

## **Goal Setting in Music Education Methods Courses: A National Survey**

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Goals and goal-setting are important to planning, assessment, and reflection in teaching. Within music education, the role of reflection in music teaching and music teacher preparation has been examined in many studies over time (e.g., Barry 1996; Conkling 2003; Reynolds & Beitler 2007; Schmidt, 2010). Goals have been identified as an important part of the reflective process (Kolb, 2014), and pre-service teachers are often asked to establish goals for their teaching development, their instruction and their students' learning. Case study research has revealed that students find value in setting goals and understand the goal-setting process, but maintaining goals through early teaching experiences can be challenging (Thornton & Gossett, 2015; Thornton & Weimer, 2015).

The purpose of the present investigation was to gain greater understanding of how goals and goal-setting are used in music teacher education courses. A random sample of music teacher educators from NASM-accredited schools of music across the United States was surveyed for this investigation. The 48 completed participant responses (30% return rate) revealed a gender-balanced sample (53% male) and a somewhat reasonably representative geographic sample.

Respondents were generally positive about their students' goal-setting. Most believe their students are typically "good" (but not "excellent") at setting teaching goals, and are better at setting short-term, rather than long-term, goals. A majority (52%) of participants reported they consider teaching experiences as the most influential experience in their students' goal-setting, followed distantly by teacher feedback (17%), and personal reflection (10%).

In sharing the role of goal-setting in their courses, most participants indicated discussing goal-setting throughout the semester, both formally and informally, and in both verbal and written exchanges.

Further, respondents provided a variety of strategies they consider effective in developing goal-setting, including teaching/field experiences, reflection, backward design, models/samples, and individualized attention or communication about goals. These and other results may help music teacher educators provide effective goal-setting instruction and opportunities in their own classrooms.

- For mentoring a pre-service or novice teacher, it is helpful to know that they seem fairly adept at setting goals, but it is helpful to provide guidance and suggestions for selecting goals.
- Pre-service teachers are not particular good at persisting with their goals, as they often change with teaching experience
- In practice, it may be better to have students become comfortable with reflection prior to working on goal-setting, and let the goals emerge from their reflection, rather than having reflection driven by less meaningful goals.

## References

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