HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE MUSIC TEACHERS

Steven J. Morrison
School of Music
The University of Washington

- Frequent and sustained eye contact
  - Keep the avenues of communication open

- Expressive rather than strict conducting
  - Explore the range from MONITOR to MIRROR

- Combinations of expressive conducting characteristics
  - Combine elements for greater specificity

- Musical tasks followed by specific and relevant feedback
  - Pinpoint and Prescribe . . . Respond and Reinforce

- Inclusion of diverse musical issues
  - style / articulation
  - intonation
  - tone quality
  - dynamics / expression
  - theory
  - correct notes and rhythms

- Less time talking . . . more time performing
  - Allow the students to show what they know

- Model superior music-making
  - Students learn from doing . . . and hearing

In short, what is key?

- demonstrating variety
  - conveying information
    - reflecting fluency
  - promoting student activity
One of the objectives of this workshop is to transfer selected research findings into the familiar setting of the music class. For more details on each of the points presented, please refer to the following articles included in today’s session:


* * *

For excellent overviews of research on effective music teaching, please seek out the following two sources:


The SCRIBE program described as part of today’s presentation is courtesy of Robert Duke and Vasser Farra University of Texas - Austin, © 1993-1995.

Commercial video footage shown was excerpted from *The Art of Conducting: Great Conductors of the Past*, Teldec Video © 1994.

Copies of this workshop’s transparencies are available at: http://depts.washington.edu/uwmused/capistrano.htm

Dr. Steven J. Morrison is Assistant Professor of Music and a member of the Music Education faculty at the University of Washington in Seattle. You are welcome to contact the presenter at sjmorris@u.washington.edu
Preliminary Questions

1. How does one judge the **effectiveness** of a fine arts teacher?

2. What are 3 things an **effective** teacher does?

3. What is one way in which I am an **effective** teacher?
More Preliminary Questions

What is so special about “fine arts?”

• Content • Engagement • Specialization • Experience

Why not THE seven habits?

What does “effective” mean?

Possibilities include . . .

(Historical)
• A tradition of program & performance excellence

(Comparative)
• Improved student achievement
  • More positive student attitude
  • Higher regard by colleagues
  • Stronger evaluations by “outsiders”
Frequent and sustained eye contact

How do we keep the conversation going after the music begins?

Conducting = Teaching

and

Teaching = Communication

Every avenue of communication is vital throughout the learning experience.

“Eye contact had a profound influence on other nonverbal behaviors. . . Novice conductors spend significantly less time maintaining eye contact than did the experts.”

Expressive rather than strict conducting

How much can be communicated through gesture?

MONITOR

Tempo & Beat

MIRROR

Becoming the music

Expressive conducting includes varied use of:

• right & left hands (patterns, cues, gestures, mirroring)

  • facial expression
  
  • body movement

“Band members preferred the expressive over the strict conductor . . .”

Combinations of expressive conducting characteristics

How extensive is the conducting vocabulary?

Gesture:

- Instructs
- Cues
- Reminds
- Models
- Directs attention
- Evaluates

In short . . . **GESTURE COMMUNICATES**

How do I show $p$? Let me count the ways . . .

“Clarinetists, play the staccato softly.”

“Low brass, plenty of support so your entrance will speak.”

“Beautiful solo, Mark!”

“Experts tend to simultaneously combine expressive qualities from two or more categories . . .”

Musical tasks followed by specific and relevant feedback

The “Music” -- Where do we get to it? How do we show we got it?

Effective teachers:

*pinpoint* performance issues in need of attention and

*prescribe* strategies for improvement.

But wait! There’s more!

They also:

*respond* to students’ attempts to problem-solve and

*reinforce* musical progress.

“If teachers want students to perceive their teaching as good . . . patterns beginning with a musical task presentation and ending with specific positive feedback should be used.”

## Inclusion of diverse musical issues

### What are the musical tasks?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Junior</th>
<th>Senior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More than just the right fingerings . . .</td>
<td>(11.0)</td>
<td>(10.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• style / articulation</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• dynamics / expression</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• tempo</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• intonation</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• theory</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• tone quality</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• rhythm</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• . . . and, yes, correct notes</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Even though some of these elements were not addressed often, their presence was important . . . “

Less time talking . . . more time performing

How does balance affect the rehearsal?

Allow the students to show what they know.

“Experienced band directors, acknowledged as outstanding by their colleagues, spent relatively little time in verbal instruction and more than half the available rehearsal time in performance.”

How do students learn quality?

Students learn from doing . . . and hearing.

Where does the music come from?

The teacher is the conduit  The teacher is the source

How does the student judge the musical outcome?

The student is the measure  The music is the measure

“Students in the model group demonstrated greater and more long-lasting enthusiasm for the study of the selected piece.”

Checklist

☐ Eye contact
☐ Expressive conducting/gesture
☐ Expressive combinations
☐ Specific tasks / positive feedback
☐ Diverse musical issues
☐ Maximum performance time
☐ Modeling
Effective habits . . .

• demonstrate variety
• convey information
• reflect fluency
• promote student activity

Effective music teachers

MODEL, COMMUNICATE and FOSTER musicianship.