

FUTURE OF MUSIC EDUCATION IN FLORIDA

Committee Focus: CROSS OVER TEACHING

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INTRODUCTION

A Historical Context

Much as the *Tanglewood Symposium* prescribed what music educators *should* professionally believe and how they should behave during the second half of the 20th century, *Vision 2020: The Housewright Symposium* has focused music educators on what might best serve the profession during the first half of the 21st century. Because both documents reflect the vision of a broad-based representation of professional leaders, no small amount of confidence has been generated among music educators.

Professional change was desirable, perhaps inevitable, preceding the Tanglewood Symposium, due to dramatic societal issues that served as catalysts for change: school reform, civil rights and technology (Michael Mark, in Madsen, 2000). School reform initiated via federal government addressed the curriculum within the schools for the first time. Well intended but misguided reform efforts created an educational model that viewed basic skills (reading, writing, math) as a complete education rather than simply important tools used to mine and access a complete educational experience: gaining knowledge and the skills to think critically about what is learned or observed. The civil rights movement and the myriad of related social issues served to refocus attention on unfair practices throughout society and, in conjunction with the turbulence of the Vietnam War, led to new thinking about race and culture, creating a prelude to multiculturalism in the schools. Technology exploded during this period, contributing speed of information to the societal changes racing through the late 20th century.

Vision 2020: The Housewright Symposium was undertaken to provide a broad yet thorough study of music education and its role within the complete education provided for each child in this country. Societal issues of impact during the previous 50 years were still present: school reform, societal upheaval and technology. Leaders determined that a cross section of music educators who were representative of the entire profession should come together to analyze, criticize and make decisions (Madsen, 1994) about six important questions (Madsen, 2000):

1. Why do humans value music?
2. Why study music?
3. How can the skills and knowledge called for in the national music standards best be taught?
4. How can all people continue to be involved in meaningful music participation?
5. How will societal and technological changes affect the teaching of music?
6. What should be the relationship between schools and other sources of music learning?

The resulting Housewright Declaration has contributed 12 action statements that reflect those beliefs common to all the diverse and disparate parts of the professional whole. These serve to shape the national future of MENC.

1. All students may participate.
2. The integrity of music study must be preserved.
3. Time for study is essential for a sequenced curriculum.
4. All music has a place in the curriculum.
5. Music teachers must be technologically proficient.
6. Music industry has a role to play in teaching and learning.
7. Music teacher preparation shall expand to include new settings for music teaching.
8. Teacher recruitment should attract diverse people, and alternative certification should be explored.
9. Research plays a foundational role in attaining these new goals.
10. Music making should lead to knowing music, all kinds of music, and include performing, composing, improvising, listening and interpreting music.
11. Music educators should join with others to create early musical experiences.
12. Barriers to the above goals should be identified and overcome.

First the Tanglewood Symposium and then Vision 2020: The Housewright Symposium have provided a thoughtful framework to create equivalent music programs in the 50 states, as led by state MENC agencies and Departments of Education. With this national framework in place, the question now becomes “How will leadership implement this national framework in Florida?”

FLORIDA ISSUES

Societal Change

Three pervasive threads must be addressed when implementing change in music education curricular offerings in Florida:

- changing state demographics;
- continued technology advancement; and
- the reality that change can create unintended consequences.

Changing demographics reflect broad variety in race/culture among students enrolled in Florida schools. The question that must be asked is whether music representing the current cultural climate will be included in the curriculum, as set forth in MENC doctrine that proposes in-depth study of all kinds of music (Housewright, goal #10). If so, how can this be addressed?

Technology affects teachers and schools because it exists, it changes and students, in many cases, come to school with great savvy. Curricular strands, such as classes directly involving technology (midi labs, composition programs and industry skills, such as sound engineering, etc.), can be included when funding for equipment is available and when teachers with necessary skills are recruited. In addition, technology as a means for improved “delivery” of current classes will also require appropriately trained teachers.

Recent legislative action already has created a new arts environment within the public schools of Florida that must be taken into account. Specifically, 1) high school students will select majors, and 2) a new one-credit fine arts graduation requirement creates an immediate need for music

education offerings beyond that of students (~20%) currently electing formal music study in schools. A final consideration of any school music change definitely must be careful protection of the quality music instruction already present in school programs. While no thinking person would ever consider jeopardizing the musical excellence currently prominent throughout music programs in Florida, a brief moment of leaders NOT thinking could certainly damage, perhaps irreparably, the excellence that currently exists. Prevention of *unintended consequences* is key to our endeavors.

Cross-Over Teaching

The focus of this committee is **cross-over teaching**, which directly impacts all three challenges listed above. As the label implies, cross-over teachers are those who have motivation, skill and a value system that allows them to function effectively in diverse music class environments and to smoothly transition between these classes. Thus a current, highly skilled teacher in Florida might have sufficient knowledge and training to teach any or all of the following: performance ensembles in band, choir and orchestral settings; specialty ensembles associated with choir, band and orchestra, such as marching band, jazz band, jazz/pop choral ensembles, madrigal groups, gospel choir, fiddlers/strolling strings ensembles, etc.; AP music theory; music history; class piano; class guitar; class voice; music theater; and other related offerings. Preparing teachers competent to provide this instructional array is at best a challenge. With expanded offerings needed to reflect cultures of current Florida residents and with need for additional music offerings to accommodate nontraditional music students who must earn at least one credit in fine arts as a graduation requirement, music educators within each school district face important decisions about what will best serve students' needs and also nurture music programs.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The following statements reflect the committee's discussion and the beginnings of consensus:

1. The most direct approach to broadening the base of repertoire is through the traditional performance ensembles. Adding diversity within these ensembles (perhaps with small ensemble participation, varied combinations of instruments and voices, diverse styles, etc) can provide minimal exposure to students enrolled primarily for traditional experiences. Implementation of this model is not costly in terms of money or time, and the teacher maintains control of the learning environment.
2. Regardless of changes and additions within Florida curriculum, care must be taken to protect and maintain the integrity of the current excellence of traditional performance ensembles (prevent an unintended consequence).

Recommendation: Through some systematic, statewide effort, districts and/or teachers should provide input about appropriate additional music offerings. Such things as African dance and drumming, steel pan ensembles, etc., might be very important or not important at all, depending on the goals of teacher and district, available funds and qualified staff. Some process should guide curricular expansion, with care taken that funds available and available qualified staff play a role in local curricular expansion.

Recommendation: For a defined period of years, all districts must document enrollment numbers in traditional performance groups, and in schools with groups that decline, an immediate intervention must be implemented. Some formula to guide this is recommended (if numbers drop X%, then intervention is required).

Recommendation: In smaller middle and high schools with enrollment that generates funding for only ONE music teacher, that teacher MUST have strong credentials in some aspect of traditional performance ensembles, i.e. band, choir, orchestra. (While adding an electronic lab or a multicultural ensemble can be very positive, doing this at the expense of maintaining performance groups is an unacceptable negative.)

Recommendation: To encourage cross-over teaching during this time of curricular transition in Florida, some system of rewarding the willingness to participate might be beneficial. Thus a performance ensemble teacher/conductor might choose to teach guitar (or any nontraditional ensemble or course) and benefit in some way. Perhaps earning one graduate course at a state university in summer, or additional travel funds to a related conference, or any related professional bonus would serve to encourage cross-over teaching for the short term.

3. Both creative use of technology and endorsement of a daring approach to scheduling can have strong influence on music programs of the 21st century.

Those courses that can be taught on-line could be offered by one (or more) teachers within a district/state, thus removing that preparation from a site teacher's load. To meet special needs, without damaging current programs, district staff sharing might be viable. One specialty teacher (e.g., electronic composition teacher, African dance and drumming, etc.) might serve an entire district by traveling to classes hosted by site teachers, who would keep projects going between expert teachers' visits. In addition, schools might consider providing certification in areas such as sound and recording to provide entry into the workforce. State and federal funding is available for these programs.

Recommendation: Create scheduling MODELS that might work in schools of various size, population and funding levels that would indicate how expansion could occur with shared staff, on-line offerings and nontraditional schedules. With this knowledge, music teachers can effectively educate principals and counselors about music possibilities that truly meet students' needs and serve well the school programs. If a model required some type of state or district approval, this could further serve to protect established performance groups from accidental harm.

Implementation of advanced technology into the curriculum requires major funding and constant upgrading to remain current. It is doubtful that every individual school or even school district could mount such a program, but technology has been a focus since Tanglewood, so moving forward seems non-negotiable. Housewright #6 calls for industry involvement in music education, and a partnership for researching technology program models seems a perfect match. Many grant programs are available and should be investigated.

Recommendation: Establish Pilot Technology Partnerships (PTP) at selected regional sites to determine what is practical and fundable for school music programs. These PTP programs might be embedded within a school program, at a district site, at a community college, at an industry site or at another approved location. Students might earn credit by taking classes in the school day, or others in the district but not in the school might earn credit offered before or after school hours. Again, one special teacher could service many students from multiple schools if creative scheduling were allowed to exist.

4. Teacher preparation is the cornerstone of creating cross-over teachers, so a key piece of this entire discussion is the role universities play in teacher preparation. If teachers are indeed expected to cross-over teach, then training and competence must be established. Ideally universities should meet state needs and still maintain accreditation standards, but dialogue and negotiation are necessary. If developing the expert music teacher needed to implement the changing Florida curriculum is deemed an impossible or an unreasonable task, then a state self-study about certification levels could also contribute to the conversation. Maybe the issue is redefining general music and performance teacher expertise, or perhaps age/developmental levels are more sensible for preparing expert teachers.

Recommendation: State leaders should prepare to collaborate with the Department of Education (certification agency) and university music education programs (certification programs) to analyze and assess current practice in Florida. A task force with clear goals and time lines might be a practical beginning.

References

- Madsen, C. K. (1994). *Contemporary Music Education*. Raleigh, NC: Contemporary Publishing Company.
- Madsen, C. K. (2000). *Vision 2020: The Housewright Symposium*. Reston, VA: Music Educators National Conference Press.