

By Jacqueline C. Henninger

Undergraduate students decide to major in music education for varying reasons—to emulate an influential educator, to contribute to a field that instilled in them a love for music or teaching, and more. Regardless of their reasons, once students are accepted into an educator preparation program, university professors have a responsibility to provide them with the knowledge and skills that will enable them to secure a job and subsequently thrive as music educators. Consider these areas that should be addressed during their development:

MUSIC INSTRUCTION

Preservice teachers in music should take the necessary steps to positively transfer and apply instructional approaches and ideas explored in undergraduate courses into their teaching in the schools. This includes learning how to write lesson plans, provide learners with logically sequenced instruction, deliver a variety of feedback, lead students to the accomplishment of music goals, and incorporate culturally relevant pedagogy to generate a sense of belonging in the classroom. In addition to planning and preparing for a lesson, preservice teachers should also reflect on teaching and learning experiences at the conclusion of each lesson. Providing them with opportunities to develop and understand the value of a three-part process that includes planning, teaching, and reflecting should have a positive impact on teacher effectiveness and student learning. These instructional experiences will enable preservice teachers to be prepared to provide quality instruction to their students upon entering the profession.

PROFESSIONALISM

Preservice teachers should maintain a sense of professionalism regarding their behaviors and verbalizations. They should understand the importance of being punctual for all school-related events and demonstrate a willingness to work before and after school to offer instructional or administrative assistance to cooperating teachers and assigned campuses. Additionally, preservice teachers should dress professionally and in a manner that is consistent with their district/campus expectations. Of course, it is important to remain authentic to oneself when it comes to forms of self-expression (e.g., attire, hair, piercings, body art). However, as young professionals, it is also important to accomplish that in a manner consistent with the policies and procedures of the district and schools within which one is assigned to teach. These approaches should enable young teachers to effectively transition into professional settings.

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT


Preservice teachers should also remain actively engaged with their field experience and student teaching placements by assisting their

cooperating teachers. Some forms of assistance might include completing administrative tasks, providing instruction to small groups, leading portions (if not all) of the lessons, and performing in ensembles to provide an accurate model for developing musicians to emulate. Preservice teachers can also demonstrate engagement by asking thoughtful questions of their cooperating teachers regarding class observations and teaching experiences. Through formulating and posing thoughtful questions, student teachers can expand their understanding of the teaching and learning of music, which will positively impact their educatorship as they prepare to enter the profession.

COMMUNICATION

Lastly, to effectively equip our preservice teachers to be most successful during their early days in the teaching profession, it is important they understand their new role, especially when communicating with parents/guardians, colleagues, students, and mentors. Preservice teachers should conduct themselves professionally in all contexts. They should remember that it is most appropriate to communicate with learners and their parents/guardians via school email accounts and school/district-approved platforms (e.g., Remind, Band App, Google Classroom). Preservice teachers should be highly discouraged from communicating with music students via social media platforms or personal texting applications. The primary objective should be to maintain open lines of communication with university and public-school mentors. This will enable preservice teachers to grow professionally, musically, and pedagogically.

CONCLUSION

The undergraduate experience in music education can and should be educational, rewarding, and inspiring. If our preservice teachers enter this phase of their teacher development experience with a growth mindset, the experience should yield positive results. Therefore, I would recommend that preservice teachers work diligently to maintain a willingness to learn, ask thoughtful questions, serve as a positive model for the students with whom they get to work, and get to know the members of their school and local communities. Getting to know one's students and their communities while also providing a positive representation of oneself and one's institution should have a positive impact on preservice teachers as they prepare to enter the profession. 



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