Questions, Discussions and the Path to Deeper Thinking

Joshua DiStefano

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Teaching

Western Oregon University
2025

Reading Committee:
Marcus Wenzel, Chair
David Sommers

Program Authorized to Offer Degree:
College of Education

MASTER'S DEGREE FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

Completion Term: Spring 2025

Type of exit requirement: Action Research Project

The supervisory committee met with the candidate for a final evaluation in which all aspects of the candidate's program were reviewed. The committee's assessment and recommendations are:

Recommendations:

- ✓ Degree should be awarded

Recommendations:

- ✓ Exit Requirement has been approved

Western Oregon UNIVERSITY

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED MEMBERS OF THE GRADUATE FACULTY OF WESTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY HAVE EXAMINED THE ENCLOSED

Action Research Project Title:

Questions, Discussions and the Path to Deeper Thinking

Graduate Student: Josh DiStefano

Candidate for the degree of : Master of Arts in Teaching: Initial Licensure

and hereby certify that in our opinion it is worthy of acceptance as partial fulfillment of the requirements of this master's degree.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my wife, Carrie, for bearing the brunt of our family responsibilities while working full time during the past year as I struggled to manage school, student teaching and work. I also must thank my kids for putting up with my stress, grouchiness and limited availability. I would like to thank all my professors at WOU, particularly Dr. Marcus Wenzel and Dr. Kendra Taylor, for their guidance and encouragement. I would also like to thank my two clinical teachers, David Sommers and Erik Osberg - learning from them during the past year was invaluable, and I am extremely grateful for the experience and for their patience with me. This program has been an amazing experience, and my growth as a teacher has been incredible. All that being said, I'm glad it's over.

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Section 1 Personal History.

For many years I believed I had the typical all-American childhood. I was just another kid from "the Valley," bumbling my way through adolescence and trying to find my place in the world. White privilege and steady parental income allowed me to experience the myth of normalcy. That being said, I did have challenges that I dealt with. All through school I struggled with math. Although I didn't know it until years later, I have dyslexia. This disability can manifest itself in a variety of ways, but for me, numbers are the worst. I have a hard enough time keeping them in proper sequence, but once you start combining and rearranging them, I'm toast. My inability to grasp these concepts, and the ensuing frustration, led me to believe I just wasn't as smart as the other kids.

Throughout elementary and at the beginning of junior high I was often separated from my peers to go with the remedial students. Sometimes within the class and sometimes to an entirely different classroom. Even though the school identified me as someone who needed assistance, whatever I was getting wasn't enough. Nothing ever made sense. I failed all my tests. I remember sitting at the dining room table night after night cluelessly struggling with math homework. My dad pacing around the table, lecturing me about my poor grades, "Real rocket scientist material, Joshua." I hated it.

By 9th grade, I was no longer being separated for special assistance and was just rolled into general population math with everybody else. It was Algebra 1. Where before I had a basic concept of how, theoretically, the problems should work, now I had nothing. Things just got more and more confusing. Because I had no idea what was happening, I spent most of class talking to friends or staring out the window, praying the teacher wouldn't call on me. Since these grades mattered for college, as a bonus, I now got to waste my summers retaking math in

summer school. The second time around in Algebra 1, I had a great teacher, and things started to make sense briefly. Unfortunately, once geometry started in the fall, it was back to square one. Ms. Shakib, my geometry teacher didn't care for me (or most of the other students) and referred to all of us under-performers as "stupid guy" or "stupid girl". She was constantly threatening to call our parents collect, to explain to them what horrible students we were. Taking geometry again in the summer was no better, and Algebra 2 was just more of the same.

Looking back, the problem with all of my school during adolescence (K-12) was that it was just what Paulo Freire describes as the "banking concept of education" (Freire, 1970, p. 45). I was being forced to memorize what the teachers thought was relevant. This concept of education is a well-worn holdout from the Industrial Revolution that did not allow any room for creativity, and certainly did not encourage me to think. I was simply trying to regurgitate information, and I did it poorly. I enjoyed the stories from history and english, but did poorly in class, as the grades revolved around memorizing dates and grammar. Music offered me the most escape. It was creative and imaginative, but I still wasn't really thinking.

I didn't learn how to think until I got to college. I went to music college, as it was the only subject I really enjoyed all aspects of. That fact that my college didn't offer a single math course was also a large selling point. Even though I loved music school and everything I learned there, the classes I enjoyed most were not music-related. They were health, psychology, and art history. It wasn't the subject matter that got me (although I do like art); it was the professors. They were very knowledgeable and approachable, but they didn't force-feed us information. They asked us questions and facilitated discussions.The teachers simply acted as our guides. I learned more from interacting with the other students than I ever did in high school. Those teachers taught me how to think. Sometimes our discussions would go down rabbit holes; this

was not squashed. Our curiosity was embraced and encouraged. Curiosity is the first step on the path of knowledge. The second step is exploring those curiosities through questions, which leads directly back to the first step.

When I was in school all questions had single answers, students were either right or wrong. I know now that great questions have multiple answers, and sometimes the best answer is another question. In my 36 years as a musician I have learned that music is infinite. Every new milestone leads to more unknowns. I want to share this curiosity with my students. The best way to do that is by asking them essential questions and letting them find their own answers.

For my Action Research Project I want to look further into teaching my students to think. I want to find the best questions to help them think critically about music. If curiosity is the first step on the path of knowledge, I need to discover how to spark their curiosity. I want to know what are the essential questions that lead to further explorations, and aren't simply answered with a period and a yawn. I want my students to realize music is not a collection of notes and symbols created hundreds of years ago by dead, white men in powdered wigs, but a constantly evolving, worldwide form of human expression. I want to facilitate conversions that promote deep thinking and self reflection. I want my students to realize music is a living discipline that begs to be examined from a multitude of directions. I want to ask my students questions that don't have simple answers, but instead lead to more questions. I want to help my students think for themselves. I never want my students to feel like I did in those early years, that I just wasn't smart enough. I was smart enough, but nobody was asking me to think. Nobody was engaging my mind. Through my ARP I want to find the right questions that engage my students, and will shape them into lifelong learners. I will discover what questions generate discussions (and

further questions) from the students? And, does the use of sentence frames help students answer the question and engage in discussion?

Section 2. Guiding Pedagogical Theory

The guiding theory that supports this approach is Questioning Instruction by Dr. Judith.S. Nappi. She states that "Teaching students how to think about their thinking, or metacognition, can lead students to deeper understanding. Questions are among the most powerful teaching tools, and when teachers increase their repertoire of questioning techniques, the quality of instruction can be significantly improved" (Nappi, 2017, p. 39). In other words, teachers should not be seeking answers from their students, they should be teaching the students how to think and come up with their own questions.

Nappi's theory of questioning instruction is based on several approaches. The first goes all the way back to Socrates in ancient Greece. Socrates spent his life asking questions. His students were posed questions, not to provide answers, but to challenge their previously held ideas. Students bring a wealth of knowledge and experiences with them, through deliberate questioning they can reexamine and reflect on their own beliefs. The Socratic method does not expect specific answers to questions, instead it encourages higher level thinking where students "analyze, synthesize, and evaluate" (Nappi, 2017, p. 31). In other words, the right questions should prompt student reflection which leads to more questions not specific answers.

Benjamin Bloom's contributions to questioning instruction are also another guiding principle. Bloom developed a system that "provides a scaffold for asking questions that become progressively more challenging and provides a structure for teachers to model complex thinking that, ultimately, can guide students to become independent thinkers who can develop their own

viewpoints" (Nappi, 2017, pg. 32). In other words, through carefully scaffolded questions a teacher can lead students through the pyramid of higher understanding (cognition). These are (from the bottom) knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. These levels of understanding build upon one another. Questions are essential at every level. Some lower level questions are required to build knowledge in the beginning, but that knowledge is laying the foundation for deeper thinking later on.

Another key principle in Nappi's theory are questioning circles. Questioning circles which were developed by Christenbury and Kelly in 1983, use a series of intersecting circles (types of questions) to guide a deeper level of understanding. These circles represent

"The Subject Matter, Personal Response, and External Environment or Reality. The subject matter is the material under study. The personal response is the student's reaction to the subject matter under study. The external environment or reality is how the subject matter relates to other disciplines" (Nappi, 2017, pg. 35). Using these overlapping circles to approach the subject from different angles leads to a much deeper understanding and critical thinking.

Norman Webb's Depth of Knowledge model is another component to Questioning Instruction.Webb's Depth of Knowledge "requires students to delve into the thinking process in order to deepen their learning"(Nappi, 2017, p. 36). It focused on how students interact with the subject matter, and structured its curriculum to help students meet the state required standards and assessments. Webb also employed the pyramid model which contained (from the bottom): Recall and Reproduction, Skills and Concepts, Strategic Thinking, and Extended Thinking.

Another key principle for Nappi's theory is models for questioning. Models for questioning state that "questions are what stimulate the thinking process, and unless the answers

generate more questions, the thought process will be brought to a halt" (Nappi, 2017, pg. 36). This idea shares the role of questioning between teacher and student, and discussions are born. We are back to my happy days in college. To truly understand a subject the students must begin to form their own questions. To facilitate this process, the teacher must be a model of good questioning (hence the title). The students must witness and learn how to have clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, and depth in their questions.

All of the above mentioned principles enable students to engage in metacognition, where they are aware of their own thinking. If teachers create thought provoking questions that scaffold learning, students will think about their learning. "Questions that are effective promote inquiry, student self-assessment, and creativity even as they stimulate critical thinking" (Nappi, 2017, pg 37). If teachers model metacognition for the students, the students will start to learn how to think for themselves. They will begin to ask their own questions, be able to make connections to prior knowledge, and evaluate themselves. This metacognition will make the students life-long learners, which is so much more important than whether or not they remember how many sharps are in a G major scale.

Section 3. Connections to InTASC Standards

My goals for this Action Research Project align with the following InTASC standards:

Standard 3. Learning Environments. "The teacher works with others to create environments that support individual and collaborative learning, and that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self motivation."

Questioning instruction lends itself well to Standard 3. Questions and the resulting discussions are by definition a collaborative learning environment. By engaging in critical

thinking and debate the students are learning in a social community. The posed questions provide time for independent thinking and self reflection, while the resulting questions and following discussion promote community and interdependent learning. This social interaction celebrates individual experiences and teaches how different frames of reference can contribute to better learning overall.

Standard 4. Content Knowledge. “The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) she or he teaches and creates learning experiences that make these aspects of the discipline accessible and meaningful for learners to assure mastery of the content.”

Questioning Instruction would not work without a deep knowledge of the content. By remaining a lifelong student of music myself, I can guide my students towards deeper understanding. Because I am always asking myself deeper questions about music, I can turn around and pose questions to my students. My commitment to the discipline allows me to scaffold questions and help students discover their own journeys. I understand that musical “content knowledge is not a fixed body of facts but is complex, culturally situated, and ever evolving”(InTASC, 2013, pg. 24). The only way to study something that is constantly changing is by asking critical questions. Multiple perspectives are a necessity to understand a discipline that is evolving before our eyes. Student perspective and collaborative learning are critical to understanding a subject as vast as music. As the field of music evolves so will the questions. For students to truly understand music, they must move beyond the classroom and develop their own questions and critical thinking skills.

Section 4. Summary.

My formative schooling was dismal, but in college I learned to love learning. That wide spectrum has given me the perspective to be an effective teacher. I know how much I loved a good question, and the exchange of ideas that followed it. I intend to recreate that experience for my students. This interactive model will encourage curiosity among my students. They will begin to form their own questions, which we can explore together. As Freire says, "The students - no longer docile listeners- are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher"(Freire, 1970, p. 54). Once the students are thinking critically the possibilities for exploration become infinite.

On my quest to find the essential questions for music, I will embrace the InTASC standards. Through questions my classroom will become a learning environment that supports and celebrates individual and collaborative learning, and positive social interaction. I will share my content knowledge with my students by guiding them through this discipline with fantastic questions. They will no longer just passively absorb knowledge. Instead, through enlightened discussion, self reflection, and questions of their own, they can begin steering the course towards discoveries of their own.

Chapter 2. Annotated Bibliography.

In my quest to discover which questions generate the best discussions, and could sentence frames result in more student engagement I researched many interesting articles. The scholarly writings I found helped guide me in creating my own questions to engage students. These articles looked into why certain questions work better than others, how different types of questions trigger different types of thinking from students, and how to properly scaffold discussions for maximum learning. They also discussed the long term value of teaching students to think critically and the connection between deeper thought and creativity.

Allsup, R. and Baxter M. (2004) Talking about music: Better questions? Better discussions! Music Educators Journal, November 2004, pp. 29-33.

This article examines the need for better questions as a tool for learning in the music classroom. Randall Allsup is a professor of music and music education at Teachers College, Columbia University. Meredith Baxter is a professor of music education at SUNY-Potsdam. Their theory is viewed through the lens of a middle school music classroom. The authors conclude that a deeper understanding of music can be reached by asking probing questions, much like a great interview. The teacher should start with open ended questions and slowly focus on details based on the responses from the students.

This article was very inspiring to my teaching because I fully believe in the importance of good questions and discussion to learn. Good questions can direct critical listening and deep thinking. Students can begin to assess material through three domains: analytical, judicial and creative. By evaluating music with these three domains

students can gain a deeper understanding of how the music works (analytical), what their preferences are (judicial), and how they might create something similar (creative). Good questions and discussions are the key to this critical understanding. The discussions should start with open ended questions, “What does this piece make you think of?”, then moving to guided questions, “How did the musical texture change?”, and finally pinpointing a specific teaching moment with a closed question, “Who can tell me what instrument is this?”. By diving deep into these ideas with questions and discussions students will learn to articulate their musical preferences and have informed dialogue about them.

The strengths of this article were the examination of different kinds of questions and which domain they addressed. Examples are given of open, guided, closed, analytical, judicial, and creative questions. By using these types of questions and diving into the different domains, students can not only learn to listen critically and speak intelligently about the music, they can learn how to make their own creative decisions, be it for composition, improvisation or arranging.

One thing I would have liked to see more of would have been how to use this information in the creative process. Music creation seems to be the forgotten stepchild of music education. Better questions and better discussions lead to a richer musical experience. Teachers must embrace their student’s creative imaginations, and push them to flex those muscles with their new found vocabulary.

Bell, C. (2018) Critical listening in the ensemble rehearsal: A community of learners. Music Educators Journal, March 2018. p. 17-25.

This article examines the importance of critical listening skills for improving ensemble performance. Cindy Bell is a professor of music at Hofstra University. Her research is viewed through the lens of a public high school ensemble. The author concludes that music directors should have focused listening around issues that are daily concerns: blend, articulation, musicality, style, etc. Through short listening sessions, question guided discussion, and repeated follow on listening sessions, students will gain a greater understanding of the music and improve their aural perceptions.

This article was very impactful on my understanding of the importance of music students developing critical listening skills. Critical listening is different from passive listening. When students begin to listen critically they can perceive, evaluate and synthesize the information they have heard. This allows students to perform their own music with the influence of the piece they listened to. While all students listen to music, the skills necessary for critical listening must be taught and developed. Teachers should select a short piece of music, relevant to the desired lesson, and have the students listen to it and record anything of note. Immediately following the first listen, teachers should lead a discussion. At first the questions can be general looks for overall impressions and observations. Then the teacher should start pushing students in the direction of the lesson; “In this next listen focus on the articulations.” “What do you hear that’s interesting in measure 45?” “How are they playing this song differently than us?” Armed with new information and questions to consider, the students have a repeat listening session. After this second listening session, and informed by what they have just analyzed, the students should perform their own music. Their performance should have

improved, as they now have an example of the desired concept, and they were perceptive enough to examine it.

The strengths of this article were the importance of critical listening and its need to be taught. As professionals we can forget that critical listening is a learned skill. It must be demonstrated and honed, students don't know what they don't know. The importance of planned questions and follow-on discussions are paramount to helping students open their ears.

Kassner, K. (1998) Would better questions enhance music learning? Music Educators Journal, Jan. 1998, Vol 84, No. 4, p 29-36.

This article examines the ability of questions to guide many aspects of the musical classroom, from creative thinking to classroom management. Kirk Kassner teaches general music in Florida public schools and master's classes at the University of Central Florida. His research is through the lens of music education in public schools. The author concludes that to be an effective guide for your students, teachers must ask higher level questions. These questions will empower students to look at problems from a variety of perspectives and be more stimulating for both students and teachers.

This article was impactful on my approach to teaching because it focuses on the importance of questions. Higher level questions lead to deeper thinking, better comprehension, and the ability to synthesize information. Instead of just giving examples of proper questions the author creates a flowchart to help guide the teacher in preparing the questions. Important sections cover relevant information the teacher must keep in mind, "What type of class is this?", "What is the ability level of the students?", "What

type of answer is the teacher looking for?" etc. This flowchart can help teachers spark meaningful discussions and achieve the desired results of their lessons.

The strengths of this article were how thorough the flowchart was. Following this guide could help a teacher craft a question for 6th grade band that would help them improve their listening skills, focus on articulations, and how that related to the national standard. Another strength I really appreciated was focusing on the creative aspects of music. As the students become more aware of the inner workings of music, this article examined how to get students to use these new tools for creation. Questions such as "Did you hear this in your mind?" or "Please explain why you made these changes?" The proper questions can help move students from interpreters of music to the creators.

One thing I would have liked to see was how to engage lower-ability level students with higher-level questions. The author suggests higher-level questions can work if the students are in mixed ability groups, but offers little support for lower-level students. I understand that some concepts will be lost on underperforming students, but they deserve the same level of engagement that open ended questions bring. By asking the right questions to these lower-level students, they might become inspired to practice and explore on their own; and maybe end up elevating their status.

Kratus, J. (2017) Music listening is creative, Music Educators Journal, March 2017, p 46-51, DOI: 10.1177/0027432116686843

This article states that active listening is a creative activity that allows students to interpret music through their own individual lens. The author is a professor emeritus of music education from Michigan State University. His findings were analyzed through the

lens of general music and music appreciation classes. The author concludes that listening to music is a deeply personal experience that draws on individual feelings and history. By celebrating students' individual experience with music, students learn to be fluent, flexible and original thinkers.

This article was very inspiring to my teaching because it celebrates the individual experience of listening to music. No two people will experience the same emotions, connections or response from any piece of music. By learning to examine their individual cognitive response to the music, students can move beyond passive consumers to co-creators of the musical experience. Choosing which aspects of the music to focus on allows students to use both convergent and divergent thinking. Convergent thinking deals with specific components and has clear answers, “Is the song in a minor key?” “What instrument is playing the melody?”. Divergent thinking is more subjective and could have multiple responses, “How would you dance to this?” “What images come to mind?” With leading questions and active listening sessions, students can learn to look beyond surface level observations (lyrics and danceability) and observe deeper level musical mechanisms. The author prompted students to write down various ideas as they listened. These ideas could be discussed in class or small groups afterward, with the understanding that all answers are valid and celebrated. Through this framework, imagination and understanding converge creating a more holistic musical experience.

The strengths of this article were the embrace of imagination. Too much of school stamps out imagination in favor of the correct answer. Analyzing music through one’s personal lens is so much more creative and imaginative than forcing everything into the teacher’s way of thinking. Another strength was the embrace of flexible thinking. If

students are asked what they notice about the rhythm, all responses are important, and collectively they will observe much more than a single answer the teacher might have pointed out.

One thing I would have liked to see in this article was a clearer explanation of fluent, flexible and original thinking. While there were interesting analogies of students choosing restaurants vs types of food to eat, the differences between these categories was still hazy. All three seemed very important, but drawing a clear distinction between them was challenging.

Masterson, M. (1994) Moving beyond "It's got a good beat", Music Educators Journal, May, 1994, Vol 80, No. 6, p 24-28

This article examines the uses of metaphor and imagery to help students associate a variety of musical sounds. It also helps students make connections between the music and their personal feelings, and understand the music through a cultural context. The author is a professor of music at Northwest College, and the Higher Education Vice-President for the Wyoming Music Educators Association. This article is written through the lens of an undergraduate music appreciation class. The author concludes through use of metaphor and imagery, students can learn to think critically about music. They can begin to evaluate deeper concepts including cultural relevance, musical elements and personal connections. Through a framework of imagery students can learn to articulate their thoughts. Metaphors are a doorway to musical understanding and open mindedness, which all students can benefit from.

This article was very inspiring to my teaching because music is subjective. If we only focus on the theoretical nuts and bolts, often the meaning and magic of the piece is missed entirely. Using imagery and metaphors allows students to personalize their experience with the music and draw connections that are relevant to them. In one example, a student compared Aaron Copland's "Fanfare to the Common Man" to Grand Tetons National Park. Upon being pushed to describe the park, the student talked about the epic mountains, and used the adjectives "majestic" and "regal". These adjectives can now be used to describe the music, and pinpointing what sound correlated to epic mountains (brass, rhythm, tempo, etc) also provided a teachable moment; as the students can now identify specific musical components associated with that feeling.

The strengths of this article were the explanation of how to guide students from imagery to musical information, but the author goes further by introducing cultural context. This is fantastic and so important since music is not created in a vacuum. In the example of "Fanfare for the Common Man" after the students have discussed sounds and feelings, they are told the music was written during World War Two. How does this historical knowledge change the way they interpret the piece? Does it make any imagery or connections stronger? The students then listen to the music again with this new context. Afterwards their connections to the music and ability to articulate their feelings are dramatically improved.

One of the things I would have liked to see more of was how the use of metaphors can describe different backgrounds and point of views. The author mentions that these tools can help students explain the difference between rap and country music, or which pieces of music sound feminine or masculine. There is no example of these comparisons,

however. As metaphors and imagery are highly subjective, I would have benefited from actual examples describing these comparisons, and the conclusions the students came to.

Priest, T. (2002) Creative thinking in instrumental classes. Music Educators Journal, Jan 2002, p 47-58

This article examines how to encourage creative thinking through composition and improvisation. The author is director of music education at Weber State University. This article is written through the lens of middle and high school band classes. The author concludes that creative thinking can be encouraged in instrumental music students through the study of composition. By getting away from the notes on the page the students learn to look within and follow their ears. This individualized approach emphasizes critical thinking, problem solving and a risk taking attitude.

This article was impactful on my approach to teaching because it focused on making students independent thinkers. Its focus on composition as a tool for critical and creative thinking empowers students to choose their own path, albeit with teacher guidance. The article stressed the importance of students becoming problem finders; through creative thinking and self analysis students can begin to self-identify problems and arrive at their own solutions. Composition can be taught in group settings with call and response ideas, and also as variations on known material. Composition is not a wild free-for-all, but a gradual elaboration on previously acquired skills. As students learn to trust their own ideas and follow their intuition, they also learn to identify problems within the music and are better prepared to correct them.

The strengths of this article were the idea of building on known material. If a student has never listened to jazz, creating a jazz composition is an exercise in futility. But if they are familiar with "Hot Cross Buns" creating their own variations on Hot Cross Buns is 100 percent accessible. By building on previously acquired knowledge, students develop creative thinking skills that follow their instrumental progression. Another strength that really resonated with me was how teaching composition teaches problem finding. For example, if the student wants to restate their original theme but change the feeling from happy to sad, they have to evaluate the many different ways of accomplishing that task, and make a decision on the best course forward. The ability to self identify problems is paramount to critical thinking. If I want my students to become lifelong learners, they need to be able to find, and solve, problems on their own.

One thing I would have liked to see in this article was an emphasis on what questions prompt compositional discovery. This was alluded to in passing, but a few concrete examples on how to get the students thinking compositionally would have been helpful. If creative, critical thinking can be encouraged through both composition and questioning, seeing a few questions to get the ball rolling would have tied everything together.

Robinson, N. Bell, C. Pogonoski, L. (2011) The creative music strategy: A seven-step instructional model. Music Educators Journal, March 2011, DOI:10.1177/0027432110395945

This article offers a seven-step process for teaching general music students composition and improvisation, with critical reflection afterwards . The authors are music education professors at Hofstra University and Columbia University. The article is written through the lens of general music classes in 5-6 grades, but could easily be transferred to older

students as well. The authors conclude that students with personal encounters with composition, improvisation and performance gain a deeper connection and understanding of music. They have created a seven-step process to help students explore these creative aspects of music.

This article was impactful on my approach to teaching because it stressed the importance of creativity in music education. Through a study of composition and improvisation students can learn to think creatively, and gain a deeper understanding of the music they are performing and creating. In order to teach creativity to students, teachers must adhere to four pedagogical principles (all of which resonate with me):

1. For teachers to teach creativity, teachers must be creative.

2. Teachers must ask open-ended questions that stimulate musical thinking.

3. Teachers must be a “guide on the side” instead of the “sage on the stage.”

4. A safe and nurturing environment must be established.

If all of these principles are established, the situation is ripe for teaching students composition/improvisation. The seven-step process involves choosing a topic to springboard off of, asking open-ended questions to stimulate students thinking, brainstorming and discussion where students reflect on their ideas, time for personal exploration where students work on their idea, conducted and planned improvisation where students perform their ideas together; either with the entire class or as smaller groups, recording the students pieces, and reflective analysis. I find this entire process to be very exciting, and I have never witnessed anything like it in my musical education.

The strengths of this article were the first step of the process, the springboard. The article uses the Underground Railroad as an example. Not only does this give the students a frame of reference for the entire process, it also allows for some excellent interdisciplinary teaching - something that is lacking in music education.

Scheib, J. (2011) Empowering preservice music teachers through the dialogue-centered methods class, Journal of Music Teacher Education, 22(1) 103–112, DOI:10.1177/1057083711430394

This article questions the effectiveness of lectures in learning. It proposes students learn better through posed problems (questions), and the discussions that result. The author is a professor at Ball State University. This article is written through the lens of undergraduate music methods class. The author concludes that lectures are an ineffective tool for learning, they only teach students to memorize and regurgitate information. By engaging in problem solving and discussion, students and teachers can work together to discover new creative solutions to problems.

This article was impactful to my teaching because it makes the students key components in the quest for knowledge. Topics can begin with open-ended questions to get the ball rolling. Hopefully students will arrive at different conclusions, and will have a rich exchange of ideas. If the students are all in agreement the teacher should play devil's advocate, creating a dissenting voice and problem for the students to tackle. Though-provoking dialogue is the key to building student understanding. The article points out that in the real world solutions aren't always handed to students. If we, as educators, want to prepare them for life after school, the students must learn to find their own solutions.

The strengths of this article were the focus on problem-posing. The students need conflict to process information. They can come to it themselves, or the teacher can provide it. Allowing the students to have an open dialogue to work through the problems is what the article stresses.

One thing I would have liked to see more of was how to incorporate student group projects and field exercises. These concepts are mentioned as being important, but are not flushed out at all. Field exercises, in particular, sound very interesting. Finding real-world applications for student lessons presents a fantastic opportunity for learning. It would have been nice to have suggestions or examples on how to do this.

Topoglu, O. (2013) Critical thinking and music education. Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 116 (2014) 2252 – 2256

This article examines the need for critical thinking in music education, and stresses that previously unreachable students may be more successful learning how to think critically through music class. The author is in the Department of Music Education at Centeral Campus, Aydin, Turkey. This article is written through the lens of public school education. The author concludes because of its multisensory nature, music is an excellent place to teach critical thinking. Furthermore, due to the self expressive and social aspects of music, it can be used to help underachieving students learn to critically think.

This article was impactful to my teaching because it examined the overall value of music instruction. It emphasized that understanding and learning music develops social, problem solving, cognitive and critical thinking skills and dispositions. In order for these skills to be developed, it is imperative that the music teacher plans engaging lessons, poses problems while allowing the students to find the solutions, and asks thought

provoking questions. Music instruction that revolves solely around teacher-led repetition (as is often the case with performance ensembles), misses out on the wonderful critical thinking opportunities music offers.

The strengths of this article were the position of the teacher as a catalyst for learning. By creating the right environment, posing the right problems, and helping to motivate the students, teachers can cultivate lessons for critical thinking. Another strength of the article was the fact that traditional performance based ensembles may be missing out on important teaching opportunities. This is a common practice of performance based classes, where everything is pushed towards the concert. While that is important, just learning notes and rhythms doesn't employ higher-level thinking. Defining problems, identifying solutions, recognizing assumptions and inconsistencies; these are critical thinking skills.

One thing I would have liked to see more of was the comparison to other disciplines. The article mentions math and history as dry subjects, but when compared to uninspired music lessons, they can actually promote more critical thinking. This is not elaborated on. I would have liked to see some examples on how to think critically in math or history. This information could have opened doors to possible interdisciplinary learning.

Woodford, P. (1996) Developing critical thinkers in music: Fostering critical-thinking skills in students empowers them to control their own musical growth. Music Educators Journal, July 1996.

This article examines the importance of developing critical thinking skills in students, and how in doing so, helps students develop their own musical identity. The author is on staff at the University of Western Ontario, and has written this article based on high school music teaching. This article is written through the lens of high school music classes. This article examines the importance of developing critical thinking skills in students. It points out that in learning to think critically, students must acquire a large amount of information and experience in that subject. As students learn to evaluate and synthesize this information their own preferences will develop. With encouragement and guidance from teachers, students can nurture and develop these preferences into a unique musical identity.

This article was impactful on my teaching because it stressed the importance of critical thinking, not only as a necessary tool for real world survival, but also as a way of knowing one's self. By teaching students to think critically about music, they are also being taught to examine and refine their own opinions and beliefs. High school, by nature, is a zone of conformity. Leaning into a style of teaching that encourages free thinking and original thought at this age seems almost revolutionary. When students balk at a particular musical example, it provides a moment for discussion and introspection. Instead of charging ahead and making them play or listen to it anyway, ask why they don't like it. Explore their convictions, expose them to other examples in a similar genre that might change their perceptions. Even if their minds aren't changed, they will be able to articulate more clearly what they don't like.

The strengths of this article were the embracing of student originality. As students learn to think critically about music, they raise their awareness of various musical beliefs

(such as flute is for girls, or black people don't play classical) and can examine those prejudices. If their previously held beliefs are not true, they can choose to abandon them in favor of new, more informed belief systems. This can take courage, as some prejudices are widely held throughout society. Another strength of the article is that teachers must support the students on their personal journeys, regardless of the teacher's opinion of the student's musical preferences. The teacher can act as a guide when the students need help, but the student must be the leader. If the teacher only dictates what should happen, critical thinking and individualism give way to indoctrination.

One thing I would have liked to see more of was the exploration of musical critical thinkers breaking free of peer pressure and conformity in non-musical settings. It is reasonable to assume that independence and the ability to think critically in music should translate into other scenarios. But this is not addressed in the article. Will our critical thinking musicians be less likely to experiment with drugs and drinking, or join a gang? Will they stand up to bullies, and break away from the mob mentality? I would have enjoyed some statistics to back this up.

My ARP asks what are the best questions to ask students for better discussions, and do sentence frames encourage more participation from the students. These articles helped me clarify my thinking, and gave me plenty of ideas to launch my research from. In the next chapter I will discuss the methods, setting, and positionality of how and where I conducted my research.

Chapter 3 Methods Guideline

Section 1

According to Richard Sagor in his book *Guiding School Improvement Using Action Research* (2000) action research is "a disciplined process of inquiry conducted by and for those taking the action" (Sagor, 2000, p. 3). In other words, finding, and answering, the questions that will make my classroom better. While on the surface this may seem simple, it is actually quite an involved process.

Sagor outlines seven steps in the action research process: (a) Selecting a focus: (b) Clarifying theories: c) Identifying research questions:(d) Collecting data: (e) analyzing data:(f) reporting results: and (h) taking informed action. To properly quantify and analyze data in a way that can benefit one's project there are certain steps that must be taken. First, a timeline must be created. This helps set parameters and gives an accurate report on what, when and how something was taught (Sagor, 2000). Second, a trend analysis must be conducted. This is a process that can identify factors that are influencing student performance. To analyze trends data must be collected. There are many ways to collect data, using both pre-existing materials and by creating new instruments to help answer research questions. Pre-existing data collection instruments are lesson plans, teacher journals, grade books, checklists, anything that already exists and is being implemented to teach classes effectively. Creating new instruments in another way to approach data collection. New instruments don't exist already, and must be created specifically to help answer research questions. While this option creates more work up front, it allows a much more pinpointed focus of the data collected. New instruments can be the use of shadowing, analyzing student work and student journals, discussions, surveys and interviews. Finally a rating scale must be developed to assess student work. By creating a rating scale you

can identify specific examples that you are expecting to see from students, and rate how effective they are from minimum to exemplary.

Action research is the ideal forum for my project. In my quest to find better ways to stimulate thinking, quantifiable data will be necessary. If I want to find the best questions to engage students in discussions and have them generate their own questions in return, I need to approach this systematically. Just haphazardly throwing questions at the students is about as effective as throwing spaghetti against the wall and has yielded mixed results, without any explanation as to why some questions worked and others didn't. I want my students to become thinkers, and I owe it to them to find the most effective way of facilitating that.

My two guiding questions for my action research project are this: What questions generate discussions (and further questions) from the students? And, does the use of sentence frames help students answer the question and engage in discussion?

The first question is clearly tied to everything I want to learn about how students think and engage with the material. Questioning instruction states "questions are what stimulate the thinking process, and unless the answers generate more questions, the thought process will be brought to a halt" (Nappi, 2017, p. 36). What are the proper questions to get that process started. I want to find them.

The second question deals with a reluctance of students to talk in class. I have asked questions I know they are interested in, but for whatever reason they won't engage in discussion. Bloom's contributions to questioning instruction deals with properly scaffolding questions to get progressively more in depth. I will try to discover if using sentence frames can scaffold the questions enough to get the students engaged in discussions.

Section 2. Participants and Settings.

The location of my school is in Medford, OR. Medford is the largest city in the southern part of the state. One in five families in Medford live in poverty and 31% of children are dealing with poverty, the students at my school are disproportionately represented by that statistic, as my school is located on the lower income side of town. While overall Medford is 86% White, 13% Hispanic/Latinos, and African American at 1%. The demographics of my school are a little more varied: 58% White, 34% Hispanic/Latino, 5% Multiracial, with Asian and African American students at 1% each. English is the predominant language, with being Spanish a strong second. Vietnamese, Nigerian, Tonga, Farsi, Punjabi and Tagalog have also been heard.

The four classes I will be collecting data for my action research project are the Advanced Jazz Band, the Concert Band, the Wind Ensemble, and the Jazz Cadets. The Advanced Jazz Band is made up of 19 students, almost all (16) of which are seniors, the remaining three students are juniors. Two of the students are on an IEP for speech impairment and one student is on a 504 plan, seven of the students are TAG (for reading and math). 14 of the students identify as male, 5 identify as females and there are 0 non-binary students at this time. All students in the class are English speakers, but one student speaks Spanish at home. The Concert Band is made up of 61 students, most of which are freshmen and sophomores, but there are a few upperclassmen who are taking multiple music electives. One student is on an IEP for math, one student is on an IEP for Autism, and one is on an IEP for perfectionism. Two students are on a 504 plan for anxiety, one is on a 504 for Autism, one is on a 504 for ADHD. 30 of the students identify as male, 29 identify as females and there are 2 non-binary students. All students in the class are English speakers, but three students speak Spanish at home. The Wind Ensemble is made of 37 students, 30 of which are seniors, 5 are juniors and 2 are freshmen. Two of the students are on an IEP for

speech impairment and one student is on a 504 plan, 12 of the students are TAG (for reading and math), 3 of the students are in students in need plan, and 1 student is in a foster home. 21 of the students identify as male, 16 identify as female, and there are 0 non-binary students. All the students in the class are English speakers, but two students speak Spanish at home. The Jazz Cadets is made up of 29 students, 4 of which are seniors, 2 are juniors, 11 are sophomores and 12 are freshmen. One student is on an IEP for Autism, and one is on an IEP for perfectionism. Two students are on a 504 plan for anxiety, one is on a 504 for Autism, one is on a 504 for ADHD, 6 students are TAG for reading and math. 20 students identify as male, 8 students identify as female, and 1 student is non-binary.

With the four classes this may seem like an enormous amount of different students, but the numbers are misleading. About three quarters of the band students are enrolled in more than one music class. All of the students in the Advanced Jazz Band are also in Wind Ensemble, 25 of the Jazz Cadets are in Concert Band and four are in Wind Ensemble, four students are in Wind Ensemble and Concert Band, and 2 students are in Wind Ensemble, Concert Band and Advanced Jazz Band.

These students bring a rich perspective and background to my data. They represent all four grades in high school, and they have a variety of musical experience. Some of them have only been playing for a year or two, while others have won statewide competitions and have much more accumulated knowledge. With such a diverse group of students, I believe my data will better represent a cross section of society and will be more applicable in future scenarios.

I have worked with the Advanced Jazz Band and the Concert Band since the beginning of January, and the Jazz Cadets and Wind Ensemble since mid-March. During that time I have gotten to know many of these students and built a rapport with them. We have a good time

together and they are beginning to trust me not only as a subject matter expert, but also as a mentor. There is still further work to be done. I have not made personal connections yet with every student, which stems mainly from the very large class size in Concert Band. I am also aware that as a 50 year old white male, I do not represent many of my students. While I cannot change who I am, I can be cognisant of who they are and where they come from. Making personal connections with all of my students also helps bridge that divide.

Section 3. Data Collection and Analysis

Using Sangor (2003) as a guide, I collected raw data from the end of January through the end of April. I have used my personal journals to record data every day. This gives me the most accurate data on student reactions to my questions and inquiries. I also used my lesson plans, video recordings of my classes, exit tickets, and informal observations of student engagement and behavior. Additionally, I spoke to my Clinical Teacher and my University Supervisor about various approaches to become more successful getting the students to engage in discussions. My University Supervisor is the one who suggested using sentence frames to scaffold discussions.

After I collected my raw data over 3 months, I read and engaged with the information. I had asked many questions to the various classes, and it was eye opening to see them all side by side. The next step was coding my data - sorting it into categories that allowed me to better understand what the information was telling me. This process allowed me to see patterns emerging and identify various themes (different types of questions, ages of students, certain students more eager to talk). After coding, my next step was triangulating the data through my initial research questions and drawing my conclusions. When I arrived at my conclusions, I shared my findings with Dr. Marcus Wenzel, my primary reader and mentor, and my second

reader, Mr. David Sommers, my clinical teacher from my fall placement. I have reassessed my analysis based on their input.

Section 4. Researcher Positionality.

I am aware that my identity as a heterosexual, middle class, old (50), White male is not necessarily an accurate representation of my community, or my classroom. If anything, I represent the gate-keepers of the past that we are striving to move away from. Most of my students do not see themselves when they look at me in the front of the class, and I cannot pretend to understand their struggles from my position of comfort and acceptance in this society.

That being said, I'm not 23 years old and completely green having never left the country club. I grew up in Los Angeles, one of the largest cities in the world, and I am familiar with a wide variety of people. I have lived in several countries where I barely spoke the language and struggled to operate in a system that wasn't catered towards me. I have battled dyslexia my entire life and know the frustration of not understanding something that everyone else seems "to get". I am also an Army combat veteran, while this doesn't directly relate to the student's experiences, military service is highly regarded in most communities and many students are interested in serving.

While these things may help me relate to my students on some level, nothing can help me understand the poverty they are dealing with, and the discrimination and fear many of my students are currently facing. The current administration's vilifying and "othering" of so many communities in this country is nothing short of heartbreaking. I can't pretend to understand what they are going through, but I do pledge to make my classroom a safe space that thrives on humor, intelligence and acceptance.

Chapter 4: Findings

The two guiding questions for my ARP are what questions generate discussions (and further questions) from the students? And, does the use of sentence frames help students answer the question and engage in discussion? This chapter dives into my findings and explores how the data helped me answer those questions.

Analyzing the data I collected over the 3 month time period revealed four recurring themes. The first theme I identified is the most successful questions included proper scaffolding. The second theme is general music questions were more successful than other types of questions. The third theme is questions that were subjective in nature fared better than those that had more specific answers. The fourth theme is that some students like to talk more than others. The themes are discussed in detail with supporting data.

Theme 1. Proper Scaffolding

The use of scaffolding and supports to encourage student participation in discussions has been a question on my mind since the beginning of this project. My second guiding question for this project is "*Does the use of sentence frames help students answer the question and engage in discussion*?" The short answer is yes. As the period of my data collection continued, and based on input from my first reader, Dr. Marcus Wenzel, I decided to add another support to the mix, talking to friends.

Before explaining my results, a brief definition of the two supports I utilized are necessary. Sentence Frames involved me spelling out for the students how to respond to a question. One of my questions was "What makes a live performance engaging?" After presenting the question to the class, I would give them the sentence frame: "What makes a live

performance engaging is _____." Sometimes I would have the sentence frame posted on the whiteboard, other times I would just verbally say it out loud.

Talking to friends allowed the students to have a brief discussion with their neighbors about the presented question. I would ask the class the question and then allow them time to discuss their ideas with students near them. The time was short, 30 seconds to a minute usually, and I gauged when to end this by student behavior. If everyone seemed really engaged I would give them a bit more time, if the students seemed bored or were getting off topic I would end it.

Based on these two scaffolds that I incorporated into my questions, I was able to divide the questions I asked into four categories:

1. Questions with sentence frames.

2. Questions with talking to friends.

3. Questions with sentence frames and talking to friends.

4. Questions without any scaffolding.

Over the course of my study I asked 13 different questions across four classes. I rarely asked the same question to different classes, because so many of the students were in more than one class. Three of my questions were Questions with sentence frames. Three were Questions with Talking to friends. Four were Questions with sentence frames and talking to friends. And three were Questions without any scaffolding. To measure the effectiveness of a question, I rated five or more students responding as a success, four students responding as neutral, and three or less students responding as unsuccessful.

Table 1.

Types of support used in questions	Number of questions utilizing those supports
Sentence Frames	3
Talk to Friends	3
Sentence Frames & Talk to friends	4
No supports	3

Table 2.

Effectiveness of questions	Number of student responses
Successful	5 or more
Neutral	4 exactly
Unsuccessful	3 or less

In the three 'Questions with sentence frames' questions that I asked, one was successful and two were unsuccessful. This category was the least successful of the questions that included scaffolding, as two thirds of the questions did not achieve the desired result. Only because of the successful question on 13 March, do I consider sentence frames to be a helpful tool. In the charts below, tan highlighted dates indicate success, blue highlighted dates are neutral, and dates without highlights were unsuccessful.

Chart 1

Sentence Frames- no talking with friends..

30 April- **Concert Band** **Reaction Question.** 1. **Don't talk to Friends.** 2. Sentence Frames. Watched *Super Mario Theme, in the Styles of 6 Classical Composers. (Sol, N. 2024)* "How did articulations affect the changes?" 3 students responded (Chewie, Miles, and Zelda). Mostly short answers, Miles had a longer response.

13 March - **Wind Ensemble.** **Connection Question**. 1. **Don't talk to friends**. 2. Sentence Frames. Watched *How to Listen to Classical Music -Emotion-Mapping. (Sol, N. 2024)* video on music emotions. "What are the emotions of your concert pieces and why?" 6 students (Leia, Madonna, Vader, Storm, Han Solo, Wonder Woman) were able to defend their choices.

30 April - **Stage Band**. **Reaction Question**. 1. **Don't Talk to Friends**. 2. Sentence Frames. Listened to *Miles Davis' Bitches Brew. (Davis, M. 1970).* "What did you think of this recording" "I liked/didn't like it because…" 3 students responded (Kleya, Leia and Scofield). All short answers.

In the three 'Questions with Talking to friends' I had equal showings across the board. One question was successful, one was neutral, and one was unsuccessful. This was an

improvement from the previous category, but due to the completely equal rating, it is hard to gauge where the students would have landed if another question had been presented.

Chart 2
Talk with Friends- No Sentence Frames

April 27th - **Wind Ensemble**. **General Question**. 1. Talk to friends, 2. **No sentence frames**. "What makes music good?" Very little engagement - only 3 students responded (Sarah Vaughn, Leia, Monk).

27 Feb. **Concert Band** **Connection Question.** 1. Talk to friends. 2. **No sentence frames**. "What are you listening for, and why?" (In their concert pieces). - 4 students answered (Bix, Chewie, Boba, Rogue), some elaboration.

30 April - **Jazz Cadets**. **General Question.** 1. Talk to Friends. 2. **No Sentence Frames**. "What Makes a Live Performance Engaging?" 5 students responded (Chewie, Boba, Link, Aretha*, Peach). Longer answers. After the first three spoke mentioning only musical elements, I redirected "with live performance specifically, how is it different from a recording?" Then Peach and Aretha spoke, with longer ideas.

The most successful support was clearly the combination of the two. I posed four 'Questions with sentence frames and talking to friends' to the students. Two were successful, one was neutral, and one was unsuccessful. Additionally, my most successful question of the entire project came from this group: *"Is music the universal language? Yes, no, or unsure."*

Chart 3.

Talk with Friends and Sentence Frames

April 29th - **Stage Band**. **General Question.** 1. Talk to Friends. 2. Sentence Frames. "What Makes a Live Performance Engaging?" 4 students responded (Leia, Sarah Vaughn, Wolverine, Coltrane). Mostly short answers - slight elaboration by Coltrane.

April 22nd. - **Concert Band**. **General Question.** 1. Talk to friends. 2. Sentence frames. "What makes music good?" - lots of engagement- 7 students responded - including Zelda, Chewie, Ella Fitzgerald, Bix, Jabba, Captain Marvel and Miles (both shy).

April 4th - **Jazz Cadets**. **Reaction Question.** 1. Talk to friends. 2. Used sentence frames. 3. Listened to *2SAXY in Malta.(2SAXY, 2024)* "This song is connected to one of your pieces. What's the connection?" - nobody wanted to talk. Nobody made the connection to the blues form.

14 March - **Concert Band**. **General Question.** 1. Talk to friends. Sentence Frames. "Is Music the Universal Language? Yes, No, or Unsure? Defend your answer". Lots of student engagement, multiple students (Chewie, Han Solo, Zelda, Michel Camilo, Peach, Ella Fitzgerald, Norah Jones) spoke using paragraphs not single words.

Unsurprisingly, the 'Questions without any scaffolding' had the worst numbers of all the categories. Of the three questions posed to the students, one was neutral, and two were unsuccessful. None of these questions yielded a successful response from the students, with a neutral response being the best result of the three questions. This data clearly highlights the students' need for support before they will engage in meaningful discussions.

Chart 4.
No Supports

April 4th - **Wind Ensemble**. **Reaction Question.** 1. **Don't talk to friends**. 2. **No sentence Frames**. 3. Listened to *Fanfare for the Common Man. (Copland, A. 1942)* "Give me an image for this music?"- 4 students responded: Wonder Woman, Vader, Batman, Nick Fury. (Thunder, Heroic, Sunrise on a new day, Jurassic Park.)

7 Feb. - **Concert Band**. **Connection Question.** 1. **Don't talk to friends**. 2. **No sentence frames**. Listened to music from *Conan the Barbarian (Poledouris, B. 1982)* "What did this remind you of? How is it similar to Fable?" 3 Students responded. (Padme, Kleya, Boba) Padme made the connection to Fable. Kleya and Boba gave single word answers.

29 Jan - **Stage Band**. **Reaction Question**. 1. **Don't talk to friends**. 2. **No Sentence Frames**. Listened to *Creep by Post Modern Jukebox*. *(Post Modern Jukebox, 2019)* "Is this Jazz?" Followed by "Why?" Coltrane responded - No. Couldn't answer why. Nobody else responded.

The results of this data are clear. The more support and scaffolding the students have, the more likely they are to participate in discussions. 'Questions with sentence frames and talking to friends' was the most successful, followed by 'Questions with talking to friends', which was followed by 'Questions with sentence frames', and finally 'Questions without any support' was the least successful approach.

While isolated sentence frames offered some support and resulted in more success than no supports, the students showed a clear preference for discussing the questions with their classmates. I assume the reason for this is by discussing their ideas with their neighbors, they could codify and refine their thoughts before presenting it to the class. These preferences are echoed in InTASC Standard 3: Learning Environments. "The teacher works with others to create environments that support individual and collaborative learning, and that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self motivation." By discussing their thoughts on the questions, before having to present it to the class, the students were engaging in individual and collaborative learning and having positive social interactions. Additionally, by incorporating sentence frames in conjunction with talking to friends, the students now had a clear path to victory. They knew what they wanted to say, they refined their ideas through talking to their neighbors, and they had a working framework (the sentence frame) to present their polished ideas to the class.

I was initially dubious of sentence frames. I felt this form of support was more appropriate in younger students or English Language Learners. As I was teaching high school and all of my band students were fluent in English (even if some also spoke other languages at home), I didn't know if sentence frames would be an effective scaffold for my students. I decided to include them in my ARP only after conversations with my University Supervisor about how to engage the students in discussions.

After reflecting on the data I collected, I believe my initial instincts were correct. On their own, sentence frames were not a very effective support for this demographic. While they still yielded better results than no scaffolding whatsoever, they did not show a large improvement in getting students to engage in discussions. As both the 'Questions with sentence frames' and

‘Questions without any scaffolding’ had two out of three unsuccessful discussions, it is hard to say definitely what the difference was for the students. Does this mean the students were comfortable enough working without the sentence frames and they were uninspired by these questions, or did the students need the time talking to their friends to properly formulate their responses? I am choosing to believe that sentence frames, while not a deciding factor in this demographic, still were more successful than no scaffolding at all. But the data does show that using sentence frames in tandem with talking to friends, can be a very effective tool at promoting student engagement during discussion. Although, even this is not foolproof, as evidenced by the unsuccessful question on 4 April to the Jazz Cadets.

Theme 2. General Music Questions

As I reflected on the data from my questions, I came to realize that all the questions I presented the student with could be sorted into one of three categories:

1. General music - questions that only required an awareness of music and were not tethered to anything specific.

2. Reaction/reflection - questions in which students watched or listened to something and then responded to a question about it.

3. Connection questions - these were questions that asked the students to make connections to the music they were working on for their upcoming concerts.

Five of the 13 questions I asked the students were General Questions. The questions were, “What makes a live performance engaging?” I asked this question to both Jazz Cadets and the Advanced Jazz Band. “What makes music good?” I asked this question to both the Wind Ensemble and the Concert Band. I also asked the Concert Band “Is Music the Universal

Language?" Three of these five questions were successful with at least 5 students responding to the questions. Interestingly, the repeated questions ("What makes a live performance engaging?" and "What makes music good?") were each only successful once.

Chart 5

General Music

30 April - **Jazz Cadets**. **General Question.** 1. Talk to Friends. 2. **No Sentence Frames**. "What Makes a Live Performance Engaging?" 5 students responded (Chewie, Boba, Link, Aretha*, Peach). Longer answers. After the first three spoke all musical elements, I redirected with live performance, specifically how is it different from a recording? Then Peach and Aretha spoke, with longer ideas.

April 29th - **Stage Band**. **General Question.** 1. Talk to Friends. 2. Sentence Frames. "What Makes a Live Performance Engaging?" 4 students responded (Leia, Sarah Vaughn, Wolverine, Coltrane). Mostly short answers - slight elaboration by Coltrane.

April 27th - **Wind Ensemble**. **General Question.** 1. Talk to friends, 2. **No sentence frames**. "What makes music good?" Very little engagement - only 3 students responded (Sarah Vaughn, Leia, Monk).

April 22nd. - **Concert Band**. **General Question.** 1. Talk to friends.. 2. Sentence frames. "What makes music good?" - lots of engagement- 7 students responded - including Zelda, Chewie, Ella Fitzgerald, Bix, Jabba, Captain Marvel and Miles (both shy).

14 March - **Concert Band**.**General Question.** 1. Talk to friends (separated into groups). Sentence Frames. "Is Music the Universal Language. Yes, No, or Unsure? Defend your answer". Lots of student engagement, multiple students (Chewie, Han Solo, Zelda, Michel Camilo, Peach, Ella Fitzgerald, Norah Jones) spoke using paragraphs not single words.

I think part of the success of these general questions was that all students felt knowledgeable enough to answer them. The questions required looking inward, reflecting on their personal opinions and experiences and formulating a response, or as Nappi says "analyze, synthesize, and evaluate" (Nappi, 2017, p. 31). The questions were general enough that they didn't require a deep wealth of musical knowledge to have an informed opinion, but still interesting and relevant to musicians at every level. "Is music the universal language? Yes, no or

unsure? Defend your answer." was my most popular question. All of the 6 students who responded spoke in paragraphs defending their position. Of all the 13 questions I asked the students, this was the only time it actually felt like a discussion. If I hadn't needed to rehearse our tunes, I think we could have talked over the various points of views for 10-15 minutes. I believe much of the question's success was because of its accessibility. Many students had an opinion. Several students compared and contrasted it with other languages and even math. As the students shared their points of views, the next speaker would occasionally reference a previous student's talking points. This is getting to the core of deeper thinking. Not only were the students sharing their own perspective, but they were listening to their peers and responding appropriately. Most of my students are near the beginning of their musical journeys. While the other two questions I asked the classes were not met with quite as much enthusiasm, they each claimed one successful class. These questions are ones that will resonate with them at every step of their journey. While their answers may evolve over time, their interests in these questions should never wane.

The next category of questions I asked was Connection Questions. In these questions the students were asked to make connections to the music we were currently rehearsing. Sometimes they needed to find a similarity to a music video I showed them, and other times I just had them reflect on how they approached performing the music. The four Connection Questions I asked the students were: (a)"What are you listening for and why?" (in rehearsal); (b) "What does this music remind you of? How is it similar to Fable?" (Fable was a piece we were rehearsing); (c)"What are the emotions of your concert pieces?";and (d) "This song is related to one of your pieces (that they were currently rehearsing) What's the connection?"

In posing these questions to the students, I was following the advice of Cindy Bell in her article *Critical Listening in the Ensemble Rehearsal: A Community of Learners* (Bell, C. 2018). Bell writes that through short sessions of critical listening followed by guided discussions the students will gain a greater understanding of the music and improve their aural perceptions. I think that critical listening and musical analysis are foundational skills that all musicians must acquire. Based on the student response to these questions, the students do not agree with me. Of the 4 questions posed to the students, only one "What are the emotions of your concert pieces?" was considered a success.

Chart 6

Connections to music in Class (with or without video/audio recording):

27 Feb. **Concert Band**. **Connection Question.** 1. Talk to friends. 2. **No sentence frames**. "What are you listening for, and why?" (In their concert pieces). - 4 students answered (Bix, Chewie, Boba, Rogue), some elaboration.

7 Feb. - **Concert Band**. **Connection Question.** 1. **Don't talk to friends**. 2. **No sentence frames**. Listened to music from *Conan the Barbarian. (Poledouris, B. 1982).* "What did this remind you of? How is it similar to Fable?" 3 students responded. (Padme, Kleya, Boba) Padme made the connection to Fable's time signature and rhythm. Kleya and Boba gave single word answers.

13 March - **Wind Ensemble.** **Connection Question.** 1. **Don't talk to friends**. 2. Sentence Frames. Watched *How to Listen to Classical Music -Emotion-Mapping. (Sol, N. 2024)*. "What are the emotions of your concert pieces and why?" 6 students (Leia, Madonna, Vader, Storm, Han Solo, Wonder Woman) were able to defend their choices.

April 4th - **Jazz Cadets**. **Connection Question.** 1. Talk to friends. 2. Sentence frames. 3. Watched *2SAXY in Malta.(2SAXY, 2024)* "This song is connected to one of your pieces. What's the connection?" - Nobody wanted to talk. Nobody made the connection to the blues form.

Due to the students' reluctance to engage with these questions, I can only assume they don't want to do critical listening, or they lack the foundational knowledge required to properly engage the question. When I played *2SAXY in Malta* for the Jazz Cadets I thought it would be a winner. 2SAXY is a two saxophonists and a drummer that walk through the city of Malta playing their music, flash mob style. It's fun, the three performers are culturally diverse, and the

music is similar in style to what the Jazz Cadets were playing (albeit at a much higher level). In the 10 minutes we watched of the video, 2SAXY played over the standard blues song form the entire time. Two of the three songs that the Jazz Cadets were working on at that moment also utilized the blues song form. Nobody made the connection. Even after I explained what the connection was, and pointed it out during the video, the students couldn't follow me. I found out later that day the students have never been taught about the harmonic progressions, or the functionally of the chords. What I considered a basic first step in the music they were learning, they had bypassed entirely.

Another factor to consider in these connection questions is the possibility of being wrong. In some of these questions I was looking for specific answers or certain possible answers. This adds pressure to the students, and moves away from every answer being equally correct as with the general questions category. Now they need to figure out a specific angle to examine the question from. This requires a much deeper level of thought and analysis of their concert music and the presented video (if there was one). If they guessed wrong, they were wrong in front of the entire class. While I go out of my way to create a fun and healthy classroom environment, nobody wants to be wrong in front of their peers. Perhaps, as evidenced by the 2SAXY question, these students hadn't done any analysis of their music before. As a composer, I tend to analyze all the music that interests me. But I have been a professional musician for 35 years, and this may have been a blind spot for me. Maybe if I had established a routine of doing guided listening sessions on our concert music, the students would have been able to make the connections more easily.

The final type of questions I asked the students were Reaction Questions. These questions involved playing a piece of music or video for the students and getting their feedback. The

questions ranged from the basic "What did you think of this music?" to the specific "How did changing articulations affect the performance?". I expected this category of questions to be well received with the students. My CT regularly played new music for the different classes, so this routine of listening to something before rehearsal started was already established. Now I was just asking them to reflect on what they had heard. These questions did the worst of all three categories. Of the four questions I asked the students, three were unsuccessful and one was neutral. None were successful. I was very surprised by this data.

Chart 7

React to a Video/Audio

29 Jan - **Stage Band**. **Reaction Question**. 1. **Don't talk to friends**. 2. **No Sentence Frames**. Listened to *Creep by Postmodern Jukebox. (PostModern Jukebox, 2015).* "Is this Jazz?" Followed by "Why?" Coltrane responded - No. Couldn't answer why. Nobody else responded.

April 4th - **Wind Ensemble**. **Reaction Question**. 1. **Don't talk to friends**. 2. **No sentence Frames**. 3. *Listened to Fanfare for the Common Man. (Copland, A).* "Give me an image for this music?"- 4 students responded: Wonder Woman, Vader, Batman, Nick Fury. (Thunder, Heroic, Sunrise on a new day, Jurassic Parky.)

30 April- **Concert Band** **Reaction Question**. 1. **Don't talk to Friends.** 2. Sentence Frames
Watched *Super Mario Theme, in the Styles of 6 Classical Composers. (Sol, N. 2024)* "How did articulations affect the changes?" 3 students responded (Chewie, Miles, and Zelda). Mostly short answers, Miles had a longer response.

30 April - **Stage Band**. **Reaction Question**. 1. **Don't Talk to Friends**. 2. Sentence Frames. Listen to *Miles Davis Bitches Brew. (Davis, M. 1970)* "What did you think of this recording" "I liked/didn't like it because…" 3 students responded (Kleya, Leia and Scofield). All short answers.

The students in the Concert Band spent the entire lesson on 30 April focusing on articulations. This video opened that lesson. Perhaps if I had done the lesson first and then watched the video, the students would have been more receptive to the differences in sound articulations create, and more willing to engage in conversation. But still, I thought the theme to Super Mario Brothers would have been a guaranteed win with the students. Clearly I was wrong.

The highest rated of these questions, April 4th's "Give me an image for this music?" (*Fanfare for the Common Man*, by Arron Copland), was borrowed directly from M. Masterson's article Moving Beyond "It's Got a Good Beat" (Masterson, M. 1994). In his article, Masterson concluded that through the use of metaphor and imagery, students can learn to think critically about music, evaluate cultural relevance, and make personal connections. Following the example in the article, after they shared their images, I told the students *Fanfare for the Common Man* was written in the lead up to World War II. I have always found the historical context in which pieces are created fascinating. The students were less impressed. This information did not result in further discussion.

These questions also included my first question of the data collection process, from 29 April, "Is it Jazz?" In discussing my ARP topic with my CT, he had told me to ask the Advanced Jazz Band (Stage Band) questions. They were almost all seniors, very accomplished musicians with their own points of view. I was in for good discussions, he assured me. I played them a recording of *Creep,* a well-known pop tune by Radiohead, being covered in a jazz style by the band, Postmodern Jukebox. Whether or not it qualifies as jazz is up for debate - which was exactly the point. All the students enjoyed the video, and most were familiar with the original song. The first student to speak said "No, it wasn't jazz." When I pressed him for a reason, he couldn't come up with one. After that nobody else wanted to offer an opinion. Maybe if the scaffolds had been there the results would have been different? I'll never know for sure.

Theme 3. Questions with Subjective Answers

Another theme that presented itself from the data I collected had to do with the kind of responses required. All of the questions had a possibility of two types of answers: subjective or specific. I asked the students more subjective questions than specific ones (8 out of 13 were

subjective), so one could argue the data is skewed in that direction. But the percentages of successful, neutral and unsuccessful questions were very clear. All four of my successful questions are included in this category. This means 50% of these questions were successful. Two of my three neutral questions showed up here as well, for a 25% neutral response from the students. Even with the subjective answers, two of these questions were still unsuccessful, bringing in the final 25%. Interestingly, these statistics are an exact match with the highest rated form of scaffolding (sentence frames and talk to friends).

The questions with subjective answers were open ended. It was less about what the students knew, and more about their personal opinions on the topic. The questions ranged from "Give me an emotion that fits this piece of music?" to "What image do you see when you listen to this?" to "What makes live performances engaging?". The possible answers were only confined by the thoughts of the students. They could go as deep down the rabbit holes as they wanted to. All four of my successful questions are included in this category. Two of my three neutral questions showed up here as well.You can see below, these questions with subjective answers were the most successful of all the questions I asked.

Chart 8

Questions with subjective answers

30 April - **Stage Band**. **Reaction Question**. 1. **Don't Talk to Friends**. 2. Sentence Frames. Listen to Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew. (Davis, M. 1970).* "What did you think of this recording" "I liked/didn't like it because…" 3 students responded (Kleya, Leia and Scofield). All short answers.

30 April .- **Jazz Cadets**. **General Question**. 1. Talk to Friends. 2. **No Sentence Frames**. "What Makes a Live Performance Engaging?" 5 students responded (Chewie, Boba, Link, Aretha*, Peach). Longer answers. After first three spoke all musical elements, I redirected with live performance specifically how is it different from a recording? Then Peach and Aretha spoke, with longer ideas.

April 29th - **Stage Band**. **General Question.** 1. Talk to Friends. 2. Sentence Frames. "What Makes a Live Performance Engaging?" 4 students responded (Leia, Sarah Vaughn, Wolverine, Coltrane). Mostly short answers - slight elaboration by Coltrane.

April 27th - **Wind Ensemble. General Question.** 1. Talk to friends, 2. **No sentence frames**. "What makes music good?" Very little engagement - only 3 students responded (Sarah Vaughn, Leia, Monk). All short answers.

April 22nd. - **Concert Band. General Question.** 1. Talk to friends.. 2. Sentence frames. "What makes music good?" - lots of engagement- 7 students responded (Zelda, Chewie, Ella Fitzgerald, Bix, Jabba, Captain Marvel and Miles).

April 4th - **Wind Ensemble**. **Reaction Question.** 1. **Don't talk to friends**. 2. **No sentence Frames**. 3. Listened to *Fanfare for the Common Man*. *(Copland, A. 1942)*. "Give me an image for this music?"- 4 students responded: (Wonder Woman, Vader, Batman, Nick Fury). Mostly short sentences or single words. (Thunder, Heroic, Sunrise on a new day, Jurassic Park-y.)

14 March - **Concert Band**. **General Question.** 1. Talk to friends (separated into groups). Sentence Frames. "Is Music the Universal Language. Yes, No, or Unsure? Defend your answer". Lots of student engagement, 7 students (Chewie, Han Solo, Zelda, Michel Camilo, Peach, Ella Fitzgerald, Norah Jones) spoke using paragraphs not single words.

13 March - **Wind Ensemble. Connection Question.** 1. **Don't talk to friends**. 2. Sentence Frames. Watched *How to Listen to Classical Music -Emotion-Mapping. (Sol, N. 2024)*.. "What are the emotions of your concert pieces and why?" 6 students responded (Leia, Madonna, Vader, Storm, Han Solo, Wonder Woman) Longer answers and were able to defend their emotional choices.

I believe these questions were more effective than the others because they acknowledge the fact that both listening and creating music is a deeply personal experience. No two people will have the exact same reaction to the same piece of music. As J. Kratus points out in his article, Music Listening is Creative (Kratus, J. 2017) much of how students experience music is informed by their individual feelings and history. By asking students questions without right or wrong answers, they are encouraged to reflect on their own unique musical journey and analyze the music through their personal lens. In sharing their answers with the class, their individualized point of view is celebrated, while the other students process that information becoming more flexible with their own ideas.

The questions that had specific answers fared far worse. I asked the students 5 questions that were looking for specific answers. Four of these five questions were unsuccessful, 80% . None of these questions were a success, but one achieved a neutral rating, 20%.

Chart 9

Questions with more Specific Answers

30 April- **Concert Band** **Reaction Question.** 1. **Don't talk to Friends.** 2. Sentence Frames. Watched *Super Mario Theme, in the Styles of 6 Classical Composers. (Sol, N. 2024).* "How did articulations affect the changes?" 3 students responded (Chewie, Miles, and Zelda). Mostly short answers, Miles had a longer response.

April 4th - **Jazz Cadets**. **Connection Question.** 1. Talk to friends. 2. Sentence frames. 3. Listened to *2SAXY Malta*. "This song is connected to one of your pieces. What's the connection?" - nobody wanted to talk. Nobody made the connection to the blues form.

27 Feb. **Concert Band** - **Connection Question.** 1. Talk to friends. 2. **No sentence frames**. "What are you listening for, and why?" (In their concert pieces). - 4 students answered (Bix, Chewie, Boba, Rogue), Short answers (bassline, Trumpets, my section), some elaboration.

12. 7 Feb. - **Concert Band**. **Connection Question.** 1. **Don't talk to friends**. 2. **No sentence frames**. Listened to music from *Conan the Barbarian*. *(Poledouris, B. 1982).* "What did this remind you of? How is it similar to Fable?" 3 Students responded. (Padme, Kleya, Boba) Padme made the connection to Fable. Kleya and Boba gave single word answers.

13. 29 Jan - **Stage Band**. **Reaction Question**. 1. **Don't talk to friends**. 2. **No Sentence Frames**. Listened to *Creep by Postmodern Jukebox. (PostModern Jukebox, 2015).* "Is this Jazz?" Followed by "Why?" Coltrane responded - No. Couldn't answer why. Nobody else responded.

These questions encouraged critical listening skills and thorough analysis of the music (either the video they just heard, or the music they have been working on in class). The students are clearly not fans of questions that have more specific answers. But I don't think it is their fault. As I discovered earlier, I don't believe the students have received any kind of training in how to listen critically. And if they have, it is only in regards to their isolated part. The idea of analyzing a piece in its entirety is a foreign concept.

Allsup and Baxter (2004) concluded that a deeper understanding can be reached by asking probing questions. The teacher should start with open ended questions and slowly focus on details based on the responses from the students. In my data collection I didn't follow this advice. I asked a single question of one kind or the other. Eight of my 13 questions were the open ended kind of questions that asked for subjective answers, five were not. The data shows that the students clearly preferred the former group. Allsup and Baxter concluded that these are the right questions to begin the discussion and critical thinking. They establish a clear path to deeper thinking. First you start with something open ended, such as "What does this piece make you think of?", then move to guided questions, "How did the musical texture change?", and finally isolate a desired concept with a specific question, "Who can tell me what instrument is this?". This clear path of tightening circle questions that scaffold as they progress, can hone in on small details and bring them to the forefront of the students' attention. It can help the students learn to better analyze the information, think more critically, and have an informed dialogue about it. In my question of the day approach, I would either have an open ended question or a specific one. According to Allsup and Baxter the open ended nature of my questions with subjective answers is the ideal starting point for musical discussions. The high success rate of these questions would validate that conclusion. The reason my specific questions did so poorly with the students is because they should never be used to start discussions. The students needed scaffolding questions to lead them up to the specific ones. After the fact, it's impossible to know for sure if my specific questions would have fared better if they had been preceded by subjective ones. But the data clearly shows that giving the students questions that require specific answers to start the discussions didn't work.

Theme 4. Some Students are Talkers

While this is hardly a revolutionary discovery, the data confirmed that some students like to talk. Some of my students are extroverts who enjoy being the center of attention and sharing their opinions with their classmates. On the other side of that coin, many students feel the opposite way. They are shy, and have zero desire to speak out in front of the class.

Between all the Band classes I teach, there are 98 students. About two-thirds of these students are taking more than one music class. Generally speaking the upperclassmen are in Wind Ensemble and Advanced Jazz Band (Stage Band) while the lowerclassmen tend to be in Concert Band and Jazz Cadets. This is not a completely accurate portrayal of how the students are spread out, but it's close. Most of these students heard the questions in more than one class (which is why I rarely repeated questions), and a handful of students got to hear my questions in three different classes. Of these 98 students that I posed questions to, only 28 responded. That's only 35%, which is not very good. This data tells me that I didn't do enough. All the types of different questions and answers, and all supports combined only engaged 35% of my students. Students don't sign up for band class to talk. I understand that. But I have to believe I can do better than 35%.

The two biggest contributors to my discussions were Chewie and Leia (students' names have been changed to protect their privacy). Chewie was the big winner with five discussions and Leia came in at four. Both of these students are in two classes, but they don't overlap. Chewie is a freshman who is in Concert Band and Jazz Cadets, while Leia is a senior who is in Wind Ensemble and the Jazz Band. Between his two classes, Chewie could have participated in seven discussions, he joined five. Between Leia's classes she had six discussions, and she spoke at four of them. I know both of these students were absent at times during the past year, so it is possible they weren't present for every question. If this is the case, my data isn't completely

accurate, and these students could have potentially inflated my numbers even higher if they had been present. Since these two students can be counted on to speak on almost every question they are presented with, I removed them to see if the results changed significantly.

Without Chewie adding to the discussions, Concert Band still had two successful questions, "What makes music good?" and "Is music the universal language? Yes, no or unsure?" His removal from the Jazz Cadets did knock their one successful rating down to a neutral, "What makes a live performance engaging?" Doing the same exercise with Leia didn't change Wind Ensembles scores at all. They still had one successful rating "What are the emotions of your concert pieces, and why?" and one neutral, "Give me an image for this piece (*Fanfare for the Common Man*)?" Unfortunately for the Advanced Jazz Band, by removing Leia's participation, all of their questions yielded unsuccessful results.

Three students tied for third place (Han Solo, Zelda, and Boba) in number of responses, with three each. Two of these students (Han Solo and Zelda) seem more introverted and shy, while Boba is very extroverted. As most of this group seems less likely to always need to share their opinion, I decided not to discard their contributions. There were ten students who spoke twice. These folks definitely don't have a compelling need to share in class, and yet they were inspired enough by my questions that they participated two different times. This tells me my questions and scaffolding were successful.

To better understand how to reach my most reluctant students (the 65% who never joined in the discussions), I decided to focus my attention on the students that only answered one question. Which questions were enticing enough to grab these shy students?

The results were all over the map. Nine of my thirteen questions drew in one-time contributors. Of those nine questions, four of them featured two different one-time contributors.

Chart 10

Questions with two One-time Responders

April 22nd. - **Concert Band. General Question.** 1. Talk to friends. 2. Sentence frames. "What makes music good?" - lots of engagement- 7 students responded (Zelda, Chewie, Ella Fitzgerald, Bix, **Jabba*, Captain Marvel*** and Miles).

April 4th - **Wind Ensemble**. **Reaction Question.** 1. **Don't talk to friends**. 2. **No sentence Frames**. 3. Listened to *Fanfare for the Common Man.(Copland, A. 1942)*. "Give me an image for this music?"- 4 students responded: (Wonder Woman, Vader, **Batman*, Nick Fury***). Mostly short sentences or single words. (Thunder, Heroic, Sunrise on a new day, Jurassic Park-y.)

14 March - **Concert Band**. **General Question.** 1. Talk to friends (separated into groups). Sentence Frames. "Is Music the Universal Language? Yes, No, or Unsure? Defend your answer". Lots of student engagement, 7 students (Chewie, Han Solo, Zelda, **Michel Camilo***, Peach, Ella Fitzgerald, **Norah Jones***) spoke using paragraphs not single words.

13 March - **Wind Ensemble. Connection Question.** 1. **Don't talk to friends**. 2. Sentence Frames. Watched *How to Listen to Classical Music -Emotion-Mapping. (Sol, N. 2024)*. "What are the emotions of your concert pieces and why?" 6 students responded (Leia, **Madonna***, Vader, **Storm***, Han Solo, Wonder Woman) Longer answers and were able to defend their emotional choices.

Chart 11

Questions with one One-time Responder

30 April - **Stage Band**. **Reaction Question**. 1. **Don't Talk to Friends**. 2. Sentence Frames. Listen to Miles Davis *Bitches Brew*. *(Davis, M. 1970)*. "What did you think of this recording" "I liked/didn't like it because…" 3 students responded (Kleya, Leia and **Scofield***). All short answers.

30 April - **Jazz Cadets**. **General Question**. 1. Talk to Friends. 2. **No Sentence Frames**. "What Makes a Live Performance Engaging?" 5 students responded (Chewie, Boba, Link, **Aretha***, Peach). Longer answers. After 1st three spoke all musical elements, I redirected with live performance specifically how is it different from a recording? Then Peach and Aretha spoke, with longer ideas.

April 29th - **Stage Band**. **General Question.** 1. Talk to Friends. 2. Sentence Frames. "What Makes a Live Performance Engaging?" 4 students responded (Leia, Sarah Vaughn, **Wolverine***, Coltrane). Mostly short answers - slight elaboration by Coltrane.

April 27th - **Wind Ensemble. General Question.** 1. Talk to friends, 2. **No sentence frames**. "What makes music good?" Very little engagement - only 3 students responded (Sarah Vaughn, Leia, **Monk***). All short answers.

27 Feb. **Concert Band** - **Connection Question.** 1. Talk to friends. 2. **No sentence frames**. "What are you listening for, and why?" (In their concert pieces). - 4 students answered (Bix, Chewie, Boba, **Rogue***), Short answers (bassline, Trumpets, my section), some elaboration.

All but one of these questions "What are you listening for, and why?" have subjective answers, and it could be argued that the outlying question is open-ended as well (even though I wanted to direct their attention specifically to the melody and bass). Also, all but one of these questions featured some level of scaffolding, solidifying my previous finding that students respond more when supports are present. Nappi states that, "Questions that are effective promote inquiry, student self-assessment, and creativity even as they stimulate critical thinking"(Nappi, 2017, pg 37). I don't know if these questions checked those boxes for those students, but something must have clicked for them. I assume that when a particular question resonated with that normally shy student, they felt comfortable enough in my classroom to share their opinion. I can also assume questions with subjective answers and that have scaffolding in place could be the difference between a student speaking up or remaining silent.

Chapter 5 Discussions, Limitations, and Conclusion

As I searched for the best questions for my students I followed Baxter and Allsup's (2004) approach of using open-ended questions to facilitate discussions, and focusing on the three possible domains of music: Analytical, judicial and creative. My most successful questions tended to be open-ended and judicial. The judicial questions focused on personal preference and reflection were much better received by the students. The analytical questions, in which the students searched for more specific answers were less successful and more difficult to get a response from. I didn't ask any creative questions.

In Bell's article (2018) on critical listening, she stressed the importance of critical listening to develop student's ability to perceive, evaluate and synthesize the musical information. Bell also emphasized that critical listening is a skill that must be taught to the students. Six of the questions I asked the students required critical listening, as the students listened to (or watched) a piece of music and analyzed it. Sometimes I had them listen for specific techniques (such as articulations); other times the students needed to identify the connecting thread to their concert music. Most of these questions were poorly received and resulted in minimal interaction from the students. This leads me to believe that the students have not had enough practice listening critically to music. Bell would have second and third listenings after the discussions so students could hear what was discussed. I never did this, as my goal was discussion not analysis. I was also always working against a time restraint and needed to get to the rehearsal part of the class.

Listening and creating music is a deeply personal experience. Kratus (2017) suggested by leaning into student's personal experience and histories students will be more responsive. I found this to be true, the questions I posed that encouraged students to view the subject matter

through their personal lens were much more successful. I further encouraged this idea when I allowed the students to talk to each other before answering. This support allowed all students to share their ideas with another student, even if they were reluctant to speak in front of the whole class. Of the two supports I tested on the students, (talking to each other and sentence frames) talking to each other was the more successful - but the combination of both worked the best.

In one question I mimicked an example in the article by Masterson (1994). He had students listen to "*Fanfare for the Common Man*" by Copland and come up with imagery. I had my students listen to the same piece, and this question was a neutral success (only four students responded). I also followed Masterson's example of giving the students historical information about the music to further stimulate discussion. My students didn't care about this information and offered no additional insight. I used a similar approach in different question that yielded a successful rating (six students responded). In this question I had students attach emotions to their concert pieces. While emotion is different from imagery, it still forces the students to think about the music from the audience's perspective, and ask what the music is portraying. Because students were intimately familiar with these pieces (as we'd been rehearsing them for a month) they had already formed their own opinions about the music (Kratus). The combination of these two concepts made this question the most successful in Wind Ensemble.

My most successful question of the project was "Is music the universal language? Yes, no, or unsure. Defend your answer." This question was subjective, but the students were forced to think analytically (Baxter &Allsup, 2004) to defend their position. They also reflected and spoke from personal experience (Kratus, 2017). Finally the success of the question was also partly due to following the pedagogical principles outlined by Robinson, Bell, and Pogonoski

(2011). I created a safe and nurturing environment, I acted as a guide on the side by encouraging different points of view, and I stimulated the student's thinking with an open-question.

Limitations

My biggest theoretical limitation was I rarely asked more than one question. Only two of my examples had follow on questions. Nappi (2017) stresses the need for a series of questions to facilitate discussion. My most successful question ("Is music the universal language?") and one of my least successful questions ("Is this jazz?") were the only times I presented a follow up question. Because of this the students were not given the full opportunity to explore each topic and come up with follow up questions. Because of my single question limit, I couldn't employ Bloom's questioning instruction principle, which is a system of "asking questions that become progressively more challenging and provides a structure for teachers to model complex thinking" (Nappi, 2017, p. 32). In other words, I should have started the students with low level, open ended questions, and moved progressively to more challenging and higher level questions. My single question approach always picked from one category or the other. The open-ended lower level questions were generally better received than the higher level questions. If I had planned a series of questions that progressively built on themselves it's possible the students would have responded more enthusiastically.

Another tenant that I didn't fully explore was Nappi's questioning circles approach. This model stressed the "The Subject Matter, Personal Response, and External Environment or Reality" (Nappi, 2017, p. 35). My questions focused on the subject matter and the student's personal responses. In other words, how familiar they were with the subject (as music students they should have had a base level familiarity with every question I asked), and personal response

dealt with their personal thoughts about the question. My study did not focus on the external environment. This last tenant deals with how the questions relate to other disciplines. While I tend to think about things like this all the time, I didn't approach this specifically with the students. Only once did I explain interdisciplinary connections to the students (when I explained the context in which Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man* was written), and it did not inspire conversation. Had I regularly drawn more explicit connections for the students, it's possible they might have been more engaged.

Some of the methodological limits I encountered didn't become apparent until after the fact. Through analyzing my data, different categories appeared. Unfortunately I didn't employ these various categories equally across the board. If I had asked the same questions and the same amount of question categories to both groups of students the data would have been more conclusive. If I had asked my most popular question without scaffolding would it have still been as successful? And would my worst questions have worked better with more supports? Also because the majority of the students were in more than one class I didn't really have seperate groups to collect data from, it was more of a loose pool of students. I'm not sure if this made things better or worse, but it would have been more definitive with separate groups of students.

Conclusion

Through this project I set out to find the best questions for student interest and participation in discussions. Additionally, I researched whether the use of sentence frames and/or briefly talking with their neighbor would make a difference in student engagement. The results of my research clearly show that students are most likely to engage with open-ended questions. Students also showed a strong preference for questions that had subjective answers.

The addition of scaffolding to the questions was a clear boost to student engagement. Sentence frames garnered more engagement than no supports, talking to friends garnered more students than sentence frames, and the combination of sentence frames and talking to friends resulted in more students speaking up than all other categories.

In the beginning of this project, I stated that getting students to engage in discussions is the path to deeper thinking. Now at its conclusion, I have learned that by asking open-ended, subjective questions with proper scaffolding, students are significantly more likely to participate in class discussions.

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