An Assessment of the Perceptions of In-Service Music Teachers on the Efficacy of Critical Pedagogy as a Theoretical Framework to Prepare Music Teachers for Public Schools in the United States: A Case Study

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Abstract

Basis of Research Study

Westminster Choir College's Music Education department uses Critical Pedagogy as a theoretical framework for their education classes. The Critical Pedagogy philosophies and theories are implemented in all four years of student's coursework and students must understand and be able to use Critical Pedagogy strategies in the classroom to succeed. As students in this program, the researchers found it important to see if Critical Pedagogy is in fact a valid framework once in a classroom.

Critical Pedagogy is "a concept of education by Paulo Friere educational movement, guided by passion and principle, to help students develop consciousness of freedom, recognize authoritarian tendencies, and connect knowledge to power and the ability to take constructive action (G iroux, 2010). Frank Abrahams applied Critical Pedagogy to how it could be used in a music education classroom (Abrahams, 2007). CPME (critical pedagogy for music education is a theoretical framework that focuses on the students being musicians rather then teacher telling them how (Abrahams, 2007). One of the fundamental ideas behind CPME is that the students bring their own experiences with music into the classroom. Bringing in music that is on the students iPods makes music class relevant and important to their lives rather than reading through a music history textbook

This research study will examine views from teachers in public schools that had graduated from Westminster's Music Education program in prior years on how effective they felt their study of Critical Pedagogy was in their classroom and teaching experiences. If positive feedback results from this study, the researchers will successfully have validated Critical Pedagogy as a theoretical framework. If negative results occur, the researchers will question if Critical Pedagogy is a valid theory and philosophy for Westminster Choir College to be teaching their students trying to prepare for teaching in schools.

Research Questions

The researchers created two focusing questions that became the foundation of the project. All of the steps taken, described below, that proceed during the case study were derived from these questions.

1. In what ways do music educators benefit from an understanding of Critical Pedagogy?
2. In what ways do music educators use Critical Pedagogy to inform their teaching?
 The following questions were created by the researchers to ask the teachers in the case study. Each of the below questions corresponds to the focusing questions or were used as background information.
1. What are the demographics of your school?
2. Is this program where you want it to be?
3. What are you working towards in your program now?

4. Describe your relationship with your principal/administration and how it affects your program
5. How often does a balance of power change in the classroom between teacher and student?
6. What kind of music is played in your classroom?
7. How do your students' musical backgrounds play a role in your classroom?
8. In what ways do the lessons you teach in your classroom affect your students understanding of the music they listen to at home?
9. How has student feedback affected your teaching?
10. What extra musical learning takes place in your classroom?

Significance of the Study

The Significance of this study was to examine how public school teachers in their music classrooms use Critical Pedagogy, as a theoretical framework. As students studying Critical Pedagogy, the researchers found it important to conduct a case study to find out from current public school teachers how their understanding and former study of critical pedagogy helps them in their classrooms. If the data from the teacher's interviews come back positive, the researchers will see how Critical Pedagogy can be useful in a class. If the teachers interviewed share negative responses to their previous study of Critical Pedagogy, the researchers will question how studying Critical Pedagogy will be useful in their teaching. If this is the case, the researchers should look at other options and come to a conclusion on to what extent Critical Pedagogy can effectively be used to teach music education.

Definition of Terms

Critical Pedagogy for Music Education: CPME is a view of music education that centers on students being musicians. The teaching activities break down the barriers that separate the music students hear in the classroom from the music they prefer in their world outside. When these barriers disappear, students and their teacher are changed. Music learning occurs when they "know that they know." The CPME term for this inner knowing is conscientization (Abrahams,2005).

Authentic Teaching: Authentic teaching is when knowledge permeates the confines of a classroom and can be directly applied to a real life experience. Authentic teaching happens when the barriers between student and teacher dissipate and both student and teacher are considered learners in the same classroom (Abrahams, 2007).

Banking Methodology: Is a method of teaching where the teacher lectures information to the students without any exploration or actual learning by the students. The "banking methodology" works for short term memorization of knowledge that will quickly be lost and forgotten after the exam, but cannot replace authentic learning in its ability to affect change in the student (Freire, 2000).

Connectivism: Connectivism is the learning theory that brings education up to the era of advanced technology where any information is only a few searches away (Siemens, 2004).

Dialogue: Dialogue is this interaction between student and teacher where both parties are learning and teaching the other (Friere, 2000).

4MAT system: Bernice McCarthy, has identified four main types of learning styles, or four ways that different students enjoy learning. Each learning style is best described by the questions each learning style tends to ask. These questions are as follows: 1-Why? 2-What? 3-How? 4-What If? These four learning styles work together in which she calls the 4MAT system. She explains in depth the characteristics of each student and their motivations for learning, as well as proper ways to assess them and involve them in a classroom (McCarthy, 2000).

Time Line
This study was conducted over the course of three months, starting on Sunday, October 17th, 2010 and ending approximately at the end of the semester on December 20th.

Review of the Literature
The purpose of this section is to review the literature on Critical Pedagogy as a framework to ground music teacher preparation. Four sections comprise the review. They discuss the origins of critical pedagogy as a post-modern perspective on teaching and learning, applications of critical pedagogy in a school setting, critical pedagogy for music education and a conclusion.

Origins of Critical Pedagogy
From early on in childhood, every child is told that they are special. Their uniqueness, the fact that no one else in the world is exactly like them, is what makes them so special. Even though we tell our own children this, we put them into an architectural system of education, one that rewards the student that separates the personal and "professional" life. Through doing such the students are all subjected to a regimen that is designed to turn them into efficient, emotionless learning machines. These school systems do not take into account the difference in student's personal lives, and because of this creates a one way conversation in which teachers plow information into the student's heads for exams (Crysler, 1995).

Critical pedagogy was created from a similar situation. In the middle of the twentieth century in Brazil, only literate men could vote. Freire (2000), an educated man impoverished as a child, looked for a way to fix the critical state the country was in by educating the illiterate, or "the oppressed." Freire understood that not being able to learn was due to any number of reasons. A student looking for scraps of food in the street every night to stay alive is not worried about learning how to read compound words. Through this, he set out to find a more realistic way to teach his countrymen how to read. Determined to find a more efficient method in which to teach, Freire conceived a way that drew upon student's prior life experiences and used them as a catalyst to invoke rapid learning. Critical pedagogy was created on the premise that students must realize their own consciousness before they can advance themselves educationally. Knowing that you know, coined conscientization (Freire, 2000) allows for students to gain perspective on what they still must do to reach their educational goals (Lima, 1995).

A strong pillar on what critical pedagogy is based on is the dissipation between not only the teacher and student, but the student's personal life with their professional and educational one (Crysler, 1995). When the walls between the teacher and the student come down, both students and teachers can learn from each other and advance the whole

of the student population. Through the evaporation of the barriers between personal and educational lives, students can connect to what they are learning in a different light (Lima, 1995). This is called authentic teaching (Abrahams, 2005).

As coined by Abrahams (2005), authentic teaching is when knowledge permeates the confines of a classroom and can be directly applied to a real life experience. Authentic learning happens when the barriers between student and teacher dissipate and both student and teacher are considered learners in the same classroom. This concept rivals the "banking methodology" (Freire, 2000) of teaching, where the teacher deposits information into the students, and the students have to withdraw that information for the assessments. The "banking methodology" works for short term memorization of knowledge that will quickly be lost and forgotten after the exam, but cannot replace authentic teaching in its ability to affect change in the student (Freire, 2000).

Finally, critical pedagogy emphasizes a transformation in the student (Crysler, 1995). The student, with the knowledge received in the classroom, applies the lesson learned to their life. Through this authentic application, students maintain the knowledge taught in the classroom because it directly affects their lives in some way (Abrahams, 2007).

Applications of Critical Pedagogy in a Classroom

Critical pedagogy uses previous life experiences to fuel educational advances in what is being learned in the classroom (Freire, 2000). Students are encouraged to apply their everyday lives to the subject material they are learning in class (Wink, 2005). In doing this, students connect to the material at a much deeper level, meaning they will maintain the knowledge past the exam (Wink, 2005). Through using the ideas of differentiated instruction (Hall, Strangman, & Meyer, 2003) , students are taught in multiple facets in which takes into account their race, gender, social class, age, maturity, and sexual orientation (Crysler, 1995).

Seeing as every student a teacher comes in contact has a very different story, it is extremely likely that the teacher will encounter a student with more experience in certain aspects of music than the teacher. This mix of student-teacher interaction allows for a great amount of dialog to happen between the students and teacher. Dialog is this interaction between student and teacher where both parties are learning and teaching the other (Abrahams & Head, 2005). Through this connection and understanding that each party brings valuable data and information into the conversation, authentic learning can happen.

Teachers who embrace a critical pedagogy perspective create, in their classrooms, an environment where no one is afraid to answer a question incorrectly. Such an environment will feel odd to enter at first, as the role of teacher is passed around between students and teacher alike. This setting does not inhibit learning by placing students into confinements of what they don't know. These communities instead will celebrate what they do know, and their thirst for more knowledge. These teachers, however, do not only implement critical pedagogy in their arsenal, but rather some other techniques that augment and aid critical pedagogy.

Possibly one of the most important concepts of critical pedagogy is the attention to each student's background and how to connect the lesson to their previous experiences. McCarthy (2000) has identified four main types of learning styles, or four ways that different students enjoy learning. Based on a fundamental question the student will ask when learning, the four types are why, what, how, and what if? These four learning styles

work together in which she calls the 4MAT system. She explains in depth the characteristics of each student and their motivations for learning, as well as proper ways to assess them and involve them in a classroom (McCarthy, 2000).

With the 4MAT system in place, teachers can understand scientifically the different uses of the sides of the brain and create a lesson plan appropriately (McCarthy, 2000). These lesson plans will include everyone and allow for every student to feel they are learning the way they like to learn (McCarthy, 2000). Student use the connectivism theory (Siemens, 2004) to understand parts of the lesson they are not as familiar or comfortable with, and help transfer the data to the other students when they understand the lesson better.

Connectivism is the learning theory that brings education up to the era of advanced technology where any information is only a few searches away (Siemens, 2004). This concept displaces the teacher from the traditional role and places them in a position of creating interest. From the interest created by the teacher, students are encouraged to learn as much as they can about the subject using technology and peers. Hubs are quickly created between students and knowledge is transferred accordingly. Because of this theory, any classroom using it places students who have similar interests in control of what they learn.

With the implementation of connectivism, the classroom teacher can take students past conscientization and allow for a more broad education (Siemens, 2004). With the vast amount of technology today, including phones that have the same functionality of most computers, teachers can assume a different role in the classroom (Siemens, 2004). By sparking interest in a subject and lying out different ways a student can approach a project through research, as well as creating an inviting assignment that induces creativity in all four types of learning styles, the student will have a will to learn (McCarthy, 2000). The classroom then becomes more than just a place to transfer information, instead it becomes a place where real life connections are made (Siemens, 2004).

Critical Pedagogy for Music Education

Critical pedagogy for music education, or CPME for short, focuses on connecting the student's musical life inside the classroom to the student's musical life outside of it (Abrahams, 2005). Through establishing this bond, teachers are teaching authentic material, rather than information that will quickly perish after the exam (Freire, 2000). Music teachers applying critical pedagogy in a classroom could possibly draw upon the works of Mozart and relate them to modern pop superstar, Lady Gaga (Abrahams, 2007). Information learned in this way becomes pertinent to the student's life and transforms them and their musical life (Abrahams, 2007).

"When observing critical pedagogy in the music classroom, it is common to see children playing classroom instruments, using hand signs, moving, or reacting in some physical way to the sounds they hear" (Abrahams, 2007). Students are asked to be more involved in music than just listening, advancing critical listening in a painless manner. Having students interact with the music physically puts the concepts being taught into physical memory, allowing information to be retained for a longer period of time.

Interestingly, in adult populations physical activity effects on cognition have been found to exhibit a disproportionately larger benefit to tasks or task components requiring extensive amounts of cognitive control [a term used to describe a subset of goal-directed, self regulatory operations involved in the selection, scheduling, and coordination of

computational processes underlying perception, memory, and action] and, with corroborating evidence from imaging studies indicating selective increases in gray and white matter volume in the prefrontal, temporal, and parietal cortices suggesting that these regions are particularly susceptible to intervention. Further, selective changes in the P3 component to an inhibitory control task following acute exercise suggest that single bouts of exercise may increase attentional resource allocation and improve cognitive processing speed in adults. To date, no such relationship has been established in the literature in preadolescent populations; thus the extension of the findings within adult populations to children is speculative. However, given the protracted development of— and the observed physical activity benefits to—the neural network underlying attentional inhibition, an acute exercise effect on inhibitory control would be expected (C.H. Hillman, 2009).

Through building these critical listening skills students can connect with music more personally without the prompting of a teacher in future years (Siemens, 2004).

With these critical listening skills learned in the music education classroom, students become amateur music critics and music teachers in their own way (Lebler, 2007). Students apply these skills and their prior knowledge of music outside of the classroom to analyze music in a more sophisticated way to express more about the music. This dialog between the students and teacher allows for more in depth conversations about the possible intentions, themes, interesting chords, and directions of the piece of music (Abrahams & Head, 2005). Even a conversation of whether the piece is in major or minor can provide an interesting insight to students that can be drawn upon in the future as a past experience to apply to music being listened to (Freire, 2000)

Conclusion

Critical pedagogy removes the barrier between students and teacher and creates an open environment where everyone can learn something from another (Wink, 2005). This environment favors past experiences to fuel learning and making connections in the classroom (Crysler, 1995). In the music education classroom, critical pedagogy blends together the music learned in the music classroom along with the music listened to in real life. Through this mix, students are transformed to make critical connections with the music they are listening to on a regular basis (Abrahams, 2005). These connections can be large or small, varying from recognizing major or minor tonality, the unique instrumentation, the vocal color added to the piece, or the basic form of the work. These individual connections to music, however, empower the student that they are truly a musician (Abrahams, 2007).

Methodology

This research study was a collaborative effort that included four student researchers and three research participants who were all in-service music educators. A senior faculty member at the university, who was in charge of the overall investigation, also oversaw all of the research team's activities. In order to approach the study effectively with a group perspective, the research team referenced an article from the periodical Research Studies in Music Education (Bresler, Wasser, Hertzog, Lemons, 1996) provided the team with the means to pursue a qualitative research study in a team setting. The different perspectives, outlooks, insights, and interpretations from the team members in discussing the research data allowed us to check for and address issues of validity.

Research Protocol

In the late fall of 2010, the research team, overseen by Dr. Frank Abrahams, contacted and invited 3 in-service music educators to act as research participants in a study that investigated the efficacy of critical pedagogy as a framework to prepare music educators for public schooling in the United States. All three of the research participants were either affiliated with or were alumni of the college and had experience with the framework in question (the framework being critical pedagogy). All three of the research participants had around the same amount of teaching experience in the field. The team initially invited thirteen in-service music educators, five enrolled members of the university who had already had experience in the field through student teaching, and had hoped to invite seven faculty members who were familiar with the framework in question and had similar teaching practices. However, it was soon realized that having a group of research participants that big would be too disorderly and large to effectively handle. It was found that some of the in-service music educators did not meet the exact requirements/specifications the team was looking for in the study. It was also decided that the university students, all whom had taken student teaching, did not have enough experience within the field to give accurate data for the study. It was felt that the faculty members, although very experienced within the field, would have presented a slightly biased response because almost all have had an experience in utilizing/teaching critical pedagogy at the university. Also, we felt that, although knowledgeable and extremely supportive of critical pedagogy, the data we would have received would not reflect an in-service teacher in the public school setting, which was the focus of this study. Two of the in-service educators used male, and the other was female. There were multiple other female in-service teachers, faculty members, and university students that were originally asked. Different circumstances took place within the research team. The team was comprised of three male and one female members of the university. Each member of the team took on a different responsibility in writing up the study: the introduction/abstract/conclusion, the literature review, the methodology, and the study findings/connections and analysis of findings. The formation of questions, selection of research participants, and deliverance of study questioning material was undertaken by all four team members as a group.

The group originally met with the larger Assessing in Music Learning class, which Dr. Frank Abrahams ran, in the fall of 2010 in one of the academic classrooms on the university. Dr. Abrahams discussed the goals of the project with the team, discussed deadlines, and also Institutional Research Board (IRB) issues (the requirement of consent forms for each participant, etc.). Since we all had a developed understanding of critical pedagogy, time was spent briefly describing music-didaktik and what our role would be in the project. We met a few weeks later and discussed the actual questions that would be asked in the study. As we did not want to ask the three critical questions directly, we decided in creating questions that would result in answers that aligned with our three guiding critical queries. We decided in breaking down each critical query into a series of questions which were aligned with the 5 tenets of critical pedagogy. Who to contact as potential research participants was also addressed. We decided on thirteen in-service music educators, seven campus faculty members, and five university students with teaching experience would be our research participants. We decided on faculty members that have either taught critical pedagogy, worked in the music education department, or have used critical pedagogy in rehearsal before. We also decided that the university

students should be selected from the BM/MAT (Bachelor in Music/Master in Arts and Teaching) program offered on campus. This was thought because a lot of high quality music educators have arisen from this program. The in-service music educators were selected from recommendation, observing the individual in a summer secondary praxis course, and also from working with the individuals in a classroom setting. Only the research team was present in the meeting. However, at the next meeting with the supervisor, which was over Skype and Webex online seminar, it was found that our questions needed to be reformatted to be aligned with the title/object of the study, which was the efficacy of critical pedagogy as a framework to prepare music educators for public schools in the United States. It was also decided at this time that the original number of research participants we wanted to involve was too great, and we arrived to the current number of three research participants. As a team, we decided that an electronic/audio interview would be the best way to gather our data. The participants would be sent the study questions through electronic mail. The participants would then respond back either using electronic mail or through an audio program, such as Audacity. We stressed using an audio program, because the team felt that there would not be as many meaningful and truthful responses if it was written down. We all agreed to give the in-service music educators two weeks from the time they received the study to complete it and return their results back to us. Once the research team's supervisor sent out a consent form, the team reviewed it to see if any changes were necessary, albeit there were none, and attached it to each study sent out.

All feedback for the study would be provided in either digital or audio form. Once received, members of the research team examined the e-mails and in the case of audio files, transcribed the data. Since we already knew the focusing questions we were trying to answer, which all related to the efficacy of critical pedagogy as a framework to prepare music educators for public schools in the United States, we applied both selective coded and open coded methods to analyze and categorize the data. The research team member in charge of that analyzing the data created categories that aligned with the focusing questions. Also, certain study questions were already aligned with the research focusing questions, allowing the researchers to focus in and pursue that specific idea all the way through (selective coding).

Triangulation and member checks were the methods used to validate the study. Similar thoughts, responses, and comments were found between research participants and recorded. This provided the triangulation in the study. At the end of the study, the draft was sent out to the research participants, fellow research team members, and the overseer of the study to confirm the accuracy of its contents. The research team made any necessary changes that were brought up.

Study Findings and Analysis of Data

District A High School has a high school population around 3,600 students. The school is obviously large with 400 students in choir. There are three choir teachers. Research Participant A says the benefit of this is that the decisions are made by at least two people at all times. This shows a democratic system of checks and balances that is that is consistent with suggested concepts in writings of John Dewy (1916). Research Participant A also mentions the fact that there are 400 students participating in the choral program.

The total population of the B School district which hovers currently around 2,300. In the High School within district B there are about 700 students. 100% of the student population speaks English as a first language. 95.7% of the district B High School students graduated by passing the New Jersey High School Proficiency Assessment, compared to an 80.9% state average. Attendance rate in 2008-2009 was 97.7% with a 0% drop-out rate.

The interviewees from both districts mentioned the race population and describe a much larger concentration of Caucasian students in attendance. While district A is much larger, it is not to say that the success is only where the numbers are. It is clearly stated that the district B high school is doing very well academically and not struggling to keep students in school.

There was a third source contacted, but the source's responses were not useful for the purposes within our study.

Research Participant B says that he does not think that his program will ever be where he wants it to be. This after being explained means that the programs current way should never be viewed as ideal. There should always be a step farther to go in order to improve and expand on learning. As an educator Research Participant B is responsible for the directional progress in between the sessions of study. The between term time for this teacher is spent in reflection upon the year that has past. In this time a list of goals is created. These goals include goals for the students in their choir classes, the goals for himself as a professional, and goals for himself as an individual in a personal regard. Research Participant B believes greatly in keeping things consistent.

The struggle he describes is a common one, "-I have a lot of new freshmen I lose the seniors, so one of the main goals is to keep it consistent every year but, there's always little things like tone quality, sight reading, um, that I got back and reflect upon and work on, uhm, and uhh, try to improve the following year."

Research participant B's belief in never settling and moving forward in relation to a school year's starting point supports a number concepts that align with the teachings of Critical Pedagogy.

He says, "-as far as good teaching is that you never want to become complacent and, uhh boring in what you do or happy with the product all the time. You always want to continue raising the bar and growing and improving both yourself and your program as a whole."

In Critical Pedagogy an pillar concept is something that speaks about a teachers responsibility to find or create a safe and accessible environment for learning. The reach in this case is being aware of the where the students are in their musical development at district B middle. This awareness creates an avenue for effective and more personalized teaching. When instruction is aligned to the way children learn, and both connects to their world and honors it, the likelihood of significant learning is great (Abrahams & Head, 2005). When a teacher takes time and energy to reach into a student's world as an avenue

of teaching he or she is, as a positive result, more vulnerable to learning himself or herself. The mutual learning that takes place in in this situation described by Research Participant B is also consistent with ideas in Critical Pedagogy that encourage the teachers to self reflect so that changes and adjustments can occur for the better.

Research Participant A gives a torn answer to the second question. The response begins, "Yes and no." There are wonderful things that have been happening since. Research Participant A began his time at High School A. The use of solfege is now a consistent practice in all of the choirs, so all 400 students in choir are exposed to the Kodaly way, which has resulted in the overall level of music reading ability throughout the program. Another positive thing that has occurred according to Research Participant A, is the improvement of singing and choral singing through the implementation group vocal technique.

The struggle mentioned by Research Participant A in this area is the difficulty to consistently and simultaneously work toward things within the choirs. The improvement of skills and sounds, Research Participant A suggests, cannot be done by one educator one choir at a time, but must be done in one effort by all three directors and all three ensembles, which does not happen all the time.

Research Participant A has made it so that the 400 person choir works as a unit. This is a wonderful way of doing things, but the individualized and personal element to good teaching described by Crysler (1995), is not present. The school is large. The program is proportionally large in comparison to the district in which Research Participant B is a resident teacher. Teaching large classes and programs with more than one director thinking of what is "best" is a challenging situation to be in.

For question number three Research Participant A did not say much. What was mentioned is the lack of an entry level choir, and how that absence of that course does not allow for a chance to teach beginners the basics like the energy and effort required to perform effectively.

Research Participant B after mentioning the typical things that a choir teacher wishes to accomplish during the early winter months. The Choir concert is two weeks away so Research participant B is fine tuning the foreign languages and other things for the concert.

To Move away from only talking about choir, Research Participant B says,

I'm working with the Tri-M Music Honors Society to increase enrollment in the chorus classes, it is a scheduled class. So, we do have to do a bit of marketing for ourselves, especially to the 8th graders to keep the incoming freshmen coming. So that going to involve going over speaking with the eighth graders, my choirs will perform for them later in the year so we try to get our face there so that the kids know the caliber of the program and hopefully will want to be included in that.

Further motivation, and extra musical motivation, for the music and choir programs includes a trip to Disney. The students in the program see this as a reward for their work and the trip occurs every three years. The trip also serves as a recruiting tool solely to increase numbers.

Critical Pedagogy advocates building community. Research Participant B reports that the choir will be continuing the annual tradition of going with the choir to sing at the tree lighting ceremony at the center of town, which is quite public. The Students in the choir also go to sing at the senior center a few times through the year to fit in another community relations activity.

Lastly, for professional development their Research Participant B mentions their pursuit of a graduate degree in order to improve the overall quality of the teaching in the music classroom to better deliver material in choir, music theory, music appreciation, and other classes.

Just as was discussed in by Abrahams and Head (2005) in Case Studies in Music Education, the relationship one, as an educator, has with the administration and the principal is extremely important (p. 12). The administration does just what the definition says. Manage and direct. The opinion of the administration is valuable and should be kept in the favor of the music program if it is to have success beyond the door of the classroom.

Research participant A states that there is a "Success=Hands off Policy" in place. The success is what gives the administration the comfort to trust the music teachers to make the right choices to teach and do things the way they like in the classroom. What critical pedagogy calls for is a learning process throughout all parties involved. If the people in charge, who in this case have made themselves observers, do not have a connection to what is happening that places value on the events in the classroom, then the relationship leaves room for another expense to be placed before the music program. This can hurt greatly when it comes time for budget cuts and for rehiring or funding applications for materials, instruments, or trips.

Clearly agreeing, Research Participant B says,

having a positive relationship with your administrators gets you very far. It gets you what you need for your program. You don't always have to agree with them, and I certainly don't agree with my administrators, but we are able to see each other in a moment we disagree. We are able to see each others side of the argument and still be respectful to each other and that really goes a long way in just setting the tone for entire year. You have a positive relationship, positive tone, you are helping that program succeed and progress as well (See appendix A).

The question regarding the frequency that which power changed within a classroom between teacher and student resulted in a varied array of results. Research participant A believed that power shifted between teacher and student very rarely, while research

participant B believed that the shifting of power between teacher and student took place constantly. Research participant A found it "very difficult to empower my students in a way that is meaningful. I often find that even when I try to empower my students, I am still really in charge of the situation". Research participant A found that he/she had an easier time shifting power with the more advanced student ensembles: "It is easier with them I believe because they have more experience and therefore more skills". According to Critical Pedagogy for music education, shifting the power between student and teacher is one of the most critical aspects, or tenets, of Critical Pedagogy. This not only empowers the student to learn, it also honors the student's world by taking knowledge they already know and placing value on it when they bring it to the table (Abrahams, 2005).

We see a more active and fruitful application of Critical Pedagogy with research participant B. In his/her choral rehearsal, they have stated that they believe that power shifts between student and teacher "rather frequently". Research participant B "frequently asked the kids to listen to what they are doing and to critique their sound, their own choral sound, to critique their section…" This form of teaching makes the student constantly reevaluate, refocus, and reconsider what is going on around them, while empowering the student to take a more personal stance about the music they are learning because of the self-reflection done (Freire, 2000). It was also discovered that, at least in the case of research participant B, Critical Pedagogy played a critical role in the reflection, post-lesson analysis, and student empowerment that took place in his/her classroom.

Research participant B stated in his/her survey that:

I want them to understand why I am pushing them as hard as I am and I want them to know what that measure wasn't right or why that note wasn't right. Its useless if I am just telling them to do this and this and this, if they don't understand why they should do this and this and this (See appendix A).

This strongly advocates for the efficacy of Critical Pedagogy in the classroom. It shows that the teacher is both willing and does participate in dialogue with the student, and is striving for them to feel a sense of ownership and empowerment in the music they have (Abrahams, 2005).

Research participant B stated:

When they get to make the decisions of what we should rehearse next time, how can we improve that selection, the results are far better they are more personal to them, and much longer lasting, than me being the all-powerful all seeing master that makes all the musical decisions (See appendix A).

This final segment from research participant B's research survey (See appendix A) showed the effects of Critical Pedagogy when applied to the choral classroom. When the students take ownership of the music they are learning, according to these results, the

more likely and willing they are to master the music and make it more personal to them (Abrahams 2007).

The next two questions dealt with what kind of music is played in each classroom as well as how a student's musical background plays a role in the classroom. Because of the close similarity between these two queries, both will be addressed in this section.

Research Participant A revealed that most of the music played in his/her classroom was classical or traditional choral music, although some pop music is addressed. This is the polar opposite from research participant B.

If you walk into my classroom when I have my itunes hooked up it might be a piece of classical choral music, it may be Tao Cruz's "Dynamite", I'm kinda obsessed with that song so that was on a lot this year. It's a little bit of everything. The kids will often ask to play one of their songs." (See appendix A).

Research Participant B goes on to talk about how in certain classes, especially his/her music appreciation class, that he/she tries to avoid music from "the dead white guys". Rather, that class is heavily popular based, including songs of the day that can range from Mumford and Sons to different multi-cultural pieces (See appendix A).

Research Participant B:

I don't want them to think that music is boring and always has to be orchestral and classical and they may consider that boring so I use their music and make that bridge to something else that might be a little bit more appropriate or more curricular"(See appendix A).

There is an interesting difference between these two programs. While one is bent on using music from the outside world as a bridge to connect to curricular materials, the other retains the traditional classical model of musical repertoire. Critical Pedagogy values honoring a students' world, and in this case we can see that the students world are being more honored by the research participant that uses popular music every day in his/her classroom (Abrahams, 2007).

One of the biggest proponents is that the musical lives of students outside of the classroom do/should play a role in the classroom. It was found that research participant B has a significant connection in this. He/she stated in the survey that,

In music theory, if they play a musical instrument they use it in the context of the class to play scales to play intervals to play chords. We try to use what they already know as, instrumental wise, to help them with the course content. In chorus, I have had students who are very good pianists accompany pieces before. Last year, I had a student who arranged a song by Green Day. He was very good at putting together arrangements like that, so with his chorus class I just said it is all yours. I gave him 15-20 minutes of class time every once and a while and they put together really great arrangements. I can't

remember the name of the song I just know that it was a Green Day song. I'll have students who are percussionists who will accompany different chorus things as well. I'd like to think that I start with….you have to start where the kids are and pull them to where you want them to be or where you think they should be (See appendix A).

What this shows is a significant connection between the students musical world outside of the classroom and the classroom itself. Using pianists, percussionists, and instrumentalists outside the classroom in the classroom brings the student's musical world from outside of the school inside. Bringing elements from the student's world into the classroom, and having the students themselves bring what is meaningful to them to the table is one of the foundational elements of Critical Pedagogy (Freire, 2000). One of the greatest benefits to bringing music from outside the classroom inside it that you are bridging the gap between the music of the community and the music of the school. It is evident that in research participant B's situation, this is most definitely the case with the following:

 You have to find out where they are, where they're at, and then use their musical knowledge to help support what you are doing in the classroom and not making it mutually exclusive, that its their music, their tastes, their instrument, playing preferences, and then everything that I do in the classroom, they have to meet, they have to meld, and they have to work together if you really want students to learn something, and grow and become independent musicians (See appendix A).

Research participant A gave a much shorter response, simply stating that: "I respect my students as individual musicians, and I expect them to take ownership for their voices and their musical learning" (See appendix A). However, it is seems evident from the data gathered that there is not as strong of an emphasis on music outside of the classroom or using the students' prior musical backgrounds in the classroom. Critical Pedagogy talks about honoring a child's world and empowering students to own their knowledge (Abrahams, 2007). Although both of these programs want this to happen, it is evident that the program which had more elements affiliated with Critical Pedagogy seemed to be more student-centered, more balanced in terms of power, and more based in the student's world (Abrahams, 2005).

 When asked in what ways the in-service music educator's lessons affected the student's understanding of music outside of school, the data retrieved was quiet astonishing. Research participant A stated that there was a real disconnect between the music in class and at home. He/she goes onto state that he/she lives several musical lives that do not intersect. However, this is the exact opposite for research participant B. He/she states that:

…I am very cognizant of trying to build a bridge and connect their music to my music and a lot of cases it is the same thing, I mean I'm listening to XM's 20 on 20 so we are listening to the same things a lot of the time. There is no reason why you can't teach that. You can still teach all the musical elements of what is in the curriculum in regards to

popular music it always doesn't have to revert back to the boring classical stuff that they could care less about…"(See appendix A).

We see an obvious contradiction between research participant A & B. While A believes that musical lives do not intersect, B is stating that he/she is always trying to connect musical lives and make them intersect. He/she also goes on to state that they listen to the same sort of music that the students are listening too, and that is not bad to teach in schools. Critical Pedagogy values using elements from the child's world. By teacher and student being on the same page, there is much more value added and much more meaningful learning taking place.

Music in the choral environment is also quite different. Since both participants agreed that the students are not listening to traditional choral rep outside of the schools, the genres are much more flexible, ranging from traditional to more popular/fun stuff. Research participant was more specific in saying that specific concerts, such as a May Glee concert, and a more traditional winter concert, makes up their program. It seems that critical pedagogy is not as present in the choral setting as it is in the music appreciation/general music setting, albeit it is still used by both participants with great success.

Student feedback is imperative to checking whether or not students are learning, and learning meaningful things that are applicable to what the students enjoy or encounter. An approach to this is watching and recording the mannerisms of the students to find the information needed to evaluate ones one teaching. Research Participant A describes the main way of getting feedback as seeing how they work during class time. The level of engagement, or concentration, decides whether or not there was a good choice in repertoire or material, and if the lesson is too fast or too slow.

Critical pedagogy advocates that teachers and their students pose and solve problems as a key tenet of instruction. To do this, advocates of critical pedagogy suggest dialogue (cite Freire, 1970 here) where teachers and their students engage in conversations that explore options. Research Participant B describes his student feedback in a number of ways. Participant B says that he students say a lot by asking questions. When they ask they are wondering. When they wonder they are engaged. The conversation that will hopefully stimulate more questions is important to both checking understanding and also to fillng in gaps for the lesson's objectives that may not have occurred. Even past successes can need revision if a new question arises form a student. The dialogue and awareness of what is taught provides development of an eager learning environment, and the development of an arsenal of teaching strategies.

Critical pedagogy for Music Education (CPME) is thought of as a vessel to transmit data from many different avenues into the paths that the children are taking. Sometimes, these avenues are extra musical. As a result of this study, we have found that extra-musical learning can have an effect on greater scales than just the music classroom.

Research participant B stated that he/she does a protest music unit every year. In this unit, not only the music is discussed, but also the social issues behind them: racism, homophobia, women's rights, and abortion rights to name a few.

Critical Pedagogy values a change in perspective (Abrahams, 2007). Discussing extra-musical issues within musical contexts not only promotes a stronger connection to the music, but it also promotes a growth and change in perception by both student and teacher. As research participant A stated; "Most of school is spent using the brain and not much else" (See Appendix). Using this framework, we see that CPME has the potential to make some powerful ripples in the life of the child. Research participant B discusses this by stating:

 You can't just limit yourself to just music if a topic comes up it is discussed in   the room. My kids learn a sense of responsibility, commitment, positive work   ethic, what it means to learn an entire piece of music and how much time   they have to put in and actually do that. I like to think that they are learning   to become good productive members of society. Its only chorus class some will say, but you have to be a positive team member because everyone else is relying on everyone else (See appendix).

Teaching extra-musical lessons, such as commitment, responsibility, and becoming a productive member of society reflects highly in Critical Pedagogy. Not only is this transformative for students, but it is also can broaden views of reality, and potentially change the political context in which the student views a situation or event (Abrahams, 2005). The results of this research study has proven that when engaged in Critical Pedagogy, students are engaged on a multi-faceted level, incorporating many different techniques, and instructors are finding that, when approached correctly, Critical Pedagogy can help foster meaningful learning, transformative lessons, and reflective students.

Appendix A: Questions and Forms

An Assessment of the Perceptions of In-Service Music Teachers on the Efficacy of Critical Pedagogy as a Theoretical Framework to Prepare Music Teachers for Public Schools in the United States: A Case Study

Thank you for taking the time to answer our survey questions.

1) What are the demographics of your school?
2) Is this program where you want it to be?
3) What are you working towards in your program now?
4) Describe your relationship with your principal/administration and how it affects your program?
5) How often does a balance of power change in the classroom between teacher and student?
6) What kind of music is played in your classroom?
7) How do your students' musical backgrounds play a role in your classroom?
8) In what ways do the lessons you teach in your classroom affect your students understanding of the music they listen to at home?
9) How has student feedback affected your teaching?
10) What extra musical learning takes place in your classroom?

CONSENT and AUTHORIZATION TO PARTICIPATE

PARTICIPANT'S NAME
_____DATE_____
_____

TITLE: An Assessment of the Efficacy of Critical Pedagogy as a Theoretical
Framework to Prepare Music
  Teachers for Public Schools in the United States: A Case Study
INVESTIGATORS: Michelle Barker Barkerm@rider.edu
Jacob Ezzo Ezzoj@rider.edu
John Floyd Floydjo@rider.edu
Brian Williams Williamsbr@rider.edu
PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH: This research, conducted as a class assignment for ME
595: Assessing Music Learning, will investigate the efficacy of Critical Pedagogy as a
theoretical foundation to prepare public school music teachers. Findings may benefit any
faculty members charged with the development of a pre-service music teacher
preparation program. This research will also inform practice within the educational
community. Participants in this research are chosen because they have specialized
information of relevance to the study. This project
1. Consists of a participation in an interview that may be conducted through email
correspondence, SKYPE, telephone or face-to-face to assess perceptions of in-service
teachers who studied in a music education department where Critical Pedagogy was the
foundational philosophy. The anticipated benefits include a better understanding of
Critical Pedagogy for Music Education as a best practice to prepare future music teachers
to teach in public schools throughout the United States.
2. There are no experimental manipulations, no deception, and no known risks or
discomforts.
3. Has been approved by Rider University's Institutional Review Board (the governing
body that oversees research activities involving human participants).
4. Should take approximately 15 minutes to complete and you are required to read and
sign this form to participate in this study. You should be aware that even if you agree to
participate, you are free to withdraw at any time.
5. Ensures that all responses are anonymous.

I have read this Consent and Authorization form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I
have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the study. I understand that if I
have any additional questions about my rights as a research participant, I may call the
faculty sponsor of this project, Dr. Frank Abrahams, at (609) 921-7100 ext. 8229, or
email him at abrahams@rider.edu.

I agree to take part in this study as a research participant. By my signature I affirm that I am at least 18 years old and that I have received a copy of this Consent and Authorization form. I understand that there is no financial compensation for my participation. CONSENT: My signature below indicates that I consent to participate in the above named study. I agree to be interviewed and authorize the investigator to record my comments for use in the final document. I further understand that notes and a written transcript will be made of comments to be kept in a confidential file by the researcher until the research is completed, and then destroyed. Audio and video recordings shall also be destroyed at the conclusion of the project. I understand that my participation is voluntary, that my name will not be disclosed, and that I will have the opportunity to review my comments in the final document for the purpose of accuracy. I also understand that I may refuse consent or withdraw my comments from the study at any time prior to the completion of the final document without prejudice or penalty. My signature also indicates that I have had the opportunity to ask any questions regarding the study or the nature of my participation, and that those questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that if I wish further information regarding my rights as a research subject, I may contact Dr. Abrahams at 609-921-7100 ext. 8229.

I have read and understood this consent form and I voluntarily agree to participate in this research project without compensation. This form shall be kept in the researcher's confidential files until completion of the study and then destroyed. I understand that I will be given a copy of the signed consent form.

_____
_____
Signature of the Participant   Date

_____
_____
Signature of the Investigator   Date

Results for Participant A
(Given in document form)
1) What are the demographics of your school?
3,600 students, 90% Caucasian, 5% African American, 5% other.
Economic- about half upper middle class, about half lower middle class.
400 students in choirs. We have three choral directors who work together, so each and every decision is made by at least two people.
2) Is this program where you want it to be?

Yes and no. I have been in my position for 8 years and have been able to implement some of the things I saw lacking when I came. We have finally begun to use solfege in all of the choirs which has resulted in better music reading skills. I have also implemented group vocal technique which has improved the sound of the choirs overall. However, being just one of three people, I find it hard to make big changes. Often the things I want to do (like improving reading, improving choral tone) must involve all of the ensembles and all of the directors working together, which does not always happen.
3) What are you working towards in your program now?

See above. Also, with out "entry-level" choir, I am working with some of them to just get motivated to put in the energy and effort required.

4) Describe your relationship with your principal/administration and how it affects your program.

I have a very good relationship with our administration. Their attitude is that as long as our program is successful they will pretty much leave us alone. They seem to have this relationship with other departments. While we are pretty much free to teach how and what we see fit, our administration knows that we will make the right choices.

5) How often does a balance of power change in the classroom between teacher and student?

Very rarely, actually. I find it very difficult to empower my students in a way that is meaningful. I often find that even when I try to empower my students, I am still really in charge of the situation.

Power can shift for good or for bad- it is obvious when a class is out of control (and therefore actually in control of the situation) and it is obvious when the teacher is in total control.

With our most advanced group I have found it easier to affect a shift in power. It is easier with them I believe because they have more experience and therefore more skills. They are more able to take on the role of teacher while staying focused on the task at hand. I am still trying to decide if this is ok, if empowerment should come with more experience or if power just looks differently with a small advanced ensemble than what it does with a large less-experienced group.

6) What kind of music is played in your classroom?

We sing all sorts of music, though most is "classical" or traditional choral music. We do some pop music. We listen primarily to choral music in order to provide the students with an aural image of what they could sound like.

7) How do your students' musical backgrounds play a role in your classroom?

I respect my students as individual musicians, and I expect them to take ownership for their voices and their musical learning. This includes using their musical background and figuring out how to take themselves to the next level of musicianship.

8) In what ways do the lessons you teach in your classroom affect your students understanding of the music they listen to at home?

I'm not sure it does for most of them. There seems to be a real disconnect between the music we sing in class and the music they sing on their own or listen to at home. I'm not sure this is necessarily an odd occurrence- I have several musical lives that don't really intersect. The music I listen to at home and the music I work on at work are pretty distinct. At the same time, I think some of them pick up on vocal techniques that they can use when singing "their" music, and I think some of them have come to realize the importance of text in relationship to music.

9) How has student feedback affected your teaching?

Student feedback comes in many forms. It comes mainly from seeing how they work during class time. It is obvious when they are engaged in what they are doing. This lets me know I have selected appropriate repertoire and that I am moving at the correct pace.

10) What extra musical learning takes place in your classroom?

Students learn what it is do something with your body, mind, spirit, heart, and voice all at once. Most of school is spent using the brain and not much else.

Results from Participant B

1) What are the demographics of your school? (Written Document, copied from participant's thesis).
RHS is located in a suburban setting in the Northeast region of the United States, centrally located between two large East Coast Cities: New York and Philadelphia. RHS makes up one of the three schools in the R Public School District; one elementary school, one middle school, and one high school, each school feeding into the next level. It is a modest-sized district with approximately 2,300 students enrolled in pre-k through 12th grade, with about 700 of those students attending in the high school. Within this population, 100% of the students learned English as their first spoken language of which 0.3% of them are students with Limited English Proficiency. 12.6% of the student population receives Special Education services and have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). 95.7% of the RHS students graduated by passing the New Jersey High School Proficiency Assessment, compared to an 80.9% state average. Attendance rate in 2008-2009 was 97.7% with a 0% drop-out rate. Current enrollment is 1030 students, with the vast majority being Caucasian.

2) Is this program where you want it to be? (MP3)
Question two. Is my program where I would like it to be? Um, No. I don't think it will ever be really, um, part of what I do at the beginning of every year, is evaluate what happened in last year, what went well, what didn't go well, and put together a list of goals for myself and what I want to improve both personally and professionally and what I want the kids to improve with in each of the chorus classes. Um, the demographics of my classes change every year, I have a lot of new freshmen I lose the seniors, so one of the main goals is to keep it consistent every year but, there's always little things like tone quality, sight reading, um, that I got back and reflect upon and work on, uhm, and uhh, try to improve the following year. So, it'll never get to where I want it to be I guess cuz I'm going to constantly keep reevaluating and wanting to improve and build upon what I already established in previous years. Um, and that just makes kind of good sense I guess as far as, as far as good teaching is that you never want to become complacent and, uhh boring in what you do or happy with the product all the time. You always want to continue raising the bar and growing and improving both yourself and your program as a whole.
3) What are you working towards in your program now? (MP3)

"Well, there are a couple of things. Uhh, in two weeks I have the holiday concert so of course I am preparing the repertoire for that concert, putting the finishing touches on, uhh, teaching the foreign language, all that stuff for the concert. Uhm, stepping outside that for a bit, I'm working with the Trion Music Honors Society to increase enrollment in the chorus classes, it is a scheduled class. So, we do have to do a bit of uhm, marketing for ourselves, especially to the 8th graders to keep the uhh incoming freshmen coming. Uhm, so that going to involve going over speaking with the eighth graders, my choirs will perform for them later in the year, uhm, so we try to get our face there so that the kids know the caliber of the program and hopefully will want to be included in that. Uhh, additionally we have a trip planned to Disney this year we use that as a recruitment tool, and also just a kinda reward for the kids who have been in the program and have worked hard for, we do Disney every three years so, I mean if you stick around you know that is coming its kinda a little bit of a carrot on a stick I guess. It's also a really great time uhm, for the kids. Others things I am working on; community relations, getting the choir out there in the community. Every year we do the uhh, tree lighting ceremony in the center of town uhm which is a very public event, and I go, I take the chorus to the senior center two or three times a year, uhh to perform there for the seniors. Uhh, ya know three concerts a year isn't bad. So those are some of the littler things that I am doing right now, uhh to improve the overall quality of my program. Uhm, additionally I am working on my master's degree and one of the goals in that in addition to getting the degree was to improve my teaching so that it would hopefully improve the overall uhm quality of the ensemble as well, and also the other classes I teach; the music appreciation, music theory uhm, things like that.

4) Describe your relationship with your principal/administration and how it affects your program. (MP3)

4, the relationship with my administrators. Uhm, I am very close to my administrators, they, I consider them to be very supportive of the program at the high school. Uhm, they are aware of what happens in my classroom, out of my classroom. They are able to give financial support with the budgets every year, they realize that money is important to running a music program, especially in purchasing music and new equipment. It makes my job much easier. Without having a good relationship with my administrators I wouldn't feel comfortable going to them to insist upon certain budgetary requirements every year. They know the kind of hours and work I put in and I know that they appreciate that and that makes me feel good about what I do as well, not like I need someone giving me praise or kudos but that's good to have at the end of the day as well. Uhm, I'm aware of some of my colleagues who do not get along as well with their principals and it makes the job far more difficult because you always feel that you are fighting about a battle and its an uphill climb to work with your kids, to schedule time, rehearsals and things like that, so having a positive relationship with your administrators gets you very far. It gets you what you need for your program. You don't always have to agree with them, and I certainly don't agree with my administrators, but we are able to see each other in a moment we disagree. We are able to see each others side of the argument and still be respectful to each other and that really goes a long way in just setting the tone for entire year. You have a positive relationship, positive tone, you are helping that program succeed and progress as well.

5) How often does a balance of power change in the classroom between teacher and student? (MP3)

In the chorus rehearsal, I think it happens rather frequently. I frequently ask the kids to listen to what they are doing and to critique their sound, their own choral sound, to critique their section, uhm, we just did the holiday Bazaar performance, and they critiqued the performance and gave themselves a group grade for that, cuz I want them to understand why I am pushing them as hard as I am and I want them to know what that measure wasn't right or why that note wasn't right. Its useless if I am just telling them to do this and this and this, if they don't understand why they should do this and this and this. So part of that is having them kind have the ears and be a mini-director and listen for the things that I am listening for and they work to improve them. When we are running pieces in class ill frequently have students come up to the front of the room and listen and then critique what is happening. That coming from a kid means a lot more and that carries more weight with the rest of the singers when they hear one of their peers giving them the same kind of feedback whether that be positive or negative in dynamics, tone quality, phrasing, whatever the case is. That also goes into making independent musicians. They need to do things for themselves because they know how to do them, not because, only because I tell them. If they aren't learning anything on their own, what is the real point of doing all of this. In classes like music appreciation, there are units where the student will teach an entire lesson themselves, that also happens in vocal tech class, so I hope that is what you mean by balance of power. You always have to be in charge of your classroom, you are the adult, you are the boss. You need to be very very careful in the balance of power. They are never really in charge and I don't think they every really should be, they certainly need to have a say, in what happens within reason of course. You are not going to say should we not have class today, because of course the high schoolers are going to say no lets sit here and do nothing. There are ways that you can incorporate their opinions, their expertise really of what they already know into your lesson plans and that goes a long way. When the kids realize that they are really active in your plans and how you are putting things together they buy in much quicker they work much harder because they own it more. In a chorus rehearsal, we are working a lot of dynamics and phrasing because that's the finishing touches on all the concert material and I make a recording of it and say alright guys what do you think of your performance here. Should we leave it, are we done with this piece, or do we need to go back and fix things. And when they hear it for themselves and start making those decisions, they work much quicker than if I were to say no the dynamic marking here was incorrect and you missed the cut off here. When they get to make the decisions of what we should rehearse next time, how can we improve that selection, the results are far better they are more personal to them, and much longer lasting, than me being the all powerful all seeing master that makes all the musical decisions.

6) What kind of music is played in your classroom? (MP3)

What kind of music is played in my classroom, uhm, everything. If you walk into my classroom when I have my itunes hooked up it might be a piece of classical choral music, it may be Tao Cruz's "Dynamite", im kinda obsessed with that song so that was on a lot this year. It's a little bit of everything. The kids will often ask to play one of their songs. In music appreciation I use very little music from the dead white guys. (from the European tradition). Its much more popular based. They have a song of the day, where I

am using things like mumford and sons, and different multi-cultural pieces. Uhm, its really and eclectic mix I don't want them to think that music is boring and always has to be orchestral and classical and they may consider that boring so I use their music and make that bridge to something else that might be a little bit more appropriate or more curricular. So really it just depends on the day and what we are listening too. Its all sorts of different styles, all sorts of different genres, all sorts of different time periods, will get played throughout the year in my classroom.

7) How do your students' musical backgrounds play a role in your classroom? (MP3)
"that plays a big role in the classroom. In music theory, if they play a musical instrument they use it in the context of the class to play scales to play intervals to play chords. We try to use what they already know as, instrumental wise, to help them with the course content. In chorus, I have had students who are very good pianists accompany pieces before. Last year, I had a student who arranged a song by Green Day. He was very good at putting together arrangements like that, so with his chorus class I just said it is all yours. I gave him 15-20 minutes of class time every once and a while and they put together really great arrangements. I cant remember the name of the song I just know that it was a Green Day song. Ill have students who are percussionists who will accompany different chorus things as well. Id like to think that I start with….you have to start where the kids are and pull them to where you want them to be or where you think they should be. So, I know the kids can read a little bit, even in chorus, the beginners can read a little bit of treble and bass clef and know a little bit of dynamics. So you start with what they know and you build upon that until they become independent musicians throughout the course of their year or throughout their four years in the program if I am lucky enough to keep them in the program for all 4 years. You have to find out where they are, where they're at, and then use their musical knowledge to help support what you are doing in the classroom and not making it mutually exclusive, that its their music, their tastes, their instrument, playing preferences, and then everything that I do in the classroom, they have to meet, they have to meld, and they have to work together if you really want students to learn something, and grow and become independent musicians

8) In what ways do the lessons you teach in your classroom affect your students understanding of the music they listen to at home? (MP3)
Music appreciation is a great example of this. Everything I teach in this, in regards to timbre, dynamics, style, and other analytical elements, I revert back to the music that they are listening too. I don't see the point in discussing timbre and dynamics and in regards to that classical dead white guy European stuff. They are not interested in that and there's no point in that. If they can talk about the chord progression they are listening too, if they can talk about the tempo the dynamics, the texture, the instruments used, with music they use, then i've don't something, I've made the class useful to them. Im always trying to relate it back to what they listen too at home, not even just what they listen too at home but what they listen too in class be what they listen too in home. For instance the critique lesson, they learn how to write a musical critique. They aren't using my videos my songs, they are going back home and finding their won live performance of a song of their choice. They are picking the material, they are analyzing and critiquing their music and bringing it into class where they get to do it and I incorporate it into the rest of the lesson. So in regards to music appreciation I am very cognizant of trying to build a bridge and connect their music to my music and a lot of cases it is the same thing, I mean Im

listening to XM's 20 on 20 so we are listening to the same things a lot of the time. There is no reason why you cant teach that. You can still teach all the musical elements of what is in the curriculum in regards to popular music it always doesn't have to revert back to the boring classical stuff that they could care less about. Now does that mean I don't touch the boring classical stuff no it gets brought up at some point but I use it to bridge a gap between my music and their music. Choral music is different. They aren't all listening to the traditional choral music. The holiday concert is al holiday music. I have traditional stuff and more fun stuff. The march concert is all serious rep. Ill be doing Vivaldi's Gloria this year Contique by Faure, things like that. In may, we do the Glee concert which is all music from Glee, and thank god they have been doing good music this seasons, so my music is already been picked. And the kids hare a lot a of buy in that and they make a lot of suggestions for the may concert. I spend the first part of the year working on choral blend choral tone all that stuff and at the end of the year its kind of the fun pops stuff where they get to use more popular music in the content of the classroom. So as I said previously, there's a lot of genres happening throughout the year, which is making them musicians I like to think.

9) How has student feedback affected your teaching? (MP3)

Oh, it has a lot. Kids let you know what you do well and what you don't do well. They don't have any qualms about telling you that. You learn so much in a college program about theoretical knowledge and all that other stuff and id say you learn about 1/10th of what you need in college. The rest you learn on the job as you are actually doing it and from your students. The feedback that they have given me has, what id like to think, improved my teaching a lot because i've found new and innovative ways to get material out to them that has bombed, that's been a disaster in previous lessons. Im always trying to pay attention to keep a pulse of what the students are thinking about my delivery and how im teaching what I am teaching. Not necessarily what I am teaching, im stuck by curricular bounds a lot of the time but they'll let you know if they didn't like, ya know, why did you lecture for the whole class period, or what did you do this project. They ask a lot of questions, and through their questions ill ask the same questions to myself, why did I do the lecture like that or that PowerPoint that way, I don't know why I did that project that certain way. If I don't have an answer for it, it means I probably have to go back and rethink re-conceptualize whatever unit or whatever lesson that was so that I can improve it the next time. My music appreciation curriculum, while the same units have been for about four or five years, every time I've taught it its been a little bit different. I've found a way to hone it, make it a little clearer, make it a bit more concise, make it easier to understand and a lot of that comes form what my students have told me, and not necessarily saying Hey, we are critiquing your class Westawski, it's the little things they say before and after class as I am talking to them about the lesson, about the material, you can gleam so much that way, you don't have to give them a formal like you do to your college professors at the end of the semester that's not necessary. You can figure out far more just by talking to them and finding what they did like and what they didn't like. A lot of times if they didn't like it, its not that they didn't like it, its that something in the delivery of it made it not work for them. So you keep your pulse on what your students are thinking, how they are feeling about your class, you certainly improve your lessons, and your teaching strategies in that class.

10) What extra musical learning takes place in your classroom? (MP3)

That happens a lot. There are a lot of tangents that happen in my classroom. Whether it is a current event, I am the co-advisor of the gay straight alliance at school so frequently that comes up a lot in my classroom. We are talking about gay rights issues, things that have happened within the school, in the community, all the suicides, especially the Rutgers suicide, in October, we talked about a lot. When I do my social justice unit in music appreciation…that's not what its called…what the hell is that thing called… yah whatever that thing is, we talk about current events, we talk about social issues as they relate to music. Protest music! We are analyzing the protest songs, but also the issues inherent with protest songs. Whether its racism, homophobia, women's rights, abortion rights, the start of that unit is just huge just talking about social issues. And there are interesting conversations and the arguments can get heated sometimes, but its nice to know that the students get something out of that and that they can talk about that. I like to think that I am teaching my students what it is like to be leaders. I have a section leader in each of my section in the choir classes. They are responsible for running music with tat section and what not and they come to me with questions about well how do I get them to do this, how do I do this, whatever the question in their sectional they are coming for me to help and I help them, its kind of teaching. You can just limit yourself to just music if a topic comes up it is discussed in the room. My kids learn a sense of responsibility, commitment, positive work ethic, what it means to learn an entire piece of music and how much time they have to put in and actually do that. I like to think that they are learning to become good productive members of society. Its only chorus class some will say, but you have to be a positive team member because everyone else is relying on everyone else. There is lots of extra musical things. And I think im doing a poor job explaining this, and if you need anything else, let me know and I will see what I can do.

Appendix B: Reference List

Reference List

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