PGE 1: Addressing Student Diversity Through Music Education

Because of the growing diversity and social divide among student populations represented in my district, I identified a need in my teaching to address a wider range of learners. In the decade since certification, the percentage my schools' low-income students has increased from forty-one to sixty-five percent. This increase presents socio-economic challenges, complex family situations and behavioral issues. My students have less time to practice, less parental support and fewer resources for learning. To remain effective, I needed to improve my classroom instruction and pedagogy, so that by learning and implementing new strategies, I could meet the challenges presented by poverty. This Professional Growth Experience (PGE) was driven by a professional development opportunity to improve my content knowledge and pedagogy in order to address the needs of a culturally diverse learning community. It is linked to a series of outcomes that impacted student learning at the individual and school-wide level.

For some time, I have followed the progress of El Sistema (a Venezuelan social project that addresses children's social and developmental needs through music education) and programs across the nation inspired by this systematic approach to learning. To that end, I attended a symposium on "Social Action Through Music" (Dec. 3-5, 2012 in Philadelphia). The symposium linked like-minded participants from around the country, united to explore ways to provide educational music opportunities to disadvantaged youth.

From the symposium, I gained content knowledge used to implement this specific music program, as articulated through the academic grades and developmental levels. For example, I incorporated the use of "bucket bands" (buckets and other industrial items are used as musical instruments) into the sequence of teaching and learning music. Though the curriculum is used with beginning instrumental music students at the elementary level, I was able to modify for use

in my high school general music class, as a way to teach rhythm skills in a new and creative format that engages students. I incorporated these activities into a class unit about "found sounds" in creating music.

A significant element of the symposium taught collaborative skills needed to engage colleagues and community in the music education process and advocated building connections and fostering collaborations with a broader community, in order to best implement *social action through music*. With a better perspective and enhanced sensitivity to issues of cultural diversity, I began to look for ways to improve cross-cultural learning among my middle school music students and the school's student body as a whole, with a special focus on addressing diversity and the needs of our disadvantaged population of music learners.

As a result of this PGE, I worked in collaboration with other teachers at our middle school in the planning (VII)¹ of our Black History Month program to transform the yearly celebration from a morning assembly to a month-long commemoration, and include cross-curricular lessons (reading, writing, social studies), which address Common Core State Standards and engage students in learning prior to the performance. Our goal was to positively present the performing arts (drama, music, dance), to bridge cultural boundaries with a unifying theme to inspire social conscience, and to integrate members of community who contributed relevant cultural experiences (VII). Presenting content through artistic contexts creates a transformational learning experience for the students as well as an enhanced opportunity for retention of information, in an experience that integrates music and the arts with other core subjects (II).

To set the musical mood and include repertoire chosen from a world sample (VI), I taught and led a student performance of a selection written for *djembe*, authentic African drums. I

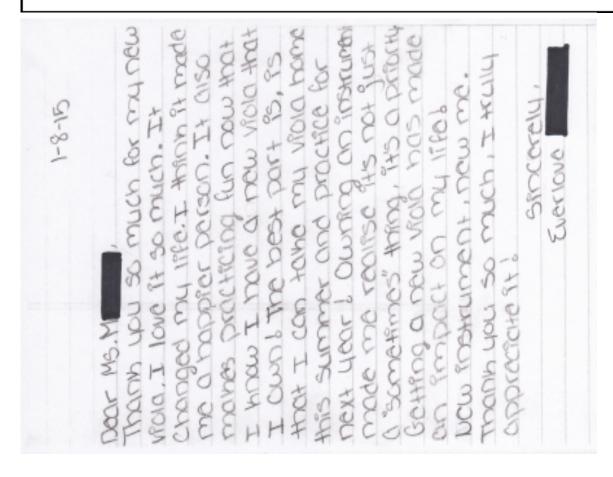
¹ Numerals refer to standards addressed

connected the planning team with a local African-American historian, Mr. SW, who shared his research, developed an original play for the students to perform and actively collaborated in the team planning. In February of 2013, more than a thousand students in the school participated in the lessons and attended the final performance, which introduced the student body to the NLR community, an "island" (segregated) neighborhood in our city.

Integral to the El Sistema model is the provision of resources (equipment, staff) to facilitate teaching and learning of music in areas of poverty. My school has a well-established and maintained collection of musical instruments and I loan to students on the basis of financial need.(VI) Due to the changing student demographics, I began implementing this practice more often. I wondered how I could make student instrument ownership a possibility. As a result of the PGE, I reached out to a colleague and community partner for assistance and support. The resulting partnership (VII) between our city's community orchestra and our district set out to identify students using borrowed instruments who would benefit from a direct donation of a refurbished instrument. The N Symphony Instrument Grant Program was born of this collaboration and in its inaugural year, granted eleven instruments to deserving students in my district. These students do not have to return their instruments at the end of the school year, and can continue to practice and advance their skills over the summer. The sense of ownership has been transformational and has translated into enhanced performance and application of abilities.

PGE 1 has enhanced my professional growth by expanding my instructional focus to reflect the changing needs of student learners, by empowering me to utilize the assets of the community and by guiding my teaching to create a rich learning environment for all. (VI) By addressing student diversity through music education school-wide, equity of access to instruction was ensured and appreciation of diversity was promoted among the entire student body.

Introduction The commemoration of the Black History Month will be highlighted by a series of three school assemblies. Students will showcame African American burings through song, dance, drawns, so the series of the series of



SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Simeone Music Director

President Treasurer Secretary Music Librarian Grant Coordinator Music Director Ex-Officio Director No. Symphony Chorus Ex-Officio President Friends of the NSO Ex-Officio Past President Ex-Officio

January 19, 2014

TO: Michele , Curtis , Heather , Administrators

FROM: Laura , N Symphony Board, E & O Committee

SUBJECT: N Symphony Instrument Grant Program

I am writing to outline a program developed and initiated in October, 2014 by the N Symphony's Education and Outreach Committee. This program involves requesting patrons of the N Symphony to donate gently used woodwind, brass, percussion, and stringed instruments to the Symphony. We then restore the instruments to pristine condition with our own funding designated for this program. We then identify middle and high school students who currently do not own their own instruments, as identified with the help of Ms. M Since Ms. M interacts with orchestra/string students, she is familiar with their situations. She forwards information about brass and woodwind to appropriate band directors in order to match students with instruments.

This program has been highly successful in generating instrument donations since its inception in October, in part because of favorable coverage by the N Post and W News-Journal in December, but also because it has been wildly popular with N Symphony musicians and patrons. We have so far granted instruments to Brianna Exercise Everlove Symphony musicians and patrons. These students were all identified with the help of Ms. M

In order to qualify for an instrument under this program, students complete and return a grant application, attached to this letter. This Instrument Grant Program is the outgrowth of the NSO's mission, which is to provide a service to the community through the performance of live classical music by volunteer musicians, and to enrich the quality of life through music education.

I am reminded of Ms. Meets when considering the following: "A teacher affects eternity," Henry Adams wrote. "He can never tell where his influence stops."

PGE 2: Incorporating Tablet Technology into the Music Classroom

Participation in high school performing ensembles provides students opportunities for music learning and social interaction, but requires prerequisite skills developed over time. There is a population of high school students who may be interested in music participation, but may feel excluded because they have not developed instrumental techniques. Working to expand music course offerings at my high school, I identified a need for an entry-level class in a general music context that would give students the opportunity to perform, create and respond to music without the need for executive skill. To ensure student interest and engagement, I decided to incorporate iPad technology as an integral component of the class, since a tablet could provide students with the technical skill required to execute a quality performance. The only challenge for me as an educator was that I had never used an iPad before! This PGE was driven by a series of professional development opportunities and a collection of resources, which provided the professional growth needed to deliver traditional music instruction with an innovative, technological twist.

Once the class was approved and the technology was ordered, I needed to acquire the technical skill to use the equipment, and the content and pedagogical knowledge to develop the curriculum. I sought the assistance of a music professor at the local university. She introduced me to a set of "apps" (GarageBand, ThumbJam, Finger Stomp) with which I experimented in order to choose those best suited for improvisation and composition. In addition, I attended a conference at the university, "iPads in Education," to gain understanding of the philosophical, technical and practical applications of the technology in my music classroom. At the conference, I attended "iPad Primer" (useful applications), "iLife in Education" (video projects) and "From the Classroom to the Cloud: Flipping the Classroom to Increase Instruction Time."

As I proceeded to develop course content, a big idea began to emerge: students' understanding of the principals of music can be demonstrated through creativity, or original composition, in multiple forms and styles. Likewise, I began to uncover essential questions to address such as, "What is Music?," which I intended students to explore from multiple perspectives as a performer, creator and listener. My PGE led me to three main sources,² which helped me to develop a scope and sequence of units, as well as summative assessments. As a result, I developed a series of composition projects in which students apply knowledge of musical elements (pitch, rhythm, timber, melody, harmony) to uncover an understanding of musical form (ABA, rondo, theme & variation, 12-bar blues, song) through composition, using the iPad to achieve their goals. I practiced on my own to gain fluency with the apps and understand the features and settings in order to be able to explain and demonstrate to the class.

With the aid of technology I developed through this PGE, my students now learn about music by reading and writing using traditional and non-traditional notation, and perform, improvise and compose using traditional and non-traditional instruments. Building upon an understanding of the rudiments of music, my students solve authentic performance tasks and demonstrate understanding of musical form through analysis and by hands-on application of skills of composition. Students are provided with multiple performance opportunities (classroom presentations, public concerts), including presenting at our district's STEM expo and performing the Pachelbel's Canon cello part as featured soloists with our high school orchestra. Students create digital movies to document their progress, which are posted on our class webpage. Through varied performances, students can share their success with peers, parents and community, and raise awareness and publicity for the music program. (VII)

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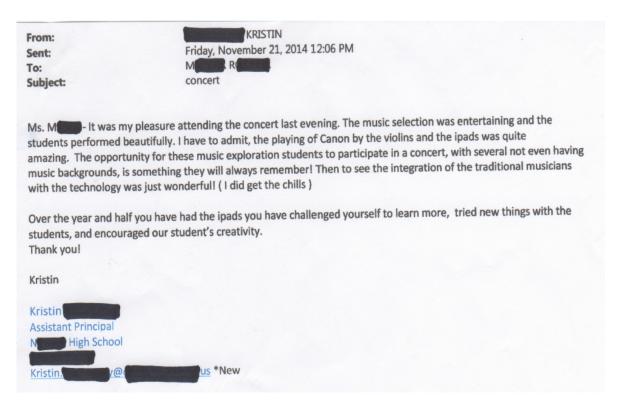
² Burton: *Engaging Musical Practices*, 2012; Freedman: *Teaching Music Through Composition*, 2013; Hickey: *Music Outside the Lines*, 2012

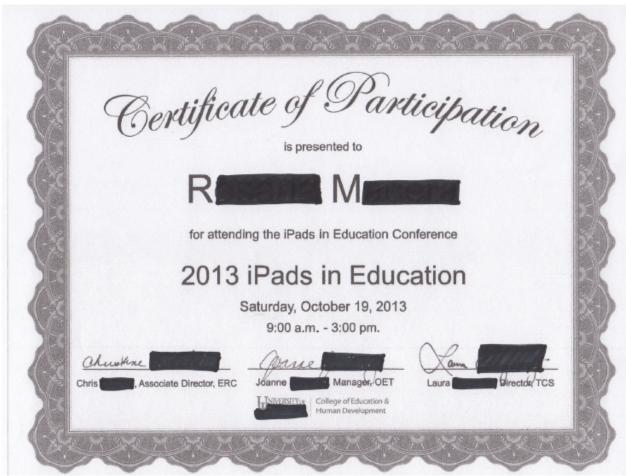
Because this class requires no prerequisite skills or prior experience, equity of access is ensured. At the start of the class, I assess students' prior knowledge through an online survey I developed to determine musical experience, preferences and cultural influence. This information helps me to differentiate the performance task and individualize instruction (such as incorporating piano skills and a rap into the projects). Equity is also ensured as students have equal access to the technology. Tablets are provided by the school and remain on campus. The tablet facilitates a "low-floor, high-ceiling" approach to improvisation and composition, by eliminating or significantly reducing the executive skill needed to produce a musical work or performance. My class, therefore, reflects the diversity of the student body, as there are no barriers of resources to participation. Through the use of technology, my classroom environment generates high engagement in a positive, creative setting that fosters individual choice, selfexpression, and a community of learning. (V) Aided by the students' access to technology, my curriculum provides a well-planned sequence of learning based on relevant state/national standards that guide the composer through increasingly complex forms, to promote success and lifelong participation in music. (IV)

Through the work of PGE 2, I was able to uncover gaps of knowledge in my teaching, which needed to be bridged. The collection of experiences helped me to gain technological skill, germinate ideas and solidify teaching objectives. The work of this PGE, however, is ongoing. The results of my students' intellectual inquiry and the multiple solutions and questions they continue to generate inspires and challenges me to learn more about the limitless opportunities of technology available for life-long learning in music.

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³ Seymour Papert: Mindstorms: Children, Computers and Powerful Ideas, 1980







PGE 3: Application of Music Literacy in the Classroom

Current trends in education have placed an increased focus on improving student literacy and acquiring 21st Century skills. Music classes bear no less scrutiny or need for added rigor. Like other disciplines, music education can and should foster literacy, but we must be sure to acknowledge the special and unique ways musical literacy contributes to learning in the context of non-verbal communication. This PGE builds upon my content knowledge and pedagogical skill previously acquired to teach music literacy in middle school orchestra classes and adds the resource of technology to aid in the documentation of students' creative work.

For the purpose of this discussion, music literacy is defined as the ability to recognize, realize and construct tonal and rhythmic patterns in the process of reading and writing music using musical notation. I have implemented the practice of teaching music literacy for some time, through an understanding of Music Learning Theory (teaching "sound before sight") and before certification, received training for its application in the instrumental classroom (2004). Since certification, I completed a ten-day workshop in the theory's application to the general music curriculum (2007), with a focus on younger learners and the teaching of tonal and rhythmic patterns as the rudiments of musical vocabulary and literacy. The content and pedagogy I acquired was well suited to developing learners at the middle school level (grades 6-8). My curriculum guides students to create and sequence tonal and rhythmic patterns to given guidelines in order to construct improvisations and compositions, and finally to learn to write those patterns using correct symbolic notation.

For many years, I instructed students on how to notate their musical ideas in longhand (drawing note heads and stems on a staff), but I later realized the advantages of incorporating musical notation software as a curriculum resource and began to look for opportunities to

implement. *Sibelius* software is a benchmark software program for music notation, used by students and professionals alike, to give the printed symbols a standardized appearance, and also to realize the notation into instrumental sounds (sequencing). I joined three colleagues to propose a pilot program to purchase *Sibelius* and other software to facilitate teaching and learning of improvisation and composition in our district, K-12. The proposal advocated for technology resources, and once approved, the grant funded the purchase of hardware and software, as well as two days of training, to implement the project in four schools, including my middle school string program.

Equipped with the new software, I added the technology component to the existing curriculum, but first, students composed in the traditional (pencil/paper) manner. Using my handout as a guide, I instructed students on how to set up a clef and key signature (e.g., D major) on the music staff. They composed tonic and dominant patterns, which they aligned to a given bass line to create a melody. I evaluated student work using a criterion-referenced rubric of assessable components (III) including rhythmic variety, melodic range, details of phrasing and style, appropriate tonal patterns and clear/accurate notation. This process delivered sequential, age-appropriate instruction in composition (IV) in which students demonstrated literacy and fluency in musical expression and communication.

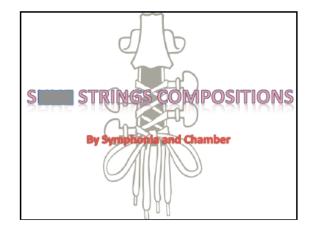
After students demonstrated music literacy in hand written notation, I guided them to transfer their work to the digital format using the *Sibelius Student* software. Students learned to set up their template to include key/time signatures, instrument(s) and tempo, but instead of drawing note heads/stems, students "keyed" in pitches and note values to create a digital version of their composition. Once the data was entered, students could listen to a synthesized performance of their composition. The class project was chronicled in a Powerpoint

presentation, developed by one of the student composers. At the next concert, the slides were projected and a few selections were performed in an authentic culminating class project, shared with hundreds of guests in the audience.

Through this creative project, students demonstrated literacy and fluency in music while using 21st Century skills. Students were given the opportunity to create within guidelines, provided with the necessary resources, and encouraged to apply their creativity toward musical exploration. (V) As a result, diversity of interpretations was evident in the originality and uniqueness of each work and the variety of self-expression. Using the new software, students were able to present their work with a professional and standardized appearance. They could hear their work realized through synthesized instrumentation (sequencing) as well as live performance.

Students who can write using musical notation demonstrate understanding of the contextual application of literacy skills. By identifying sight with sound, students who read music with fluency can be independent learners, building self-confidence, independence and interest. (IV) Through musical composition, they demonstrate creativity—the highest-order thinking skill on the revised Bloom's taxonomy. Students who can use notation software have the ability to create a professional look to their original work and hear the resulting performance realized through synthesized and sequenced sound.

This PGE inspired me to pursue a grant to incorporate the use of technology to enhance my established curriculum. Through the grant-writing process, I collaborated with colleagues (VII) as we worked to expand the project to multiple schools. Finally, the student performance engaged learners in sharing their process and product with parents and community.





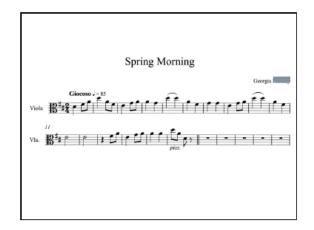


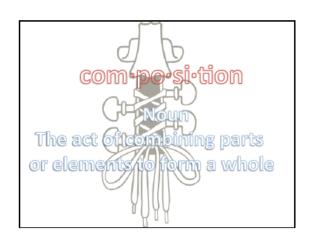


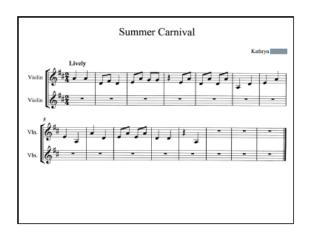


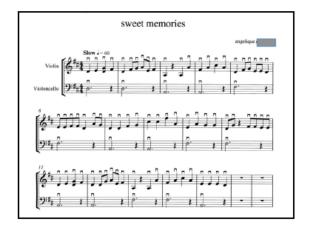


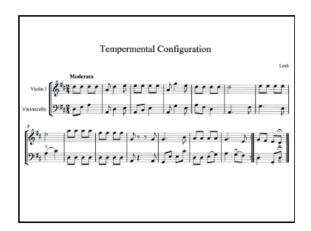












PGE 4: Visiting Artist Activities: Performers, Composers, Arrangers

Students' musical education is enriched when provided with the opportunity to experience music of varied influences, both those that reflect their cultural preferences and those that stretch their range of understanding. Though students need to experience music through performing, arranging, and composing, it is also important for students to interact with professionals in the field who practice these skills as a vocation. After I identified a need to give my students additional experiences to enhance my existing curriculum, I began collaborating with local musicians to coordinate visiting artist activities in my school. In this PGE, three residencies resulted from connections established with professional colleagues and alums of my program.

In the fall of 2005, I began the first residency, which featured a string quartet of worldclass musicians from a major metropolitan symphony. The goal of this collaboration was to
incorporate chamber music performance in the middle and high school string curriculum by
scheduling three visits a year and following the students who participated in this residency for
six years. The performances featured works by standard composers like Beethoven, Bach and
Mozart but also stretched the students' listening skills with composers such as Dvorák, Janacék
and Shostakovich. In the short-term, my goal was to engage students in the experience of
hearing a string quartet performed live in their classroom and be able to interact with the
performers in a personal way. In the long-term, I wanted to increase student understanding of
chamber music as a performance medium. Both goals were achieved. With the musicians'
guidance, students were introduced to chamber music literature that was beyond their level of
performance but well within their capabilities to appreciate.(IV) End of year surveys showed
increasing appreciation of chamber music as a genre. In fact, we came to realize years later that

one student (Brent) attributed his decision to pursue a music career to a specific performance visit! Beyond the collaboration, I began to reflect on how to incorporate chamber music into my teaching and assessment practices of large group instruction. As a result of this PGE, I incorporated rehearsal and evaluation of students' knowledge of orchestral repertoire using quartet groupings (one player per part). Over a period of four to six classes, students met in small groups to assist each other in their practice, much like a professional quartet, and their final performance was graded with a five-point rubric. (III)

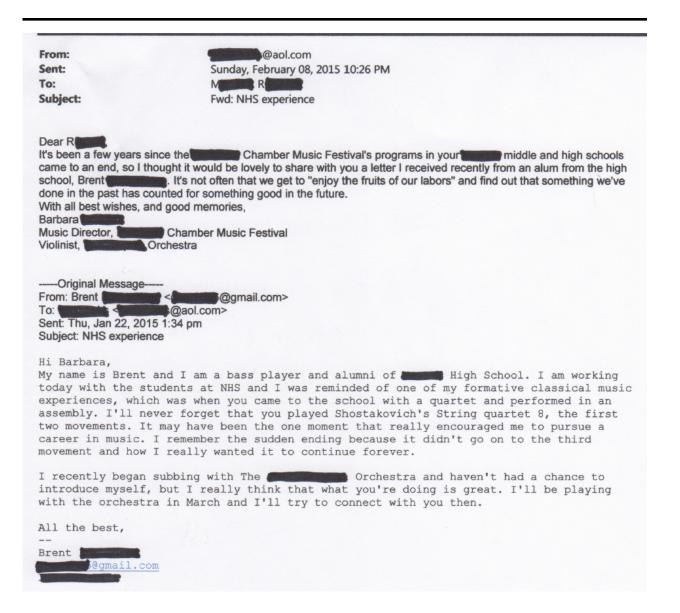
The project yielded two joint concerts (2006, 2011) and concluded in the spring of 2011, with a culminating performance at a local chamber music festival where the students played alongside the professional musicians. I have continued the practice of small group rehearsal and evaluation. It has become an integral component of my pedagogical practice, to promote teamwork and demonstrate independent musicianship and mastery of the literature.(V)

During their residency, the visiting quartet initiated an activity in which they performed their own arrangement of a popular tune and engaged the students to play harmonies on open strings. The activity generated immediate success and created such a positive experience for the students that it inspired me to continue the practice. The following year (2012), I enlisted the help of an alum of our program who is now a professional composer. He arranged selections that were meaningful to the students by first asking students to vote on their selection to be arranged and then providing drafts for their review. Students were an integral part of the process, even going so far as to request mp3 recordings for practice and edits to simplify rhythms to be more accessible for all performers. Because the students and I worked directly with the arranger, we are able to tailor the work each year to suit our evolving program. This year, the students requested parts written for our newly acquired "electric" string quartet instruments. Through the

interactions with the arranger, the students and I had the opportunity to question and analyze the work. (IV) Now in its fourth season, the practice creates a high point for students and audience in our final concert of the year.

The third visiting artist opportunity presented this year when another alum of our program (the student, Brent, whose decision to pursue a musical career was inspired by the visiting quartet), now a professional musician, connected our orchestra with a local composer to perform his original composition. In addition to score and parts, the composer provided mp3 files to help students prepare and spent a day rehearsing, connecting with students, inspiring and refining their performance by demonstrating, coaching, and telling stories. This is the first time my students and I worked directly with a living composer and had the opportunity to ask questions in order to more clearly understand the work and the composer's intent. (IV) The students applied techniques of syncopation and glissando, and we learned about new bowing and percussive techniques like "chop," a non-pitched technique performed with heel of bow.

This PGE linked my teaching and my students' learning to professional development embedded in the instructional process, through varied visiting artist activities that connected my students with world-class musicians. Looking back on the decade of collaborations, students were introduced to a range of musical repertoire—from old classics to new and original compositions—to broaden students' understanding of styles (VI), and to illustrate the distinctive roles of performers, composers and arrangers. For me, the experience transformed the way I group and assess students in large ensembles. The collection of experiences challenged and inspired my musicianship and that of my students. Finally, the decade came full-circle to inspire (at least) one participant to achieve lasting involvement in the arts and contribute to the community of learning, in his journey from student to collaborator and professional musician.



| Quartet rubric | |
|----------------|--|
| 5 = | Performs with accurate pitch, rhythm, ensemble and expression. |
| 4 = | Performs with accurate pitch, rhythm and ensemble, without expression. |
| 3 = | Performs with a few problems with pitch and rhythm, while maintaining a general sense of ensemble. |
| 2 = | Performs with many problems with pitch, rhythm and ensemble. |
| 1= | Does not perform for most of the passage. |

