

MUS 775

Discussion 1 - Introductions

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Please introduce yourself, telling us who you are, where you teach, where you are in the MME program, etc.

How do you know what to teach in your music classroom?

Skills

Topics

Literature

Competencies

Etc.

My name is Jim Novak, and I attended the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for my undergraduate. I am currently in my 20th year of teaching. I have taught in Nebraska, Iowa, and now in South Dakota, and most of my career has been at the middle school level. I serve as director of bands at Harrisburg South Middle School in Harrisburg, SD. I have two concert ensembles (6th grade band and 7th/8th combined band), and a jazz band that meets before school. I live in Sioux Falls with my wife Erin, son Jay (11), daughter Nora (4), and 3 birds. I am in my third semester working toward my MME. It has always been my goal to earn a master's degree, and I am happy to finally be in the process.

What I teach my middle school band students is largely guided by my curriculum. I have a list of skills that I need to teach or revisit over the course of the school year, such as proper instrument hold, playing position, embouchure formation, stick and mallet grip, etc. I also have a list of topics that I address over the year, broken down into when I like to introduce them to the students. I've got a curriculum map that gives me a general compass for covering those topics, such as keys, rhythms, musical literacy, terms, etc. This is covered primarily, but not exclusively, through individual lessons, using our band method book, *Measures of Success*.

I know everyone has their own unique teaching assignment, and many of us aren't afforded the luxury of individual band lessons. I consider myself very fortunate to have individual lessons as part of my assignment. As such, I use lessons as the primary source of teaching concepts and skills, and I use my ensemble literature to help reinforce those skills. As such, I try to select literature that is varied and interesting, and also that helps me address and reteach the necessary skills and concepts as laid out in my curriculum map.