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A Mixed-Methods Examination of Expert Band Directors Rehearsal Pedagogy

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to observe, analyze, and describe the rehearsal methods, procedures, and approaches of expert middle and high school band directors. Experts were defined as middle and high school band directors who have had ensembles perform at the annual Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic. Participants ($N = 15$) were interviewed, completed an online survey ($n = 10$), and were observed through video conferencing ($n = 3$). An inter-method design was used.

Analysis revealed the core purpose of these experts' rehearsal pedagogy was the development of each students' instrument-specific and age-appropriate characteristic sound. Four components contribute to their decision-making in context-specific ways when planning for and leading a rehearsal: 1) listening, 2) fundamentals, 3) literature, and 4) teacher interaction. Data consistently supported the importance each participant placed on the students' ability to produce a characteristic sound. This singular goal guided all of the participants' pedagogical choices and influenced their short and long-term rehearsal planning.

These participants utilize listening, both their own and their students', throughout rehearsal to aid in teaching many different concepts. They dedicate a consistent and significant amount of rehearsal time to developing the students' fundamental musical skills. They apply specific criteria to select high quality and appropriately challenging literature for their students. They place a strong emphasis having on meaningful classroom interactions to hold students to high standards and maintain a positive classroom environment. A pursuit of these concepts toward the development of students' characteristic sound drives expert band directors' pedagogical choices within and outside of the classroom.

While the rehearsal methods, procedures, and approaches of these experts did not significantly differ from related literature, their ability to draw on a vast storehouse of pedagogical and musical knowledge while responding extemporaneously has enabled them to create nationally recognized bands. A set of recommendations for improving band pedagogy is provided for in-service music educators and music teacher educators.

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Application to Teaching

Main Idea

The expert band director focuses on developing an age-appropriate and instrument specific characteristic sound. To do this he/she excels at:

- Developing students' listening skills
- Reinforcing students' fundamental skills
- Selecting appropriate literature
- Sustaining constructive student-teacher relationships

Suggestions for Implementation (Middle School & High School Teachers)

- Continue to perform on one's own primary instrument
- Play and perform on secondary instruments
- Create a library of recordings of chamber ensembles, soloists, large ensembles
- Network with colleagues
- Be intentional about the planning and sustained focus on student fundamentals
- Maintain unwavering high standards for your students
- Connect with your students in a way that is meaningful

Suggestions for Implementation (Music Teacher Educators)

- Create and provide opportunities for ensemble teaching (chamber or large)
- Develop lab band or literature repertory groups for performance on secondary instruments
- Connect pre-service teachers with practicing educators