



**Society for Music  
Teacher Education**

**2023 Symposium on Music Teacher Education  
Presentations**

**Session 7 – Saturday, 2:00PM**

Libby Gardner Concert Hall

Elevating a Culture of Belonging: The Role of Grassroots Policy Activism in Teacher Education

Patrick Schmidt

Participants: Max Keisling, Lily Ling, Tatyana Louis-Jacques, Adrian Rodrigues, Michaela Rael, & Clara Yoon

The growing complexity experienced by those working in schools and community-oriented arts environments today necessitates considerable re-direction on the formational priorities established within music teacher education programs, as well as upon the professional disposition and capacities of music educators in the field (Author, 2022). Indeed, Henderson and Forbat's (2002) characterization of "compromised citizenship" may best describe the challenges faced by many music educators today. Thus, the question driving this presentation is: Should music teacher education program priorities be reconfigured, given the unprecedented way teachers must navigate school politics, curricular restrictions, program advocacy, and a growing set of policy demands, often without adequate understanding, training, or guidance?

Arguing for a view that values grassroots policy practice as definitional to the micropolitics of schooling (who gets to do what, has the power to do so, and how relational networks operationalize and distribute such power) this panel troubles the notion that educators can ever belong to their work communities without some modicum of local policy engagement (Kristen & Lawson, 2018). As Shieh (2023) argues policy and political practice are constitutional to music educators becoming citizens of the spaces they inhabit. To address and exemplify the practical application of policy activism in the field, this presentation offers six representative cases. We do so by drawing from and bringing together the voices of six diverse music education practitioners (two Latinx, two Asian-Americans, one African American and one White) working within a significant cross-section of contemporary practices: High School band and choral programs, a highly selective college preparatory program, music directorship on Broadway, and an expansive studio program.

Our collective aim is to highlight the impact of a grassroots policy activism approach, and its potential role in problem grappling (Author 2017) and teacher empowerment and professional capacity (Shaw, 2018; West and Bautista, 2021; Westerlund and Gault, 2021). We offer real-world examples where larger educational policy issues intersect with music program challenges, and how music teachers can contribute to their labor communities. Each case study provides design and implementation strategies structured around a policy briefs focused on the following areas of practice: LGBT curricular rights, open enrollment and school disempowerment, diversity-oriented leadership, fairness and representation in Union rules, and equity and school attendance policies. Each brief delineates the following elements: problem recognition and critique, policy analysis frame, stakeholder voice (interviews), contextualization, and recommendations.

By centering the voices of six diverse individuals working in the field and representing a plurality of practices, this Programs, Practices, and Issues proposals highlights the trials and opportunities, frustrations and discoveries emergent from teacher practice as grassroots policy action. The cases herein link belonging and policy conflict through emotional storylines (Verhoeven and Metze, 2022) as "generative narratives that allows people to draw upon various discursive categories to give meaning to specific social phenomena" (p. 56). The presentation will invite attendees to a robust discussion on how such approaches can benefit and be better integrated in music teacher preparation and how they can make an important contribution at a time of significant professional disruption.

DGH 270

**A Beginning Music Teacher's Micropolitical Literacy Development**

Ryan Shaw

Teachers' negotiation of work inevitably involves issues of power, diplomacy, and cooperation. In the research literature, this has been termed micropolitics (Blasé, 1991; Hoyle, 1982), and the ability to "read" micropolitical situations has been identified as micropolitical literacy (Kelchtermans, 2005; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002). Micropolitical literacy has especially been central to studies of beginning teachers, with researchers suggesting that its development is important for forging professional identity. Furthermore, scholars have suggested micropolitical literacy may impact job satisfaction and retention, noting special relevance in under-resourced urban districts (Curry et al., 2008; Johnson et al., 1994).

In music education, several studies have involved micropolitics and micropolitical literacy as a central element of inquiry (Conway & Hibbard, 2018; Conway & Rawlings, 2016; Conway, Rawlings, & Hibbard, 2017; Cortesio, 2022) or have

implicated micropolitics and micropolitical literacy despite these topics not being enumerated in the purpose or research questions (e.g., Conway et al., 2005; Shaw, 2020, 2022; Stringham & Snell, 2019). However, no explicit attempts have been made to understand micropolitical literacy of beginning music teachers in urban districts. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore one beginning music teacher's micropolitical literacy concern with explicit connections to the original framework put forth by Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002). The research questions were: (a) how does the participant describe their micropolitical understanding, (b) how does the participant describe their micropolitical strategies, (c) how does the participant feel about their micropolitical literacy?

#### Method

This research was informed by Kelchtermans and Ballet's (2002a) three-part theory of micropolitical literacy and took the form of a year-long single case study of a beginning music teacher's pursuit of micropolitical literacy. I knew the teacher, who I call Eliav (a pseudonym), as an undergraduate and knew the challenging situation he had landed in with his first job after college. He arrived in an urban district that had experienced turmoil—declining enrollment, budget problems, cuts to arts programs, accountability pressures, leadership changes, and eventually the COVID-19 pandemic—an intense, but not extreme situation of what Yurkovsky (2022) refers to as turbulence.

#### Findings

Qualitative analysis of interview transcripts suggested themes aligned with the theoretical framework aspects of know (understanding), do (strategies), and feel (experiential). The participant's knowledge development focused on power dynamics, structures, and relationships. Strategies included gaining clout and reframing situations. Furthermore, the participant's experience of micropolitical literacy development was fraught with negative emotions and uncertainty. Overall, literacy development was stymied by systemic challenges in the district.

#### Scholarly Significance

This study helps to illuminate micropolitical literacy in beginning music teachers and is therefore relevant to the work of the "Supporting Beginning Teachers" ASPA. Through a focused theory-driven examination, this research has the potential to add nuance and depth to the existing studies on this topic. This research is also timely: as worries of a post-pandemic teacher shortage loom, the profession needs continuing evidence to understand conditions that facilitate job satisfaction. Micropolitical literacy has the potential to facilitate optimal working conditions, contributing to teachers' longevity in the field.

## DGH 272

### The Great Music Teacher Resignation: A Study of Four Music Teachers Leaving Successful Music Programs during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Christopher Marra

In the wake of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, professionals throughout the United States began to reexamine their personal priorities and work conditions. Exhaustion, burnout, and perceived lack of support are among the most commonly cited reasons fueling the Great Resignation (Henry, 2021). During this time, public education is also experiencing a wave of teacher shortages. A recent nationwide poll by the National Education Association (NEA) found 55% of teacher respondents indicated they were more likely to leave education sooner than planned due to the pandemic (Jotkoff, 2022). The demands of being a music teacher prior to the pandemic have been thought to create more at-risk conditions for teacher burnout (Gardner, 2010; Hamann, 1990; Hamann, Daugherty, & Mills, 1987; Hamann & Gordon, 2000). With the added difficulties placed upon music teachers during the pandemic (Hash, 2020), attrition is likely to become an even greater concern for the profession. While music teacher migration and attrition has been well documented prior to the pandemic (Gardner, 2010; Hamann, 1990; Hamann, Daugherty, & Mills, 1987; Hamann & Gordon, 2000; Hancock, 2008; Hancock, 2009; Killian & Baker, 2006; Madsen & Hancock, 2002; McLain, 2005), few studies have examined the experiences of teachers who have decided to leave the profession all together. The purpose of this study is to describe the experiences of four music teachers who made the choice to leave successful instrumental teaching positions for another profession during the Covid-19 pandemic. A basic qualitative study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) and interview as method (Sideman, 2019) was used to examine the meaning participants made of their experiences. Research questions include: (a) How to participants describe their journey in teaching up to this point? (b) What are the perceived influences that contributed to the decision to leave their current positions? and (c) Where do participants see themselves in their most immediate positions? (d) How do participants compare their new work-life satisfaction when reflecting over the course of 18 months? Four participants were selected using a homogeneous purposeful sampling (Patton, 2015). Primary data collection included semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews over the course of 18 months. Implications for music teacher education and in-service teacher support will be addressed.

## DGH 302

### Navigating Anti-Woke Legislation in a Doctoral Sociology of Music Education Course

Barry Hartz, Edward White, Troy Thomas, Michelle Gibson, Rowoon Lee, Brendan Sweeney, & Eric Murianski

This presentation will orient attendees to legislation in one south-eastern state governing how topics related to race, gender, privilege, and oppression can be addressed in higher education classrooms. The format will be a panel discussion presented by the instructor and doctoral students in the Sociology of Music Education course conducted during Fall 2022 at one university.

Because issues of equity are central to this course, the passage of new legislation raised the possibility of dissonance between the course purpose and the intent of the legislation. This presentation will feature panelists describing how they grappled with equity in music education within the context of legal restrictions on how those discussions could occur.

The importance of equity in music education is reflected in the content for this individual course, in the contemporary literature (Garrett & Palkki, 2021; Hess, 2019; Talbot, 2018; Wright et al., 2021), and in the theme of this conference. A major theme of this course is that creating inclusive music learning environments requires an examination of whom music education has traditionally been designed to benefit and who has historically been underrepresented within music learning environments. The semester began with reading Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* as a foundation for understanding Hess (2019), Talbot (2018), and Garrett and Palkki (2021). Readings in the course were supplemented with podcasts including *Nice White Parents* (New York Times, 2020) and *Moral Panic in the Classroom* (Fresh Air, 2022), and documentary films including *Finding the Gold Within*, *Love Them First*, and *Underwater Dreams*. These readings were processed through written reflections and class discussions.

These discussions took place within a legal context that placed specific restrictions on how topics related to race, gender, privilege, and oppression could be presented. Specifically, the legislation prohibits instructors from suggesting or asserting that one race, sex, color, or nationality is morally superior to another; that any person is inherently racist, sexist, or oppressive; that one's status as privileged or oppressed is determined by race, color, sex, or national origin; or that virtues such as merit, hard work, or color blindness were created to oppress members of a certain race or sex. The law also makes it illegal for instructors to suggest or assert that any individual bears responsibility, should feel guilty, or should be discriminated against for past actions by members of the same race or sex. These strictures can be difficult to navigate because students committed to creating inclusive environments often experience a range of emotional responses when contemplating instances of exclusion within music education.

This presentation will feature the firsthand voices of an instructor and students describing how they navigated this challenging terrain. The presentation directly addresses the conference theme of *Elevating a Culture of Belonging* and connects with the focus of both the Curriculum and Social Justice ASPAs. It is timely because of the increasing instances of similar legislation in states throughout the US that will be affecting how issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion can be addressed in our classrooms.

## DGH 306

### Integrating Self-Compassion Content within Music Teacher Preparation Programs

Jamey Kelley, Allison Farley, Christopher Loftkin, & Ian Cicco

#### Background

In the field of social psychology, self-compassion is an emerging construct of how an individual treats themselves when encountering failure or obstacles (Neff & Vonk, 2009); it is often characterized as an alternative construct to self-esteem (i.e., a global valuation of one's self-worth). Self-compassion is described as multifaceted with three underlying components: self-kindness (the self-talk one engages in when encountering obstacles), common humanity (the understanding that failures and setback are not extraordinary in the human experience), and mindfulness (the awareness and openness to the present moment). Researchers have previously reported strong relationships between self-compassion and performance anxiety in musicians, where musicians who report low-levels of self-compassion also report high incidence of music performance anxiety (Farley & Kelley, 2022; Sigurdson & Ttir, 2020). Self-compassion may act as a safeguard against performance anxiety. Additionally, self-compassion training could be a useful tool for university students to combat the debilitating effects of music performance anxiety.

#### Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the usefulness and relevance of a self-compassion curriculum. This study extends previous inquiry on self-compassion in musicians to evaluate if a specific self-compassion protocol would be well-suited for music education preparation programs.

#### Method

To examine the suitability of self-compassion content within a teacher preparation curriculum, four university music education professors (with varying backgrounds and at different institutions) were enlisted to complete a self-compassion training workbook (i.e., *The Mindful Self-Compassion Workbook*, Neff & Germer, 2018). The workbook comprises 25 lessons on self-compassion that includes clarity on self-compassion content, reflective prompts, and meditation exercises. The participants completed the workbook over the 2022-2023 academic year. At ten points within the completion process, participants were asked to journal on: (1) What content would be useful information for students pursuing music teaching? (2) What class or types of classes (if any) should include this content within a music teacher preparation program?

#### Results

The self-study is entering the analysis phase. The participants' journals will be the data used for qualitative analysis; we will employ an open coding system (Saldaña, 2021) to identify themes concerning the value of self-compassion training as well as how to include self-compassion content within a music education curriculum.

#### Conclusion

Through this study, we hope to elucidate the key content and strategies for practicing self-compassion and to identify ways to embed this material within standard music education curricula. In addition to promoting music teacher health and wellness in pre-service teachers, this project reflects the conference theme, *Elevating a Culture of Belonging*. This project highlights the need for discussions addressing the mental health needs of our P-12 educators. Through research studies such as this, our field can help

identify support systems that promote health and job satisfaction in music educators, “cultivating a field where teachers will want to belong.

DGH 318

### WTFlorida: The Macro- and Micro-Challenges and Implications of Ever-Changing Policies

Margaret Flood, Anna Horltdt, & Emily Langerholc

This presentation aims to educate attendees and problematize the issues behind the ever-changing policies taking place in Florida that are affecting music teachers daily. We bring our perspectives and current experiences as public and private PK-12 teachers, graduate students, and teacher-educators to help contextualize the challenges at all levels of education. The recent NAfME Divisive Concepts Laws and Music Education report highlights a national perspective on how these policies affect the personal and professional lives of music educators. However, in states such as Florida, the uncertainty and fear instilled by current legislation are causing teachers to vastly change how they operate within the profession (Salvador, et al., 2023). These laws, which are continually broadened and increasingly exclusionary, are purposefully removing teachers’ pedagogical agency and undermining their expertise. This legislative environment necessitates that teachers be engaged and educated on current events at the local and national levels.

Our presentation aims to analyze and show real-life examples of some of these divisive policies. We also intend to problematize the discourse behind them and the lack of operational definitions used in framing these policies (e.g. Critical Race Theory, and imposed binary aspects of “Don’t Say Gay”) (NEA, 2022). Considering Florida State Department of Education’s structure of county-wide districts and resulting site-based management, we reveal various types of interpretations school administrators have used to create inequitable and exclusive situations in Florida schools. Lastly, we aim to discuss the challenges of the Parental Rights Policy (Parental Rights in Education, 2022), and the issues of credentials and monetary means to support the oversight of materials and curriculum content taught in schools.

To further contextualize the challenges, we share our experiences. As K-12 educators and current graduate students at a public university in Florida, Emily and Anna will discuss directives given to them by their administrators and graduate education programs, and interactions with parents. Margaret, coordinator and director of an undergraduate music-teacher prep program at a private institution, will discuss the challenges of preparing teachers for placements in public school internships. Furthermore, she shows how these policies may prevent various FEAPS, or state credential objectives, to be achieved within formal observation and portfolio assessments. We will also briefly examine the long legislative path that led to our current circumstances. Together, we discuss how we have worked to overcome the political roadblocks and create teachable moments about diversity, equity, and inclusion for ourselves, our research, and our students.

Our presentation hopes to reveal systematic issues embedded within these policies and encourages discussion and questioning from attendees throughout. As veteran teachers, we wish to collaborate and share resources with attendees, including those suggested by the NAfME report as well as practices that have worked in their classrooms. This presentation does not constitute legal advice but rather encourages people to further educate themselves about divisive policies while taking into account the lived experiences of educators facing down this troublesome legislation.

DGH 324

(no presentation this session)