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the course and consider ways to improve it. I am hopeful that I will be able to implement this course some day.

Evaluation of Curriculum

After compiling the feedback from each educator, I made minor revisions to the activities in *Music: Reflecting or Shaping Society?* and spent a great deal of time self-evaluating and reflecting. In the style of *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee, 1960), I attempted to place myself in the shoes of many of my at-risk students and consider their reactions to this course. Would Corey* find this interesting after spending the morning getting his siblings fed, ready for school, and on

the bus? Would Andrea* care about the implications of government-restricted music being performed for social justice even though she is battling insomnia, among other things? Although we are often left with more answers at the completion of a project, I found myself truly able to say that these students – my alternative kids who spend a small portion of their day in my choir class – would be interested, passionate, and engaged in the course. They care about music and view it as an essential part of their lives, which is evident by the ever-present iPods and MP3 devices. They care about many of the deeper issues in the world, including inequities, social protests, and the meaning of life. They tend to appreciate and embrace challenging topics and conversations and do not shy away from often-taboo issues or conflicting viewpoints. They care about something much greater than a grade. Overall, I believe this course would captivate many minds that otherwise lie dormant on the fringes of society.

*not their real names

Chapter 4

Results

Because alternative philosophies of education support active inquiry and exploration (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998), this curriculum plan was designed with the individual student in mind and, again, in accordance with alternative values emphasizes ongoing dialogue between students and teachers (Horton & Freire, 2001). Due to my current teaching assignment in a traditional high school, it was not possible to implement my general music curriculum in an alternative setting. To ascertain the probable effectiveness and appropriateness of this curriculum, I shared the design with several professionals within the education field and requested feedback. The expertise of these educators, including a music teacher, a social studies teacher, a counselor, and an alternative high school teacher, was sought in a variety of forms, including personal conversation and written evaluation and recommendations. The following questions were asked of each person reviewing my work:

- Would high school students find this interesting? Engaging? Worthy of study?
- Would at-risk students find this interesting? Engaging? Worthy of study?
- Do the scope and sequence of the curriculum make sense?
- Is it evident that dialogue between all class members (including the teacher) will comprise a large portion of the class?
- Have flexibility and adaptability been built into the framework?
- Is the big picture – or continual question of music’s role in society – present throughout the units?
- Does the framework allow for a constructivist (student-centered) approach to teaching and learning?

The feedback obtained from each person is compiled here to give a brief description of the perceived strengths, weaknesses, and effectiveness of *Music: Reflecting or Shaping Society?*

The general consensus was that at-risk high school students would find this unit interesting, relevant, engaging, and worth their time because, as one educator explained, [the unit

involves] several artists students would be familiar with and also allows for their own personal interests to be expressed through choices for different projects (S. Bosch, personal communication, July 15, 2010). Additionally, the alternative education teacher believed students would be drawn to this unit because of their addiction to music, as well as the fact that her students have expressed continual interest in listening to and learning about music (K. Simes, personal communication, August 8, 2010). Each educator indicated that students are more likely to be engaged and excited about learning when it involves something important to them and draws on their personal experiences and opinions. This unit places a great deal of emphasis on student input throughout the course, continually asking students to consider essential questions about music. Likewise, the scope and sequence account for logical skill-building and continually bounce the students between whether music defines culture or reflects culture (S. Bosch, personal communication, July 15, 2010). The big picture has been kept in mind at all times, eliminating busywork and respecting the time of both students and teachers (S. Bosch, personal communication, July 15, 2010).

Dialogue between all class members plays a prevalent role in this course, and all four educators felt there was sufficient evidence of this in the curriculum. Each person also felt that this ongoing dialogue was of paramount importance to gain students' trust and respect. One explained that the course was structured like her social studies forum classes where students are allowed to express their opinions in an open environment, creating meaningful, substantial, and challenging debates (S. Bosch, personal communication, July 15, 2010). Taking the time to allow all participants to share views indicates a teacher cares and respects all students (K. Simes, personal communication, August 8, 2010). This becomes increasingly important when working with an at-risk group of students who have potentially experienced rejection and disrespect from

adults in their lives. Additionally, the alternative education teacher especially liked the "Take a Stand" [on the side of the room] activity. She explained, "it's funny when you work with at-risk kids you would think that they are not very opinionated, however when they are surrounded by other at-risk kids rather than mixed in with traditional kids they really do have an opinion! And they enjoy being able to share that opinion!" (K. Simes, personal communication, August 8, 2010). Sharing opinions and making time for discussions and debates helps hone students' critical thinking skills and increases their ability to articulate their thoughts and ideas clearly. S. Bosch (personal communication, July 15, 2010) believed that the discussions would be very valuable to students' final decision about music's relationship defining or reflecting culture, making this curriculum the picture of student-centered learning and teaching and keeping the focus consistently centered on the essential knowledge identified.

Flexibility and adaptability are essential in every classroom, but even more so in alternative settings for many reasons. Responses indicated that each educator felt there was room for variation and student input, while the course was still structured enough to help students stay on track and keep the ongoing question of music's role in their lives relevant throughout the unit's entirety. Structure, while sometimes suffocating and debilitating, can also provide safety, boundaries, and a sense of self-assurance, so it is important to establish enough guidelines to facilitate appropriate behavior and interactions (G. Buehner, personal communication, August 10, 2010).

Concerns about at-risk students' verbal communication skills were present in several responses, and it was agreed upon that the presence of so much discussion and debate would help students develop appropriate verbal skills, useful in the workforce, as well as the world in general (G. Buehner, personal communication, August 10, 2010). Determining the difference

between formal and informal language and when each should be used was also a concern, which can be addressed in debates, written work, and journaling exercises (G. Buehner, personal communication, August 10, 2010). Another common theme to the responses was the need for support and guidance for all students because there are often inaccurate assumptions about students' abilities, experiences, and knowledge, which leads to a variety of problems.

In terms of recommendations for improvement, there were a few conflicting views. One believed there needed to be more specifically articulated plans and activities to give a better description of the actual course experiences (J. Bice, personal communication, August 5, 2010). Another felt there could be more variety in the discussions, saying it would be a good idea to vary the ways in which students are allowed to express opinions throughout the semester to "change things up". For example, have the students go to different sides of the room for one unit, do a web-based discussion the next unit, debate in front of the class the next unit, and write a paper the next (S. Bosch, personal communication, July 15, 2010). And yet another indicated a need for formal research instruction and basic computer literacy training before moving to compositions and independent study projects (G. Buehner, personal communication, August 10, 2010). Overall, each participant recommended minor changes to make the unit more effective, and in implementing *Music: Reflecting or Shaping Society?* someday, I hope to experiment with different strategies and techniques.

Finally, when asked for any final remarks about the unit's effectiveness, ideas for revision, or logistical recommendations, a high school social studies educator responded:

I think it looks amazing! It made me want to take the class! I wish I had more background in music to help you think of more things to do within each unit, but from what I do know, it looks like it is covered well and will be meaningful. As you go through it, like with everything, you will come up with more ways to teach the information, more examples, and maybe change the scope and sequence. I love how you have fieldtrips and guest speakers set up in the curriculum to help bring in outside

resources! I also love how you included many different types of music and found a way to allow the students choices and build on their cultural backgrounds. Of course, I am thrilled to see music's relationship to history in the curriculum. I feel that students will be able to make the connection cross-curriculum and connect what they have learned to themselves helping them to be able to answer the bigger question as to why it is important for all people to learn about music (S. Bosch, personal communication, July 15, 2010).

It is important to carefully and continually consider who we teach, why we teach, what we teach, and how we teach; as our demographics, world, and cultures change, so must our teaching.

Chapter 5

Recommendations

Ideally, the most significant recommendation is for *Music: Reflecting or Shaping Society?* to be taught to high school students in an alternative setting. To effectively evaluate the success of this course, it would be important to request student response to the curriculum, analyze student assessments to determine their abilities and progress, and self-reflect on both teaching and learning to ascertain the appropriateness and value. Additionally, it would be interesting to survey at-risk students in an alternative setting and ask their opinions on relevant topics within the framework of this course in the hopes that different musicians and activities could be included to maintain student interest. For this course to be implemented successfully, I believe the students and instructors must be aware of the essential components that make it unique, including the focus on an ongoing dialogue, the flexibility to alter content to meet students' needs, and the overarching questions that constitute the heart of the course. It is imperative that this course not be taught utilizing traditional teaching methods, such as direct instruction, because it is the combination of the distinct content and the open discourse that creates a safe setting and fosters individual growth.

In terms of further research, it would be helpful to consider other potential guest musicians, field trips, or instructional materials that are of interest to students and could help solidify their understanding of music's role in their daily lives. For a music instructor to be well-equipped to teach this course, it would be helpful to have read Freire's work and have a solid understanding of his pedagogical recommendations. Additionally, the instructor must have musical knowledge, refined technical skills, and a good sense of musicality, as these are

imperative in order to teach the course correctly. I feel strongly that a licensed music teacher should be in charge of this course; just as someone without a background in math would likely shy away from instructing a high school geometry course, one without the necessary training in music, specifically music education, should not teach this course, despite its elective nature. To attach both validity and integrity to the alternative curriculum, it will be important to continually assess whether the National Standards of Music Education are being met within the classroom (MENC, 2009). Finally, I believe the instructor should have expressed an interest and desire to teach in an alternative setting. Regardless of the location and specifics, alternative schools are organized and managed differently than traditional schools; without a clear understanding of the structure of the organization in which you will be teaching, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to experience success. The instructor, while not intended to be a lecturer or dictator in the alternative classroom, still has a great deal of power in establishing a positive, open, caring environment, and students will assess this environment immediately. If we expect students to be open, we must first demonstrate that we will be open and honest with them. Freire explained this simply, yet eloquently, by saying, "I cannot be a teacher without exposing who I am," (2000, p. 87). For meaningful learning experiences to occur, it is essential that the instructor have the necessary skills, both musical and pedagogical, but also the necessary attitudes.

Ultimately, for *Music: Reflecting or Shaping Society?* to thrive in an alternative school, it is crucial for it to be structured and taught so that dialogue is at the center of each experience. It is also beyond critical to understand, respect, and never underestimate the role and potential impact of the teacher in the alternative setting. "It is imperative that we maintain hope even when the harshness of reality may suggest the opposite...we awaken in others and ourselves the need, and also the taste, for hope," (Freire, 2004, p.106.).

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Appendix A

General Music Curriculum: “Music: Reflecting or Shaping Society?”

Rationale

Currently, there is very little music instruction in general alternative schools. Because of its inherent value, music is an important subject to teach all students. This framework presents the foundations for a course that meets a general education elective credit, as well as challenges students in meaningful ways.

General info

- Geared toward students in an alternative setting
- Semester-long unit
- Materials required: keyboards, sound equipment, amplification equipment, percussion instruments, computers with internet access and notation software, projector, video camera

Considerations

- Essential knowledge is at the core
- Versatility and flexibility should be primary concerns
- Open dialogue will be emphasized
- Topics are general enough to be tailored to meet specific needs
 - o Emphasis on individual, experiential learning in a changing world (Dewey, 1938)
 - o Cultural differences are appreciated and honored (Kozol, 1991)
- Legitimacy found in adherence to National Music Standards
- Variety of skills and experiences provided in order to meet standards (MENC, 2009)
- Focus on “uncoverage” of information (discovering what something really means, entails, implies) based on Understanding by Design (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998)
-



Unit 1 – What’s the point of music?

Uncoverage question: Does music reflect culture or define it?

- 1) As a class: Consider Pachelbel vs. Coolio (from Kertz-Welzel, 2005)
- 2) Group Discussion: Take a Stand: Literally, stand on the side of the room that designates your feelings about the following statement:
TRUE, FALSE, or UNSURE *Rage against the Machine’s [Zack de la Rocha](#) said, “Music has the power to cross borders, to break military sieges and to establish real dialogue.”*
- 3) Small Group Discussion: Sampling vs. Covering – is there validity and creativity in working with other people’s compositions?
- 4) Guest musician – Terry Murphy (Is his music seeking to reflect the culture in which we live, or is his music written and performed with the hope of igniting change and defining who we are and the critical values for which we stand?)
- 5) Extemporaneous Speech: What is the relevancy of classical music today?
- 6) Individual Writing Activity: Choose 1 song that defines you or would fit as the soundtrack of your life and explain how the lyrics, melody, rhythm, etc pertain to your life.

Unit 2 – Experimenting with sound

Uncoverage questions: What constitutes a “good” sound? A “sellable” sound? Do you care?

- 1) Small Group Activity: Keyboard introduction
- 2) Group Discussion: Topic - Learning to play someone else’s written music vs. creating your own sounds (Is this problematic if you can’t notate them?)
- 3) Small Group Discussion: What is the value of both written and oral music traditions? Do we place more significance on one of these in American culture?
- 4) Individual Writing Activity: Compare/contrast “good” music from different time periods
(an example is Beethoven’s “5th Symphony” vs. Monkees I’m a Believer vs. Eminem’s “Love the Way you Lie”)
- 5) Group Discussion: Take a stand: TRUE, FALSE, or UNSURE *“Pop music aims to appeal to a general audience rather than a subculture, ideology, or specific cause.”*

Unit 3 - Rhythm & percussion instruments for the non-percussionists

Uncoverage questions: Is rap music? Why is this debatable?

- 1) Group Activity: Is there a beat within the body? Is it possible to “feel” a rhythm? Is rhythm something that can be taught, or is it something innately present?
- 2) Group Activity: Drum circle exercises

Field trip/guest musician visit – Live Drum Circle
www.drumcircle.com OR www.drumcircles.net

3) Individual Listening Activity: Where and what are the similarities between African music and rap? Does something have to have melody to be classified as “music?”

www.africanhiphop.com

4) Group Activities: Vocal percussion & experimentation

-<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jLN63bRcY5I&feature=related> Amazing beatboxer
-<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mLQDgIdrz9M&feature=related> World’s Best Beatboxer
-<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=59ZX5qdIEB0> Flute beatboxer – Inspector Gadget Theme
-<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yjbpwlpq5Qw> Perpetuum Jazzile – Africa

5) Group Discussion: Take a stand: TRUE, FALSE, or UNSURE *“There are inherent differences in white and black music.”*

Unit 4 – Music’s connection to our daily lives

Uncoverage questions: What would your life be like without music? What would our world be like without music?

- 1) Group Exploration: Music & Math – organization of written music, symbolic representation

2) Small Group Activity: Music & Writing - music as poetry (especially rap) – Analyze lyrics & their impact on shaping culture or their ability to define culture (accurately?)

Tupac – Ghetto Gospel

Eminem – Lose Yourself

Red Hot Chili Peppers – Under the Bridge

U2 – Sunday Bloody Sunday

3) Small Group Activity: Music & History – political & social protest music – Analyze lyrics & consider their references to cultural, political, & social issues (examples below represent one aspect of American culture during the 1960s and 70s)

Cat Stevens – Peace Train

CSNY – Ohio

Helen Reddy – I am Woman

Bob Dylan – Hurricane

John Lennon – Give Peace a Chance

4) Individual Activity: Music & Culture – what is your ethnic background? What type of music is/was common in this culture? Consider music as a means to express culture, specifically traditional/folk music and/or music that expresses problems within society.

-Cuban/Puerto Rican – Nueva trova (1960s protest music)

-Chilean/Latin American – Nuevo Canción Chilena (revolution in popular music Chilean coup of 1973)

-Russian – protest music written outside of the Soviet establishment – most of it - as never permitted by Soviet censorship, creating underground music style

-German – Deustchpunk movement – 1970s to present

-French – protest singers in general – permanent background of criticism & contestation

-South African- Anti-apartheid music

5) Group Activity: Music & Art – means to express emotion

Compare/contrast “crazy” musicians & artists – what do they have in common?

Can you justify loving/appreciating/ purchasing/supporting someone’s art or music if you disagree with his/her morals, values, behaviors, etc?

6) Group Discussion: Take a stand: TRUE, FALSE, or UNSURE

“The cultural invasion is like a leafy tree which prevents us from seeing our own sun, sky and stars. Therefore in order to be able to see the sky above our heads, our task is to cut this tree off at the roots. US imperialism understands very well the magic of communication through music and persists in filling our young people with all sorts of commercial tripe. With professional expertise they have taken certain measures: first, the commercialization of the so-called ‘protest music’; second, the creation of ‘idols’ of protest music who obey the same rules and suffer from the same constraints as the other idols of the consumer music industry – they last a little while and then disappear. Meanwhile they are useful in neutralizing the innate spirit of rebellion of

young people. The term 'protest song' is no longer valid because it is ambiguous and has been misused. I prefer the term 'revolutionary song.'" – Victor Jara, speaking out against Americanization of Chilean music and culture

- Unit 5 - Independent study of an effective musician

Uncoverage questions: What does it mean to be "highly effective?" What relevance does this have to my life?

- 1) Small Group Activity: Consider and discuss "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Musicians" from *Classical Music for Dummies*
- 2) Individual Activity: Choose one musician to research (make sure you use a variety of sources, which could include YouTube, audio clips, web sources, music analysis, etc)
- 3) Individual Activity: Carefully address the following questions: Why does s/he move you? What will be the lasting impact on society?
- 4) Individual/Partner/Small Group Activity: Prepare something to present to the class explaining your views with sound supporting evidence. Audio, visual, and oral presentations are all acceptable.
- 5) Group Discussion: Take a stand: TRUE, FALSE, or UNSURE *"There is a universally acceptable definition of an effective musician."*

Unit 6 - So, you want to write a song...

Uncoverage questions: What does it take to be a composer? Musician? Lyricist? How can you collaborate with others to create something meaningful?

- 1) Small Group Activity: Song format/construction with aid of technology (midi keyboard lab, computer workstations, Sibelius software, GarageBand software)

(as a resource and guide, use: <http://www.soundtree.com/sites/default/files/popsong.pdf>)

- 2) Individual Activity: Choose an area of interest (social protest, ethnic background, beat laying, etc) and build on your comfort foundation to sketch a compositional outline.
- 3) Small Group Activity: Consider what you believe an effective musician to be and create something that can be used to educate, inspire, or reach a certain audience.
- 4) Group Discussion: Take a Stand: TRUE, FALSE, or UNSURE *"Pop music is music that is part of mainstream culture and represents a societal norm."*

Unit 7 – Why music? Public Service Announcement (PSA) creation

Final question: So, does music reflect culture or define it?

- 1) Small Group Activity (Final Task): Create a Public Service Announcement (30 sec or less) that depicts your answer to the question "Why music?" or the question "Does music reflect culture or define it?"
- 2) Group Discussion: Take a stand: TRUE, FALSE, or UNSURE *"We are – or we become – what we listen to."*

Appendix B
National Standards for Music Education

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
3. Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments.
4. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines.
5. Reading and notating music.
6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
7. Evaluating music and music performances.
8. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.
9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

MENC: The National Association for Music Education (2009). *National Standards for Music Education*. Retrieved from <http://www.menc.org/resources/view/national-standards-for-music-education>