

WHO AM I? HELPING MUSIC EDUCATION UNDERGRADUATES THINK, FEEL AND ACT LIKE TEACHERS

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Roberts (1993) reports that the primary referent other for music education undergraduates as they seek to develop a teacher identity is their studio teacher. The secondary referent other is the collective influence of upper class music education majors. This is likely due to the amount and consistency of contact time between these groups.

Music education professors rarely interact with undergraduate music education majors as often as studio teachers and upperclassmen (Kingsbury, 1988). Undergraduates often enter schools of music without being officially categorized as music education majors for their first couple of years of study. All have plenty of performance experience and few have any teaching experience. They readily identify themselves as performers and this notion is reinforced with regular performance requirements. Performance is the common link for all music majors and many music education majors fail to realize they can (and should) assume both identities (Hellman, 2007).

The frequent failure of music education majors to adopt a teacher identity is not the fault of their primary or secondary referent others. It is the fault of music education programs. Programs must be redesigned, to whatever degree possible, to allow music education professors to be the primary referent other for undergraduates from their first semester on, and continue to support upper class music education majors as secondary referent others.

Below are some ideas for accomplishing this, some idealistic, most not; some already occurring in institutions around the county, most not.

- Categorize all music education majors as such from their first semester on.
- Distribute course requirements so that music education majors take at least one course from a music education professor every semester.
- Devise materials that provoke “teacher-thoughts” from undergraduates in each of their courses, requiring them to reconsider every student task from a teacher’s perspective. For example, have students reflect on their studio teacher’s teaching methods and strategies; or have students analyze lectures/presentations/class sessions (history, theory, aural skills) from a teacher’s perspective; or have students analyze the rehearsal techniques of their major ensemble director.
- Encourage major ensemble directors to consider the presence of music education majors in their ensembles, perhaps leading to discussions (during or outside of rehearsals) of their thought processes in rehearsal preparations, score study, repertoire selection, etc.
- Establish partnerships with schools that allow all music education majors regular opportunities to teach supervised private and/or group lessons.

- Require all music education majors to conduct a series of interviews with the public/private school music teacher who most influenced them. It is likely that undergraduates have their own notion of what teaching is through apprenticeship of observation, but knowledge gained from observation is not influenced by the behind-the-scenes work of teaching (Lortie, 1975).
- Establish a formal mentoring system with upperclassmen. This could include organized meetings to discuss the music education program experience from the upperclassmen's perspective; or requiring that upperclassmen involve (through observation of and reflection on) at least one underclassman in every off-campus music education program requirement such as observing or field experiences.