

Maximizing Student Teacher Experience

by Anthony Susi

Benefits for Students in Cooperating Teacher's Class:

- * An extra pair of hands provides more individual attention for needy students.
- * The fresh ideas and vitality of a student teacher can provide more motivation.
- * The student teacher's new approach can provide increased understanding and reinforcement of the concepts you have been teaching.

The benefits described cannot occur without the proper guidance and communication from the college supervisor and the cooperating teacher. The following outline suggests the role of each member of the student teaching team.

Role of College Supervisor

- * Discuss philosophies, program and responsibilities with cooperating teacher before making a placement to ensure the needs of the student teacher will be met.
- * Provide the cooperating teacher with their perception of the prospective student teacher's strengths and weaknesses before the student is placed.
- * Observe the student teacher in a variety of settings (i.e., small group lesson, large ensemble rehearsal) at equal and frequent intervals throughout the period.
- * Provide feedback to both the student teacher and cooperating teacher about your observations through pre- and post-conferences. Offer suggestions when necessary.
- * Listen to suggestions and ideas from cooperating teacher concerning student teacher's strengths and weaknesses and share them with their university colleagues.
- * Be a resource for the cooperating teacher, making materials from the college music library available (books, recordings, videos).
- * Avoid last minute cancellation of a scheduled observation because it often impacts the week's lesson plans and is frustrating.

The shortage of qualified music teach-

continued high quality music education, it is the responsibility of experienced music teachers to nurture new ones. Teachers qualified to serve as cooperating teachers hold the power to help improve the situation for the next generation of students in music classrooms. If you have not participated in a training program to become a certified cooperating teacher, I strongly urge you to consider completing the course so you too can help groom the next group of music teachers.

Many directors of performing ensembles fear that having a student teacher could jeopardize the quality of their program. On the contrary, with the proper team work by the college supervisor, the student teacher and the cooperating teacher, everyone can benefit from the experience. While the benefits for the student teacher's career preparation are obvious, those of the cooperating teacher may not be.

Benefits for Cooperating Teacher

- * He or she can help you become more reflective on what works and what doesn't as you observe the student teacher present lessons in a different manner than you have.
- * He or she can help you re-evaluate and perhaps re-formulate your philosophy on teaching music as you explain to the student teacher why you do what you do.
- * Learn new strategies of teaching from the student teacher who is generally modeling methods taught to them by expert college professors.
- * The student teacher's enthusiasm and idealism give you and a renewed excitement about what you do.

Role of the Student Teacher

- * Meet with the cooperating teacher before placement begins to discuss your goals and expectations and those of the cooperating teacher. Find out about the curriculum, rehearsal/performance calendar and school schedule, as well as the rules and procedures of the school and the cooperating teacher's classroom.

department, committee or club meetings, workshops, fund raisers, music festivals and rehearsals/concerts outside of the school day whenever possible.

- * Inform the cooperating teacher if you will be absent as this will likely impact the week's lesson plans.
- * Prepare your lessons and materials in advance so you can share them with your cooperating teacher for feedback and insight before implementation.
- * Don't hesitate to ask when you are uncertain about what you are doing or why the cooperating teacher does something different than you are accustomed to.
- * Be open-minded to suggestions and constructive criticism.
- * Don't try to be a carbon copy of your cooperating teacher. Approach each lesson in a manner that you feel comfortable and confident teaching without worrying about how your college supervisor or cooperating teacher would do it.
- * Be professional in all aspects of the job. This includes a positive attitude, the manner in which you dress and speak, punctuality, dependability and being impartial with the students.
- * Offer to do more than is asked of you.
- * Be a resource for the cooperating teacher, making materials from the college music library available (books, recordings, videos).
- * Keep a journal to help you reflect and learn from your day to day successes and failures.
- * Compare/share your notes with your peers who are also presently student teaching.

Role of the Cooperating Teacher

- * Become familiar with the student teacher's prior experience in music and teaching before they are placed. You need to know what the person's strengths and weaknesses are so you can prepare an experience that will be beneficial to both your student teacher and your stu-

Teachers

(Susi from page 28)

dent teacher's transcript if the college does not already provide one.

- * Ask for a copy of the prospective student teacher's resume if he or she already has one.
- * Arrange an interview with the prospective student teacher, preferably at your school.
- * Establish long and short term goals with the student teacher at the start of the semester, including time commitments and expectations of the student teacher's responsibilities.

Provide them with the following materials at the onset:

- School handbook with school schedule, calendar, rules and established consequences, etc.
- Performing ensemble handbook with rehearsal/performance calendar, grading policy, etc.
- Your weekly schedule and class rosters listing each student's name, grade and instrument/voice.
- Copy of the music curriculum.
- * Orient the student teacher to the routines, grading procedures and behavioral expectations of the school and your classroom.

In addition to providing the materials listed above, you also need to:

- Give a tour of the entire school and try to introduce him or her to the entire staff.
- Provide a recording and program from your most recent concert so he/she has a frame of reference in regards to what your students abilities.
- Share copies of recent tests, quizzes and assessment tasks/forms.

- Show them what resources you have and where to locate them, including music, books, tapes/CDs, videos and software.

- Share copies of correspondence sent out to all parents of your students.

- **Provide scores up front** for any selections you intend him or her to direct.

- Have him or her observe the first few days to get a feel for your teaching style and to get a sense of what works with your students.

- Gradually increase the teaching load as you observe the level of response and cooperation from your class.

- * Treat the student teacher as a colleague rather than a student.

- Let them know that you value their ideas and hope to learn new ideas from them also.

- You should not address them by their first name in front of the students.

- You should not belittle their actions or correct them in front of the students.

- * Provide continuous feedback about the student teacher's performance. Your perspective and suggestions will be well received by the student teacher and college supervisor when evidence of strengths/weaknesses are presented in the following manners:

- written critiques kept in a journal to measure progress over time.
- verbal consultation to present reflective questions that will guide him or her to self-evaluation.
- audio/video taping and scripting to reveal clarity of directions, sequencing, pace and class participation.
- balance constructive criticism with the positive things and a generous amount of encouragement.

- * Provide as many teaching experiences as possible. It is in the best interest of the student teacher to be involved in all aspects of the teacher's responsibilities to gain the experience he/she can't get from a book or college classroom. Allow and encourage the student teacher to take advantage of the following opportunities:

- write lesson plans complete with behavioral objectives and teaching strategies.
- design assessment tools to measure student comprehension and skills.
- select pedagogical materials and/or repertoire.
- perform your teacher duties with you (i.e.; cafeteria, bus, study hall).
- attend all your job-related meetings (faculty, department, conference, committee and clubs).
- participate in fund-raising activities.

- participate in a choir and/or band section that is not their applied voice/instrument.

- give small group or one on one lessons.
- grade homework assignments and tests.
- conduct large ensemble rehearsals and performances.
- coach a small ensemble.

In summary, your task is to provide an environment and guidance that will allow the student teacher to bridge the gap from theory to practice and idealism to reality.



TONY SUSI is in his 17th year teaching music in the public schools at both the middle and high school levels. Tony is a clinician and guest conductor for symphonic, jazz and marching bands. He has received all superior ratings in his district throughout the eastern