

Final Reflection: Facilitating an Inclusive Music Classroom

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Reading Response: Facilitating an Inclusive Music Classroom

The music classroom has many opportunities to facilitate inclusive practices, if as the teacher I am willing to be intentional and humble. Sensoy and Di Angelo (2017) highlight that while challenging, the reward in educating oneself is that “we gain insight, expand our perspectives, deepen our cross-group relationships, align what we *believe* and *say* with what we *do*, and increase our personal and political integrity” (p. 186). I would like to continue examining my core beliefs in ways that will check my privileges, assumptions, and prejudices while maintaining a firmly rooted faith belief. Over the course of the past two weeks, my mind has been whirling with questions and possibilities, which I will try to unpack in this reflection.

A key point that has been in my thoughts is the issue with making assumptions. From Young’s (2016) article “The Pecking Disorder: Social Justice Warriors Gone Wild”, I used the line “individuals are little more than the sum of their labels” (para. 7) for my poem. In every reading or discussion, I have found myself contemplating how assumptions place labels on people from an outside perspective. These assumptions could be on the understanding or “smarts” of an English as an Additional Language learner, the perceived needs of an LGBTQ student, or the way we define students with cognitive or physical disabilities. As a member of the dominant group, I can acknowledge that I assume minority groups share my reality. This is also an acknowledgement of my privilege in realizing that my view of “normal” comes from a learned stereotype that needs to be re-examined.

From this course, I have learned that the best way to combat these assumptions is through dialogue. My goal is to be brave and compassionate in having dialogue with

the marginalized and other students in my classroom. Once a relationship is established, these conversations can be the key to giving a voice to the students and allowing room for their individual perspectives. In telling Rie's story, Nichols (2013) writes "that meaningful change will happen as we listen to the voices of our students, engage their lives in all of their complexity and daily approximations, and become open to what may be learned in the process" (p. 276). Through dialogue, students like Rie may find a voice outside of a musical outlet that will give them room to express themselves openly in their everyday lives.

In addition, I am determined to provide my students with disabilities a place for their voice to shine. It may not be in the way that we are used to communicating, but if I am willing to take the time, I can learn their voices and encourage them to share their talents and joys. In having these conversations and listening to the individual perspectives, a key aspect of this kind of dialogue will be the ability to admit when a mistake is made and in turn apologize. It will also mean giving students a space to dialogue with each other in a respectful manner as they continue to form their own perspectives and beliefs.

Next, I am examining the effects of colonization on the music classroom. After reading the DeVito (2020) and Bradley (2012) articles, I am convicted by the need to facilitate authentic cultural experiences and exchanges. Bradley writes that we must give the students a chance to bring their life to the classroom, "if students are to make meaningful, important, and durable connections between and among school knowledge, family life, community relationships, cultural practices, and personal interests" (p. 6). In the choral classroom, we sing a variety of different cultural pieces, however, I have

been negligent in taking the teaching time required for more of the background that is necessary in singing with understanding. I get caught up in the limited rehearsal time and use that to justify the inadequate historical and cultural teaching given to my students. I recognize the time that will be required to present this well and can see the benefits that it will give to them, both in encouraging the students from a minority and engaging the majority in an openness of thought on the importance of celebrating the diversity of our ensemble.

An area in which I am struggling is in incorporating more Indigenous music and thought. In my desire to not offend in presentation, I choose to not explore it at all. This is out a pure selfishness because the effort required to work with an elder, knowledge keeper, and storyteller, working through the history and coming to place of understanding will be time consuming. The question I have been asking myself is “where is your priority?” If I believe this is an important part of education, as well as my own development, then making time for those conversations will be factored in as an essential part of the planning. While I do not teach many indigenous students, the passing of knowledge to the other students will be beneficial in creating a bridge between their current perceptions and our indigenous friends’ viewpoints. I do, however, teach many Filipino students, and there are numerous parallels between the British colonization in Canada and the Spanish colonization in the Philippines. In discussing Canadian indigenous music and thought, it will give an avenue for dialogue with the Filipino students.

These past two weeks have opened my mind to possibilities. As I have allowed myself to question and examine my perspective and personal story, I am aware of key

thought patterns that need to be reshaped and some that have been further rooted in my mind. Remaining silent is not remaining neutral. As Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) admonish, “Our worldviews are not neutral; they are shaped by particular ideas about how the world is or ought to be” (p. 196). As I help students navigate life, providing an open and honest dialogue in a place where care and boundaries exist, we can explore together how our worldviews are shaped, what we believe to be true, and ways to recognize the people around us who build into our stories, shape our perspectives, and remove labels and assumptions.

References

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