

INFUSING INFORMAL LEARNING INTO THE MUSIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM

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Regelski (1969) suggests that music education curricula must be relevant in order to meet the needs of the student which in turn leads to more authentic student learning. Educators who utilize informal learning practice have the power to engage their students in authentic music making and thereby empower musicianship. (Batt-Rawden & DeNora, 2005; Folkestad, 2006; Green, 2002, 2008; Jaffurs, 2004) Although university music education programs in general are aware of the need to help future teachers break out of habitual modes of thinking about music learning, and envision forward looking instructional approaches, a larger perspective is needed in music education to help adaptation to current cultural and societal frameworks so that we in the music education profession can participate with “engaging fully with this universe of potentials.” (Wheatley, 2006, p. 73)

One potential solution is to incorporate informal learning into music education curricula via performance and pedagogical practice (Goodrich, 2005). Using informal learning in addition to established practice will assist music education students with opportunities for connecting with and parlaying teaching directives to their future students.

Various musical styles that incorporate informal learning include jazz, popular music, rock, hip-hop, and rap (e.g., Elliott, 1995; Green, 2008). Implementation of music performance via informal learning routes is of primary consideration before additional cultural elements (e.g., lingo) can be introduced to the students (Goodrich, 2008). An existing structure in music education for incorporating informal learning practice into the curricula includes peer mentoring (e.g., Alexander, 1980; Cartwright, 2001; Feeman, Madsen, & Smith, 1988; Goodrich, 2007). In addition, utilizing systems thinking in conjunction with establishing a matriarchal framework in ensembles can contribute to a learning environment rich in informal learning and practice (e.g., Capra, 1996; Checkland, 1985; Morgan, 2006; Wheatley, 2006).

It is time to shed the “1920s” structural foundations of ensembles as the sole framework for music education programs. Informal learning can occur in addition to already existing ensemble practice (e.g., concert band, orchestra, choir) and allow for an opportunity within the profession to literally be open to exchanging information, energy, and materials with the current cultural and societal norms in the surrounding environment.