

Managing A Music Classroom

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Abstract

In this paper, I will dissect and summarize aspects of my future teaching style and methods. It will be broken down into succinct parts including: a classroom management philosophy, a detailed plan of my first five days teaching, communicating with students and parents, and procedures I plan on implementing in the music classroom. It is also worth noting that the content of this paper will directly correlate with teaching a high school band or choir class.

Classroom Management Philosophy

My philosophy of classroom management is based upon building community within a safe and caring environment. An effective classroom community strives to form bonds and personal connections that helps students to grow and learn. In my music classroom I will share the gift of music to inspire, motivate, and bring students together while always making them feel welcome. I will provide students with a creative outlet while also expanding their musical intellect by keeping students focused on the task at hand. In the words to follow I will explain how I plan on achieving these aspects of my classroom management philosophy.

Community is an essential aspect of a well run classroom because it brings the students on board with what the educator is trying to achieve. It also connects different cultures which promotes diversity and growth. In the words of Chesley Talisse from her article on *edutopia.com*, “community is a medium for individual and group expression” (Talissee, par. 1). I tend to agree strongly with this statement because in music classrooms, the individual contributes to the ensemble’s success and willingness to progress musically.

In my classroom, I will make it clear to my students that each one of them matters to execute the end goal of making beautiful music. In particular, I will build a welcoming and trustworthy community by placing students by people they do not know. I will instruct them to introduce themselves to at least one new person every class period until they have met everyone. This process will take place during the first minute of class. To build interest and community I will also account for students' musical interests by incorporating songs they like in the program. A music educator's job is not just to help students learn and play music. Our job is to build community and encourage students while also expanding their musical intellect.

Music is the universal language which is intended to bring people together and stir up various emotions. In my classroom, I will get students excited to play or sing music by involving them in the creative process. Certain students in my class may get the option of playing a percussion part on bongos or accompanying the choir on piano. I will also involve the individuals by asking for direct feedback in regards to songs they'd like to sing and ways to make my music classroom more enjoyable. I believe student feedback in the high school classroom could be very beneficial because that age group has enough wisdom to form positive responses that would help the ensemble grow.

In its natural state, "music is undoubtedly a subject that is able to promote an educational model based on exploring, discovering and using students' creativity, originality and capacity for improvisation without any need for previous knowledge" (Bujez, Mohedor, Paynter, 1991). This is why teaching music is more than just teaching music. A music educator teaches lifelong skills that disperse into many aspects of life. In my future music classroom, I will push my students' creative boundaries by introducing songs in different languages, letting students lead section

rehearsals, and doing listening exercises that challenge the students' ears. I want to keep my music classroom unpredictable by incorporating different aspects of music including music theory, ear training, and composition.

Classroom management in the music classroom has its differences when compared to other classroom settings. I will utilize nonverbal cues such as raising a hand or 'peace' sign to signal all of the students to stop playing/singing and focus on me. I will also keep my classroom and space organized at all times to ensure I know where to locate certain things (ex: instruments, music, documents etc). In the following paragraphs I will elaborate more on rules and procedures but my goal is to keep my classroom rules simple. All of my rules will revolve around the golden one which is treating others the way they want to be treated. In an article from *NAfme.org*, Rachel Maxwell and Jessica Corry stresses that students should, "act in a way which does not create problems for others" (Maxwell, Cory par. 2). I definitely think this rule has some merit and I plan on incorporating it in my future music classroom. Now that I have explained how I plan on executing aspects of my classroom management philosophy, my first five day teaching plan will explain in detail how I will establish a caring and creative environment in my future music classroom.

First 5 Days Teaching a High School Choir

Day 1

In my first day of teaching a high school choir, I will begin with having notecards on each chair in the room. The notecards will have students' names and also be different colors. There will be five colors total which would make five groups. I will greet students at the door with a handshake, smile and let them know to find their seats with their name on it. I will get the

students attention and let them know my nonverbal signal to focus on me. This will be a peace sign. After this, I will introduce myself to the class and provide a brief bio of who I am and what I plan on achieving throughout the school year. Next, I will ask the students to group up in whatever color note they were assigned to. Every individual in the group will be assigned to complete tasks to share with the rest of the group including: 1) sharing what their names are and where they are from. 2) sharing their favorite band/musical artist. 3) sharing what their favorite thing about music is. When this is completed I will ask that the students make their way back to their chairs. The last task of the first day will be listening to the music that the choir will be singing at the semester's concert.

Day 2

Day two will begin with a vocal warmup to get the students singing and making music. After the warmup I will address any questions that the students may have for the semester. With this, I will let the students know of simple procedures that should be completed every day. The first procedure is to get their music folders and be seated before the bell rings. To practice getting the correct assigned folder, I will have the students go to the cabinet and grab their folders in order. Each folder will have pencils which are needed to add markings to music. After this procedure we will start to rehearse an accessible piece of music from the folder.

Day 3

On day three of class, I will expect students to be sitting in their seats, with their music, when the bell rings. We will go over the progress we made yesterday on the first piece of music. Then we will rehearse more music from the folder. I will let the students know that there is a sheet in their folders that should be filled out and turned in by day six of class. This sheet will

require the student to provide general info, past singing/music experience, and what voice part they sing (soprano, alto, tenor, bass).

Day 4

Day four will begin similarly to day three. We will start the day with a vocal warm up and then get to work. Midway through this class, I will play some music and ask the students to tell me what they hear. I think listening exercises like this are valuable because expand students' musical ear and help them realize what aspects of music feeds their soul the most. After this listening exercise, we will resume singing music from the folder.

Day 5

The last day of the week will begin with a vocal warm up and then we will have a class discussion on what music means to the student. I will ask the students for feedback on what they think of the music we have been learning. Next, I will ask the students to go and find a person they have never met and introduce themselves. After these brief community building exercises we will sing through the songs that we have been learning. I will ask the students to form a circle around the classroom while singing towards the end of class. Then I will congratulate the students on a successful first week and tell them that I expect nothing less in the coming days.

Connections to Students/Families & What If's

I already elaborated on connecting with students earlier by building a strong sense of community within the classroom. Along with this, I plan on having a fifteen minute one on one lesson with each student to get to know them and hear their voice so where I know where they will fit in with the rest of the choir. This one on one time can build trust with the educator and student. To connect with families, I will send an initial letter home that consists of my bio,

objective for the year, and my contact info in case they need to contact me. I will let the students and families know that they can always reach out to me in person or through email in regards to any concerns they may have.

I think the most relevant ‘what if’ that can occur in music classrooms is students misbehaving. I will counter this by having a point system based on behavior/participation. Each student will begin the day with three points and if they are acting up or causing a disturbance they will lose a point. Two out of three points is a 67% for the day so this gives students to not be disruptive. This rule goes for cell phone usage as well. If behavior problems persist then I will address the student one on one and ask them why they don’t want to contribute to the team. Having a strong foundation of trust and community can eliminate most behavior issues but I will have this point system in place just as an extra incentive to be a ‘team player’.

Closing

Being an educator in a music classroom requires courage, persistence and competence. Music educators should teach students how to be human beings as well as provide them with a creative outlet. If music becomes mechanical and monotonous then students will lose interest and not want to contribute. From day one, I want to emphasize that my music classroom is a place of community, care, and creativity. I believe these three aspects allow for a music classroom to thrive in the most efficient way they can. Sharing the gift of music is so special because music can override any other challenges one may be facing in life. I want my classroom to be a safe place where students can make music without judgement. They will be free to be themselves and grow into who they are meant to become. This strong foundation within my classroom will make

the students want to work and learn music which ultimately makes my job more rewarding in the end.

References

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