

MUS 782

Discussion 1: Introductions

Jim Novak

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Kindly introduce yourself, where you are in the program, where you received your undergraduate degree, your current job, etc.

Also, talk about your current philosophy of music and music education. You do not need to do any research, but rather simply explain why you teach what you teach with what you know now. Include a list of the most important aspects of your personal philosophy of Music Education.

Also, read and comment on the one-page blog post by [Dr. Mitchell Robinson](#).

For those of you who have taken one of my classes before, feel free to talk about what newcomers might expect. (Be nice!)

My name is Jim Novak, and I attended the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for my undergraduate. I'll be entering my 21st year of teaching this year. I have taught in Nebraska, Iowa and South Dakota, and most of my career has been at the middle school level. We just moved back to Des Moines this summer, and I am in my first year as Director of Bands at Meredith Middle School, in the Des Moines Public School District. It is a large district, a fairly large band program, and a very involved schedule, but I'm always up for a challenge! I live in Urbandale (suburb of Des Moines) with my wife Erin, son Jay (11), and daughter Nora (4). I am in my fifth semester working toward my MME.

Even after teaching for 20 years, I don't know that I've given a good deal of thought on what my teaching philosophy is. I'm really looking forward to this course, as I feel like views are going to either change dramatically, or become very affirmed and cemented. My teaching philosophy, in the lens of a middle school band director, takes a three-pronged form. First, I feel like it is important for us to excite our 5th grade students about band at the middle school. They should know that, while band is great in elementary school, it gets even better as they get older, with more involved literature, more varied ensembles, and a greater variety of performance opportunities. Second, I feel like my job as a middle school band director is to continue to excite and motivate students through their time in middle school, while teaching them the concepts and skills they need to be successful at their current level and prepare them for what's next. I feel like it is important to instill the feeling that, in an ensemble, we are a part of something larger than ourselves, that everybody contributes to the whole, and that everybody is important and valued. Finally, I feel like it is important to provide a smooth transition to high school band, and to excite them about that experience and opportunity.

I really appreciate Dr. Robinson's blog post, particularly the fourth paragraph. For many students, music is how they identify themselves. It is where they feel the most comfortable. It is where they feel like they fit in. Band, choir and orchestra are the reason that some students

come to school in the first place. I can't imagine what the removal of music from a school's course offerings would affect those students' experience or identity.