

Honors Project Proposal

The Basis for a Somatic-Learning Centered Curriculum

I will be completing my honors project between the fall semester of 2017 and the spring semester of 2018. My project is linked to my General Music Methods 1 class in the fall, and my General Music Methods 2 class in the spring, as these classes explore curriculum development and classroom management strategies. This seemed like the best class pairing, because I decided to develop a music curriculum pathway for my honors project.

Modern music education programs often focus on the performance aspect of music because it is the easiest element to assess. However, music is a much more complex field than this implies. Children innately have a tendency to create. Therefore, providing them with musical creation and play-infused experiences teaches them at a more developmentally appropriate level. Furthermore, music is an expressive art, and understanding the emotional qualities within music is something I believe should be integral in music education. A study of the sensory side of music, and the physiological and emotional responses music can produce within the body, leads many educators to believe that music can be used to further students' understanding of themselves as well as the world around them. This feeling-based response to sound is known as somatic learning. Through my research, I will attempt to understand how somatic learning can be intertwined with traditional principles to create a formative and effective music curriculum that encourages creativity and self-expression through music.

My research will begin with scouring the web for existing sources on somatic learning. I will read and analyze various peer-reviewed articles and books in order to better understand

exactly what somatic learning is. I will also research the developmental differences between children and attempt to draw conclusions about what, I believe, is the most developmentally appropriate approach to music education in the various grade levels of elementary school.

Music education occurs within the context of a child's life, and therefore my research should not be limited to music education but will explore overarching concepts of learning and child development as well.

I will branch out my research by interviewing various teachers and observing their classes. I will speak to both elementary school teachers and music teachers about their experiences with children of various grade levels: their needs, their desires, and what they, as teachers, have found both effective and ineffective. I will then begin to infuse existing ideas about music education with the principles of somatic music education. I will interview a set of well-respected music teachers about ways in which they teach musical expression within their classrooms. I will gauge how it is currently represented in music classrooms and assess how central it is to each teacher's curriculum approach. I will also be listening for their ideas about formulating musical learning experiences centered on physiological and emotional responses to music. I am a student, and these are field experts in their craft, after all.

Furthermore, I think it is very important to talk to children of various ages. I will ask them a series of questions which I will predetermine. These questions will be about their musical experiences: what they like, what they don't like, what their favorite songs are and how music makes them feel. Understanding how children relate to music and what experiences they find most meaningful is integral to developing lessons which are thoroughly engaging for children. Additionally, I believe it is important to get an idea about what children currently understand about the expressiveness of music and how they emotionally

relate to it. Every child is different, but I believe speaking with various children will give me at least some child-based context for my project.

With my research in hand, I will construct a set of lesson plans that differentiate the depth of musical instruction based on grade level. These lesson plans will work together to form a coherent, elementary school plan for exploring the somatic qualities of music through composition and listening analysis. I will also type up a curriculum proposal, presenting the developmental and somatic benefits of each lesson plan I construct to complete a comprehensive elementary school curriculum. These lesson plans will form a basis for a somatic learning centered music curriculum. My proposal will further explain and evaluate elements of somatic learning in a musical context and how it can effectively be applied to an elementary school, general music curriculum. Both the cohesive lesson plans and my curriculum proposal. In other words, together my lesson plans and proposal should serve as a basic how-to when considering expressive music curriculum development. I believe that this is essential to a music education program which acknowledges and teaches to the whole child, rather than just the assessable parts. By providing children with opportunities to better understand their emotional and physiological responses to music, and to explore what those responses are, a music teacher allows the children to explore their own identity and get better acquainted with themselves as people and fully development musicians. I will present these ideas in a formal presentation, aided by the use of PowerPoint or a similar program, that demonstrates some of the experiential elements of my curriculum proposal and lesson plans, and overviews somatic learning within the music classroom.

Timeline

Fall Semester:

- Determine honors mentor (Dr. Johnson Green)
- Develop a proposal
- Read the following books as a basis for research:
 - *When Music Goes to School: Perspectives on Learning and Teaching* by Danette Littleton
 - *The Power of Mindful Learning* by Ellen J. Langer
 - *The Scientist and the Crib: What Early Learning Tells Us About the Mind* by Alison Gopnik, Andrew N. Meltzoff, and Patricia K. Kuhl
 - *Arts Awareness: A Fieldbook for Awakening Creative Consciousness in Everyday Life* by Patricia Hoy
 - *The Songs in their Heads Music and its Meaning in Children's Lives* by Patricia Sheehan Campbell
- Read a variety of articles on childhood development, learning, and their application within the classroom
- Research somatic learning and its basic principles
- Research somatic learning in a musical context
- Field Work: Spend at least 20 hours observing children engaged in musical experiences, both in and out of the classroom. Classroom teachers will all be from Lowell Public Schools, due to my presence on campus at this time. Reflect on these experiences and tie in knowledge gained through research to observed behaviors and teaching practices.
- By December: Create at least 10 lesson plans which apply a variety of somatic learning concepts and are developmentally appropriate, based on research and observations. These are a way of practicing using intelligence gained through research and General Music Methods 1 lectures in a lesson plan context and will help prepare me for the creation of my curriculum.

Winter Break: More Field Work

- Observe at least 10 hours of teaching in other districts of Massachusetts.
- Interview at least one well-respected teacher from each grade level in elementary school
- Interview a variety of master music educators on their experiences with different grades levels as well as their methods for teaching and encouraging musical expression
- Interview children about their musical experiences and document their responses.
- Potentially: clear it with the teachers and see if I can talk to some of the students I have observed about their musical experiences. Tying specific children's opinions into the observations I have made will be great for research.

Spring Semester:

- Discuss the process of creating a comprehensive music curriculum plan with Dr. Johnson Green. Identify how many lesson plans to include in this curriculum presentation and strategize a game plan for its completion.
- Compile research and field work into a preliminary set of lesson plans
- Review these lesson plans with Dr. Johnson Green and discuss how to improve them.

- Develop a final set of lesson plans
- Write the curriculum proposal, which breaks down somatic learning in application to a music education classroom and uses the lesson plans as examples for way to implement it. These two works are a pairing while together create my final project.
- Present my project