

SPECIAL CURRICULUM DESIGN SEMINAR

*Curriculum Design Part 4: Curricular Models, Pedagogical Approaches, and Content -**Part 4 of a four-part series on Curriculum & Assessment for Music Education**by Patrick M. Jones***Introduction**

Welcome to the culminating article in our four-part series on curriculum design. This article discusses curriculum models, pedagogical approaches, and content for k12 school music. This is by no means a simple task. There is confusion and debate as to what curriculum is. To some it is a predetermined linear plan of narrowly defined “elements” and verbal concepts while to others it includes all the experiences students have at school.¹

A more comprehensive understanding of curriculum is that there are actually several curricula operating simultaneously at any given time. Some of them include the “formal” written curriculum, which is what schools claim teachers instruct and students learn; the “instructed” curriculum, which is what teachers actually instruct; the “learned” curriculum, which is what each individual student learns as a result of instruction; and the “hidden” curriculum, which includes unspoken values and biases students bring with them and experience at school, social-psychological interactions among students and teachers, and other things students experience at school from which they learn and become socialized.²

When some people discuss curriculum, they mean the formal written document. This is often

what school administrators mean when they use the term. Others, particularly music teachers, use it to mean their instructed curriculum. While each group is accurately identifying one aspect of curriculum, neither of them is expressing curriculum from the students’ perspective, nor are they articulating the complex and dynamic undertaking curriculum actually is. If we are to improve schools, then it is incumbent

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that many people simply accept them as how curriculum is supposed to be and don’t realize there are other approaches. Nor do most people question the efficacy of technical-scientific approaches for meeting the needs of students in general and the goals of music education in particular. Most of us were probably taught by teachers employing technical-scientific approaches, learned to organize lesson plans that way in college, and have worked with administrators who only know such approaches. Therefore, most of us also know them as the only way to conceptualize curriculum. However, very

few music teachers, especially ensemble conductors, follow these models because they are inherently unmusical. Therefore, we need to understand

the theoretical bases of them so we can articulate their implicit values and undesirable effects in order to advocate for more musically sound approaches to curriculum.

Technical-Scientific

According to Ornstein and Hunkins, the roots of technical-scientific approaches are found in the turn of the Twentieth Century when schools attempted to “adapt the principles of bureaucracy to methods that could be considered scientific.”⁴ These approaches are mechanistic and view knowledge as something that can be broken down into parts, ordered sequentially, and taught “scientifically”. Students are then systematically tested to determine which specific parts were learned and which need to be readdressed.

“Content is the locus and substance of educational and musical interactions and learning.”

upon all of us engaged in education to expand our understandings of curriculum to more accurately reflect its comprehensive nature. This will enable us to effectively communicate with each other and facilitate optimal learning experiences for the students we are entrusted to serve. To do so, we must understand approaches to curriculum design and implications they hold for music education.

Approaches to Curriculum Design

There are several approaches to curriculum design currently used in US schools. Ornstein and Hunkins categorize them as either technical-scientific or nontechnical-nonscientific.³ Technical-Scientific models are so ubiquitous

Technical-Scientific approaches to curriculum design are consistent with the essentialist philosophy of education⁵ and “back to basics” movements such as that advocated by E.D. Hirsch.⁶ They focus on content recall and efficiency instead of the needs and interests of students. As such, they have been criticized as being dehumanizing. Paulo Freire, a noted Brazilian philosopher, coined the term “banking model” to illustrate how such approaches dehumanize students. He illustrated how students are turned into “containers” or “receptacles” to be filled by the teacher as “education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor.”⁷ The student’s role is to receive, file, and store deposits. Freire provides the following descriptors of a classroom in which the banking model is used:

- a. the teacher teaches and the students are taught;
- b. the teacher knows everything and the students know nothing;
- c. the teacher thinks and the students are thought about;
- d. the teacher talks and the students listen – meekly;
- e. the teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined;
- f. the teacher chooses and enforces his choice, and the students comply;
- g. the teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher;
- h. the teacher chooses the program content, and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it;
- i. the teacher confuses authority of knowledge with his or her own professional authority, which she and he sets in opposition to the freedom of the students;

j. the teacher is the Subject of the learning process, while the pupils are mere objects.⁸

The most influential technical-scientific approach in US schools was developed by Ralph Tyler and published in his book *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* in 1949. Tyler’s procedure for curriculum design has dominated education in the USA since the 1950s. It is based on a four-step linear process where teachers 1) develop objectives, 2) select learning activities, 3) organize learning activities, and 4) develop means of evaluation.⁹

A refinement of the Tyler model was the *Structure of Disciplines* approach, which grew out of the Woods Hole Conference of 1959. In this approach, subject matter experts outside of the school environment determine what should be taught.¹⁰ The content is organized into a sequential spiral based on verbal concepts. The Tyler and *Structure of Disciplines* approaches resulted in supposed “teacher-proof” curricula and basal series that are still used in elementary music classrooms all across the country.¹¹ Jerome Bruner, who was the main advocate of the *Structure of Disciplines* model, later realized the emptiness of technical-scientific approaches.¹² However, they still predominate in K12 schools.

A currently popular model of technical-scientific curriculum design is *Understanding by Design*. Even though it is a private business, it is being propagated by the *Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development*, which is the professional association to which K12 administrators belong. A review of their website reveals it is being advocated with no discussion of the ethical con-

flicts of ASCD supporting a business enterprise, the philosophical paradigm on which it is based, or whether or not it is appropriate for all disciplines.¹³ It incorporates the following three-stage approach:

1. Determine the desired end-point of the course (using aims, goals, and national, state, and local content standards) and narrow content to that essential to achieve it.
2. Develop the assessment tools that will be used.
3. Develop the instructional activities.¹⁴

When applied to music, technical-scientific approaches have resulted in the reduction of music into “elements” and verbal concepts that are then taught out of context and in ways that are ultimately meaningless and useless in the lives of most students. Such reduction and decontextualization is not consistent with the nature of music and the goals of education and music education.

The poor results of such approaches is evidenced by generations of current adults who had years of general music classes in which they named staff lines and spaces, identified various note values, and even sang songs, but who in adult life are incapable of and disinterested in doing any of those things. The lack of relevance to their musical lives made their music classes meaningless and useless. While this is difficult for us music teachers to admit, we need to face reality and reject ineffective approaches if we are to truly serve the musical needs of our students and communities.

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Nontechnical-Nonscientific

Contrary to technical-scientific approaches are nontechnical-nonscientific models of curriculum design that emphasize content with the individual learner, curricular relevance, and context in mind. According to Ornstein and Hunkins, nontechnical-nonscientific approaches reflect the world as a living organism, whereas technical-scientific approaches reflect a vision of the world as a machine.¹⁵ Nontechnical-Nonscientific approaches are consonant with critical pedagogy and humanistic, perennialist, progressive, and reconstructionist theories of education,¹⁶ and praxial philosophies of music education.¹⁷ They are non-linear and child-centered and recognize that students are not interchangeable and do not all learn at the same pace. They situate education within the context of culture and believe it must take agency, reflection, collaboration, and culture into account.¹⁸

Music education scholars have advocated that such approaches are more appropriately suited to the nature of music and the individualized development of each student's musicianship.¹⁹ There are two well-developed models for music educators to implement. One is the Curriculum-as-Practicum model developed by David Elliott and the other is the Action Learning model developed by Thomas Regelski. Since all I can do is provide a brief overview here, I encourage you to read both authors' books in order to gain a full understanding of their models and how to implement them.

Curriculum as Practicum. David Elliott has outlined a musician-centric model of curriculum known as curriculum-as-practicum in his book *Music Matters: A New*

Philosophy of Music Education. In this model, all music education programs are conceived, organized, and carried out as reflective musical practicums. The music classroom becomes as authentic a musical practice as possible and students are inducted as apprentices into the musical practices studied. Thus, the classroom becomes a jazz band, orchestra, rock band, et cetera, depending on what the class is learning. However, unlike traditional rehearsal approaches where the teacher makes the decisions, the students are the musical problem solvers and decision makers.

According to Elliott "by treating all students (including "general" music students) as apprentice musical practitioners and by teaching all students how to find and solve musical problems in "conversation" with ongoing musical practices, music educators situate students' musical thinking and knowing."²⁰ He advocates that "the quality and development of a learner's musical thinking is something that emerges gradually, [revealing] itself in the intersection of several conditions: (1) the opportunity to make music in the context of (2) an authentic musical situation that, by definition, surrounds the student with (3) musical peers, goals, and standards that serve to guide and support the student's thinking."²¹

Elliott proposes a seven-stage approach to curriculum design as follows. While it may appear similar to technical-scientific approaches, it is qualitatively different in that instead of being focused on acquiring atomistic knowledge extrinsic to the students, locale, and even genre, it is situated within all three:

1. Orientation – Begin by developing critically reasoned perspectives on seven commonplaces and their interrelations:
 - a. Aims
 - b. Knowledge
 - c. Learners
 - d. Teaching-learning process
 - e. Teacher(s)
 - f. Evaluation
 - g. Learning context
2. Preparation and Planning – Apply the conclusions of the orientation stage to the specific circumstances of the school and class.
3. Teaching and Learning – Teachers and students interact.
4. Evaluation – Evaluate teaching and learning in such ways as to improve teaching & learning.²²

Action Learning Curriculum. Thomas Regelski has developed a musicianship approach to curriculum called Action Learning, which he describes as a model of defining and promoting musical "good health" in his book *Teaching General Music in Grades 4-8: A Musicianship Approach*. It is based on Action Theory, which gets students "into action" musically to promote their development of "musical independence needed for musicking throughout life."²³

Key to this approach is the value of the musical actions to the individual student. Instead of doing activities simply because they are fun or required, the goal is to get students to have their own musical intentions that they want to achieve because doing so will directly improve their ability to make music outside of school. Thus, students see a direct relationship between school music instruction and their real-world musicking. Action Learning curricula involve students in real musical praxes similar to the approach employed

by Elliot, but Regelski emphasizes that they be meaningful for students' use outside of school and in the future.

The Action Learning curriculum focuses on students attaining three Action Ideals, which are written by teachers into their curriculum guide and with detailed content listed in a curriculum grid. The action ideals are:

1. General Praxial Ideal – Personal relevance of active musical involvement outside of and after graduation from school.
2. General Musicianship Ideal – Musicianship skills and knowledge minimally needed to be musically independent in one or more of the real-life forms of musicking identified in the Praxial Ideal.
3. Attitude Ideal – That students will want to continue to apply musical learning and skills in life outside of school.²⁴

Whereas both Elliott and Regelski are concerned with students developing independent musicianship, Elliott focuses on the criteria of specific musical practices and Regelski emphasizes students' desire for real-world application. Although Elliott's model appears to be geared toward secondary ensembles and Regelski's is labeled as intended for middle school general music, both approaches are equally applicable to K12 music in all settings. As similar as they are, there are qualitative differences between them and between them and technical-scientific models. For example, a student might be given a composition assignment that looks very similar in each type of classroom, but the intentions and results for lifewide and life-long musicking are vastly different as follows:

Technical-Scientific. A student is assigned to write a composition for music class. The teacher assigns specific parameters that the class is learning. The composition is graded based on its meeting those parameters. The composition is perhaps performed once in the class, but has no other purpose for existence. It is simply a class assignment.

Curriculum-as-Practicum. A student is assigned to write a composition for music class. The teacher assigns specific parameters that the class is learning in their performance studies of a specific genre. The student writes the composition for the class, which is an ensemble. The student rehearses, conducts, and perhaps records the composition with the class. The composition is performed on the class' upcoming concert. The composition is graded based on its meeting the parameters and the student is perhaps also graded on conducting, rehearsing and performing the composition in public performances at school. The composition might never be performed again because the ensemble that performed it is based at school.

Action Learning. A student is assigned to write a composition for music class. The student plays guitar and sings with a small acoustic folk band outside of school. The teacher assigns specific parameters that will help the student improve her songwriting skills and theoretical knowledge. The student writes the composition for her group. The student rehearses, conducts, and perhaps records the composition with her group. The student's group performs the composition at an open microphone night at a local coffee shop and perhaps also at school. The composition is graded based on its meeting the parameters and the student is perhaps also

graded on conducting, rehearsing and performing the composition in public performances both at school and in the community. The composition becomes part of her group's repertoire and has led to other ideas for songs she will compose.

Pedagogical Approaches

Curriculum models organize how content is treated and how teachers and students interact with each other in the macro sense. Pedagogy (didactics + methodology) is how one operationalizes curriculum. One must carefully choose pedagogical approaches that foster each student's independent musicianship for personal musical agency. Models for this are not easy to find in music education. American music educators have traditionally overemphasized methodology at the expense of regarding the ethical implications of teaching and learning.²⁵ There are two approaches, however, that focus on the development of student musicianship in ways that are consonant with the praxial curricular models developed by Elliott and Regelski. One is *Arts PROPEL* and the other is *Critical Pedagogy for Music Education*. Both of them are approaches to education, not specific methods.

Arts PROPEL. The essence of the *Arts PROPEL* approach is that all students fill three interdependent musical roles: producer, perceiver, and reflector (Thus, the acronym PROPEL). This is a complete artistic cycle. A musician produces music, perceives it, reflects on it, and alters her production to improve it. Incorporating the *Arts PROPEL* approach causes teachers to focus on students fulfilling all three roles. This results in students who are aware of musical problems and able to solve them

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as opposed to merely responding to teacher directions.

A central component of *Arts PROPEL* is the domain project. Domain projects are long-term or repeated projects involving issues central to the domain of music. They integrate production, perception, and reflection. They emphasize process as well as product, incorporating revision and experimentation. They provide opportunities for self, peer, teacher, and parental assessment. And they are highly compatible with an apprentice/mentor style of teaching.²⁶

Domain projects can be developed for almost everything one does musically, such as critiquing rehearsals and performances, composing and arranging, and listening and reflecting. It is simply a matter of designing projects that integrate production, perception, and reflection and allow for student growth through self-assessment. Domain projects cut across various music classes and can be implemented in both performing ensemble and classroom settings. Teachers interested in implementing this approach should read Winner's *Arts PROPEL Handbook* listed in the bibliography.

Critical Pedagogy for Music Education. Critical Pedagogy focuses on student empowerment and transformation of society.²⁷ Frank Abrahams has synthesized critical theory, experiential learning, and praxial approaches into a teaching model he calls Critical Pedagogy for Music Education (CPME). Teachers employing CPME strive to empower students by breaking down the barrier between "school music" and the music they listen to and enjoy outside of school.²⁸ This approach challenges and empowers students and teachers

to experience each other's musics and "has the power to liberate students and their teachers from present stereotypes about music and musicians" while improving their musicianship.²⁹ Central to CPME are mutual respect, dialogue, and investigation. Teachers plan instruction to engage musical imagination, musical intellect, musical creativity, and collaborative performances. Teachers interested in incorporating this approach should read Abrahams' various articles listed in the bibliography.

Content

With an understanding of praxial curriculum models and appropriate pedagogical approaches, one can conceive of content in a holistic way instead of as atomistic bits of knowledge, elements, and verbal concepts. Content is the locus and substance of educational and musical interactions and learning. Determining the content of a school's music curriculum is informed by three things: 1) the musical ecology of the community and interests of the students, 2) the purpose of music education as articulated in a comprehensive rationale for music education, and 3) the needs of students and society for success both today and in the future. The following three-step process will help you determine the content.

1. List all musical offerings in the community and musical interests of your school's students uncovered in your musical ethnography from the first article in this series.³⁰
2. List activities, projects, and approaches that will accomplish the purposes of music education as outlined in the rationale you developed from the third article in this series.³¹

3. List other activities, projects, and approaches that will help meet the needs of your students and communities based on an environmental scan. Environmental scans look at the broader community and things such as the economic and social needs of the community. In this case, you will also include the school and/or district strategic plan and goals, cross-curricular concerns, and skills needed for academic and employment success. You can inform your environmental scan by reading previously published articles, some of which are available on the Curriculum Design Seminar portion of the PMEA website at www.pmea.net.³²

Organizing. Organize the content according to the praxial curricular models and the pedagogical approaches discussed above. Select musical practicums, determine action ideals, and develop domain projects and critical pedagogy lessons. Read the appropriate books and articles by Abrahams, Elliott, Regelski, and Winner. Put them on your summer reading list and get started. Bring what you've developed to the curriculum design session at the PMEA Summer Conference in July.

Auditing. Audit the content by using MENC's *National Standards for Music Education*³³ and the *Pennsylvania Academic Standards for the Arts and Humanities*.³⁴ This will insure you are meeting all legal mandates by including the required content and skills. The standards intentionally do not include repertoire and pedagogy. This allows teachers to customize curricula to meet the local needs of students and communities. Items listed in the standards that are not being met need to be addressed in

ways that are relevant to the musical needs of your students and communities. The audit can be presented as a list of standards and how they are addressed in various practicums and domain projects.

Assessing. Develop assessment tools that are appropriate for the type of activity being assessed. While assessment tools will be developed as needed, the curriculum guide should include samples of the types of assessment tools that will be used and descriptions as to the types of musicing and projects they will be used for. A workshop on developing assessment tools will be presented as part of the curriculum design session at the PMEA Summer Conference in July. Please join us.

Curriculum Guide Components. You can organize the content however you prefer.

However, your curriculum guide should include all content listed in Table 1.

Closing

There is no doubt that some readers are still having difficulty imagining curriculum as musical practicums instead of lists of atomistic elements and verbal concepts organized hierarchically or sequentially. This is because we have been trained to expect curriculum to consist of such lists, not because it is more appropriate for, or effective in, developing

musicianship. Instead, we need to engage students as musicians. We need to help them develop musicianship skills they can use in current lifewide as well as lifelong settings. The praxial curricular models and pedagogies outlined in this article, and the curriculum design approach offered in this series of articles and workshops, are designed precisely to do that. This isn't the easiest or most comfortable way to teach music. It will challenge you to stretch your

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<p>Table 1. Curriculum Guide Components</p> <p>I. Rationale for Music Education II. Historical overview of Music in US schools III. Demographics and Musical Ethnography of the School Community A. Demographics of the Community B. Musical Ethnography of the Community & Student Interests IV. Environmental Scan A. School/District strategic plan/goals B. Cross-curricular concerns C. Skills needed for academic and employment success V. Curriculum Content A. Musical Practicums B. Action Ideals for Each Practicum C. Sample Domain Projects D. Sample Critical Pedagogy Lesson Plans VI. National and State Standards Audit VII. Sample Assessment/Evaluation Strategies & Tools VIII. Bibliography</p>

musicianship past your present comfort level. It will cause you to learn new genres and approaches to musicing. And it will force you to grapple with the messiness of creativity, uncertainty, and risk. However, it will result in your music program being unique, vibrant, and relevant to your students and community. And, most importantly, it will improve the lives of the students you see every day.

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End Notes

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