

Curricular Efficiency: Modes, Models, and Modalities (Less is More!)

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We believe that there needs to be change in our praxis in higher education for many reasons. The knowledge explosion tempts us to add more and more to the curriculum, but challenges us to realize that we can no longer “cover it all.” The diversity of music, the diverse backgrounds of our students, new technologies, and increased understanding of how people learn encourage us to move out of our traditional ways of thinking about the content and processes of music teaching and learning. Advances in the field of assessment motivate us to change the ways we look at student progress.

Less is More

Inspiration for our work comes from such models as Comprehensive Musicianship and MMCP. We recognize that there are blocks to change based on lack of communication and fear among colleagues. At the same time, we realize that change can occur on an individual or micro level that can begin to provide a catalyst for more systemic change. This needs to happen in an environment that fosters mutuality, and we need to model those behaviors and attitudes for our students. We focused our work on developing ideas and strategies for micro-changes that could lead to larger change. We need to design fewer experiences that are in-depth as well as meaningful ways to help students make connections between the various disciplines of music, other disciplines, and their actual practice. We need to develop pedagogies that transcend our traditional requirements. These changes will involve new connections between faculty, students, other disciplines, and the broader community.

The following ideas represent a starting point for such change.

Strategies for Change

I. Personal:

A. Content:

1. Program notes.
Major ensemble directors should provide program notes at first rehearsals to begin modeling comprehensive approaches. This would provide a historical/stylistic/cultural background to the music.
2. Service learning.
Use service-learning opportunities to augment structured field experiences and to gain an idea of career choices.
3. Projects (Themes)
 - a) Students write and objective and develop a project accordingly. E.g.: Instrumental methods comp or arr.
Have students in instrumental techniques or in music methods compose and/or arrange for a typical school ensemble.
Have students design a long-term project to address their particular needs or interests. They would write the objectives and decide how to implement them. For example, to meet an inadequacy of information on learning styles of young students, a student could decide to shadow an elementary music teacher for an extended period of time. These projects could include observation, team teaching, independent teaching, research and application of research findings. Use project based learning that involve design, planning, implementation, reflection, and demonstration of a variety of skills.
 - b) Theme projects across several music courses.
Select themes that are rich enough to be used for the content of several courses during a specific time period. For example, “change in music,” “spaceship Earth” or “music of Scandinavia.”
4. Requirement for development in diverse musical cultures & practices.
Consider requiring students to develop knowledge and skills in at least two diverse musical cultures/practices.
5. First year seminar: incorporate western art music, world music & improvisation.
Create a first year seminar class that incorporates western art music, world musics, and improvisation. This course could also include library skills and technology.
6. Improvisation Integrated into aural skills.
Include improvisation within the aural skills components of music theory.
7. Integration of technology in all courses.
Incorporate technology into all courses as appropriate. For example, how can music notation software be used in every course?
8. Electronic portfolio
Students develop electronic portfolios and begin documenting achievements in all courses. Student might write in a journal, tape lessons and performances, video tape teaching episodes, and include written assignments. The portfolio could be self evaluated and reviewed periodically for progress by instructors and or peers. Beginning students in

music theory describe their current knowledge and skills and create their learning goals. They track their own progress, both technical and academic, via an audio, video and written journal. There are regular reviews to make sure students are progressing toward the identified goals. In addition to discussions between students and professors, rubrics could be designed to assess achievements. Projects included in the portfolio will require integration between theory and other subjects.

B. Pedagogical (Reflective Practice):

1. Peer coaching and review – faculty and students.
2. Faculty interviews.

Have music education students or perhaps all music students interview non-music education faculty about their teaching strategies and philosophies.

3. Question to faculty: How is your field changing; what will your grads. Look like; similarities?

Communications groups might begin by asking questions such as: How is your field changing; what do your grads need to know and be able to do as a result to the changes in your field? What are the similarities between different responses to these questions?

4. Group reflective thinking.
5. Facilitator for group process.

Bringing in a facilitator (from outside the faculty) to develop healthy group processes so that discussions about change can take place in a “safe” environment.

6. Individual/small-group strategies:.

- a) Individual reflection
- b) Student & professors combined reflection.

Create opportunities for students to be reflective about their work. This could begin with the student and professor reflecting together and move toward students being able to reflect independently. Students need to cultivate this as a skill.

7. Provide models for reflection & evaluation.

Faculty should be reflective about their own teaching and model the thought process and evaluation by sharing with students.

8. Juries:

- a) Practice teaching in front of a jury.

A new take on juries – a music education jury in which the student prepares and implements a lesson for a group of faculty. The student could demonstrate skills such as secondary instruments, harmonizing on sight, sight singing, etc.

- b) Improvisation/Composition jury.

Require improvisation juries where students improvise on primary or secondary instrument in a setting of their choosing. Require composition juries in which students compose pieces, prepare ensemble, and conduct.

9. Electronic portfolio for music ed. students: work & teaching. Use of audio, video, journaling; w/ progress rubrics g/discussion on tech. materials and integration between

II. Collaborative:

- A. Guest lectures exchange
Offer to do exchange guest lectures with your colleagues. For instance, a music history professor might discuss choral music from a particular period and a music education professor could discuss how music was taught at that time and how we might teach it now.
- B. Initiate dialog w/ colleagues.
One on one brainstorming (forward thinking) sessions with like-minded colleagues that might expand to larger groups about changing and/or improving instruction and curriculum.
- C. Collaborative curriculum development
Faculty groups reflecting (looking back) on their individual teaching and sharing to discover concerns and connections.
Collaboratively developed program and course objectives and a variety of means for achieving. The James Madison model: define objectives of curriculum in a way that is free from specific courses and common to the mission of higher education. Develop a variety of plans to meet objectives.
- D. Compare syllabi; develop strategies for reinforcement of concepts & materials.
Collect syllabi from instructors to compare content and processes to eliminate overlap or points for collaboration.
- E. Development of negotiation skills; invite outside consultant.
- F. Peer coaching and review – faculty and students.
Initiate peer observation and coaching. For faculty, this could be a means of mentoring, faculty development and support. For students observing and providing constructive feedback for in class peer teaching assignments. This can be accomplished by pairing or grouping students.
- G. Interdisciplinary teams w/in music faculty.
Creating interdisciplinary teams to discuss teaching in curriculum. For instance, a team might include professors from music ed, theory, history, performance - or even from other fine arts disciplines, education, or beyond.
- H. Cohort groups.
Establish interdisciplinary cohort groups to provide feedback and support, for example students groups, student-faculty groups, student-faculty-public school teacher groups. These groups may continue to provide a network throughout the student's academic career and beyond.
- I. Mentoring:
Establish mentoring programs pairing upper class students and freshman and well as graduate with undergraduates. The purpose of these groupings may be social and/or academic. Mentors could also be interdisciplinary pairings. Faculty mentoring groups could be within the music discipline or outside of it.
- J. Faculty & students working across disciplines.
- K. Collaborative projects
Faculty should make an effort to design collaborative projects using people and resources available on campus and in the community; for example, faculty, students or community members from other cultures.

- L. Music ed. involved w/ theory teachers.
Music education faculty could work with the theory faculty to develop shared techniques such as Dalcroze, Eurhythmics, Kodaly, and Orff. This would help apply theory skills to teaching.
- M. Faculty development, meeting changes (dialoging, rethinking our teaching).
Use faculty meetings for professional development by dialoguing about teaching and move administrative tasks to e-mail.
Music schools should provide in service training for all faculty to address specific needs. An example would be providing intensive technology training.
- N. Music Ed. faculty work w/ ensemble directors for school assembly presentations.
Music education faculty team with ensembles and conductors to help present informances appropriate for school assemblies.
- O. Teams to conferences: Theory w/ music ed. faculty to methods conference.
Sending teams of faculty with common interests to conferences even if it's not their primary discipline. For instance, a theory professor might attend with their music ed. colleague a methods-based conference.

III. Structural:

- A. Encouraging the hiring of faculty in all areas that are more ed. oriented, more comprehensive minded.
When hiring new faculty throughout the music unit, we can look for individuals who think more comprehensively and who show willingness to collaborate with other faculty. This may need to be added to job descriptions!
- B. Active involvement in tenure process development.
Tenure processes need to value teaching, not just research and scholarship. Music faculty should seek involvement in policy development for the larger university in addition to departmental committees.
- C. Development of negotiation skills; invite outside consultant.
- D. Field Experience course (Houghton, De Pau).
- E. Individually designed programs.
- F. Development of disposition & character qualities:
 1. Music Ed. juries; these issues are confronted.
 2. NCATE accreditation requiring yearly 'gateways' involving these considerations.
Develop strategies to assess disposition and character (fitness to teach) that constitute yearly gateways [NCATE]. These could include reflective practice strategies, music education juries, use of rubrics, journals, experience with immersion in schools beginning in the freshman year and assessment of student response to those experiences.
- G. Re-thinking course categories. E.g.: Sight-reading, aural skills – ensemble teachers; history – form, style; piano class – harmonization & composition, etc.
- H. Specific Issue: Bloated Curriculum:
 1. May need to begin w/ small strategies (other category) that lead to larger changes.
In some cases, small changes may lead to more systemic change. Do not hesitate to start small. For example, an individual professor could begin to implement a new practice such as the use of reflective thinking that then inspires other

colleagues and eventually becomes a part of thinking that is integrated throughout the entire music curriculum and becomes a way of assessing student growth.

2. Paradigm shift in thinking:

a) Acknowledge that we' can't address every thing and begin to prioritize. Clarifying what the really significant experiences are.

We need to learn to determine what the most significant experiences are, acknowledging that we cannot cover everything. These experiences need to be addressed in depth using strategies that involve such things as problem solving, discovery learning, collaboration, field experiences, and infusion of technology.

These become models for kinds of thinking and working that students can then transfer to new settings.

b) Think in terms of addressing fewer things more deeply accompanied with training in the process to apply independently to other situations.

c) Thinking of selves more as facilitators, than trainers: Guide on the side vs. sage on the stage.

Our roles should be to move from being the sage on the stage to the guide on the side.

Our expertise will be used in forming significant questions, knowing what research and trends are in the field that can inform the practice, and in guiding the students to go more deeply in their work.

3. Coordinate individual projects between courses.

Teachers from different disciplines can coordinate to combine content from separate courses and formulate meaningful projects that synthesize key ideas for students.

4. Seek "catalyst for change" situations: How else could this be accomplished? Are there some ways we can coordinate? Look for options to discuss options or ideas.

Consciously look for moments or events that might provide opportunities for creative and effective change such as a willingness to collaborate, a discussion of new ways to approach content delivery, common interests, redundancies, etc. Then "go for it."

5. Work w/ scheduling: blocks & cohorts.

Examine ways to restructure the schedule or the way students are grouped to facilitate change and break out of old molds. Ideas include such things as block scheduling; teaching courses intensively for two weeks (total immersion); forming cohort groups; tying service activities to significant program objectives; connecting undergraduate students with mentors in the field; have freshman level music education students do a two-week immersion in classrooms where they work intensively with students and teachers; have sophomore level students design their own project they want to do in schools with teachers/children that will inform their sense of direction and competence in music education; change scheduling to allow classes to address interdisciplinary themes.

6. Mini-courses? Shorter times, total immersion. Re-thinking class meeting times; restructure according to the more valuable learning situations – e.g.: time w/ teachers in field.

7. Reduce # of courses by examining overlap & commonalities in courses.

Reduce the number of courses by sharing syllabi and examining overlap and commonalities. Be willing to let go. Rethink course categories such as dividing the content of music theory and placing it in other courses such as piano class (harmonization and composition); history (form and style analysis); ensembles (aural skills and sight-reading); studio instruction (improvisation). Theory teachers could be responsible for teaching some of this and oversee the integration of these key ideas and understandings. Do similar kinds of thinking with content in the rest of the music curriculum, including music education.

8. Change scheduling to allow for classes to address common theme material.

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Important URLs

Jame Noxon Model <http://php.indiana.edu/~jnoxon/pjmodel.htm>

Important Models

CMP

MMCP

University of Minnesota (Dean Jeffrey Kimpton)

James Madison University

Eastman School of Music

Mary Goetze's IVE model (Indiana University)