

Highlights From
DISCOVERING HARMONY
Creating an Elementary Music Community

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Highlights From Discovering Harmony: Creating an Elementary Music Community
BRIEF TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
1) Beginning My Research 3) Goals and Hopes	4
2) The Next Three Months G) Group Development Progress	5
3) Concluding the Year D) Stage Three: Academic Content: 1) Authentic Learning Theron's Revelation	7
4) Revising My Curriculum Intro Activities for Group Stages	10
5) Resource Research Intro	15
6) The New Year B) 9) Stuck in Stages One and Two C) 5) Authentic Group Learning C) 7) Self-Assessments	17
7) Overall Conclusions A) Stages One and Two B) Stages Three and Four D) Answers to My Questions	24
8) Epilogue Student Reflections The Final Question	28
Bibliography	31
Appendices Group Development Stages	33

Introduction
Discovering Harmony
Creating a Music Community

In my five years of teaching high school orchestra at two different schools, I never felt that any of the ensembles really became a cooperative, caring community. It is essential that musicians in an ensemble trust each other and work well together, so I began my research with the following questions:

- 1) **What activities, classroom philosophies, and traditions help create the sense of community and a cooperative learning environment?**
- 2) **Why do some students feel connected, while others feel left out?**
- 3) **How are building a sense of community and making good music in band related?**

Although I now teach elementary band, my questions remain the same and the answers are now even more important, as I am the first instrumental teacher these young musicians will have. The band we create together will be the whole of their ensemble experiences.

I drew on my positive experience as a member of the Northwestern Band Staff, and included many traditional music leadership roles in my classroom: section leader, student teacher, student conductor, instrument manager, and librarian. I also created a Band Board to oversee the whole organization. The first year I used many helpful teaching, assessment and data collection methods from our graduate texts. Observing students in action and noting what worked became my main source of data. The second year I streamlined my original methods and added new ideas from my group development and curriculum research.

To create my new curriculum I fully outlined and digested the content I should teach, and made sure to choose appropriate teaching and assessment methods for maximum learning. In addition I focused on the school community as I discovered it and contributed my ideas to it.

I found that the *same* philosophies, traditions, structures, routines, activities, and teaching methods create a community *and* a cooperative learning environment in any size group. Once people *trust* each other, and are *dependent* on each other to accomplish their goals, there will be a cooperative learning environment called a community. Members of the group will *not* gain entrance to the community if they cannot or do not contribute significantly toward reaching the group goals. *I have found this to be true both in my classroom community as well as the school community.*

Chapter 1
Beginning My Research
August to December, 2001

C) SETTING THE STAGE

3) Goals and Hopes

I want my students to feel that they are an integral part of the band, musically, organizationally, and socially. I want all students to be able to read music and to play their instrument with a good tone. I want to be sure each student is involved in some way in leading the band. I want some musical and organizational leaders to emerge from each small group—students who will be strong enough to help lead the full bands to be more cohesive and self-sufficient. I hope that smaller groups of more advanced students, including the percussionists, will perform at each themed all-school assembly once every few months. I would also like each grade-level band to perform a concert in January or February and again in the spring.

Another goal I have is to take at least one group to the City Ensemble Contest in March where they would play for three judges who would give comments and critiques and award prizes to every band. Because the bands are critiqued on their performance of the selected music—which will be the right level for them—I feel confident in taking them to this contest. If they do not get the highest rating, I expect they will still have a good experience and want to return next year and receive a better rating. I hope this becomes an enjoyable and treasured tradition. Taking students to contest is another way for me to motivate them to be better players. All of this would be a huge accomplishment, considering the former director did not provide any performance opportunities for the band.

I also have four “above-and-beyond” goals for the band: I would like to have a fundraiser that unites all the band members; a contest to design a band logo; and find a sponsor to buy shirts for the whole band. I would also like at least some band members to march in a neighborhood parade. I believe these goals would not only motivate them to practice more, but also enable them to take pride in themselves, while the community gains pride in the school and the band program.

Personally, I want to improve at complimenting quiet students who do not bring attention to themselves automatically. I try to create goals, routines, and traditions that are useful for making music and a classroom community. I aim to give students the tools to continue learning on their own—in any subject.

Chapter 2
The Next Three Months
January to March, 2002

G) GROUP DEVELOPMENT PROGRESS

When I began, the main focus of my research was to create a classroom community. This has now become the guiding force behind my research. I have spent much of my time on the smaller details that must be researched and resolved before the community I want can be created. One major factor affecting the progress of group development is the high number of students who have transferred in and out of our school, and the band program.

There are many divisive patterns in how the school is run, and they spill over into the band room. Through fourth grade, bilingual students are separate from English-speaking ones. From fifth through eighth grade, bilingual and special education students are pulled out for help frequently, and therefore are not as integrated as the other students. Even for the “regular” students there are not very many opportunities to socially mix with kids from other homeroom classes because everything except lunch and a few extra-curricular activities are scheduled within their homeroom class. (Mar 2002)

By the end of March I had a good understanding of how our classroom routines were progressing and what I would still need to refine:

- A) *Students still don't have the schedule down, but I guess that's understandable because it has changed so frequently.*
- B) *Getting instruments out and setting-up is the students' responsibility and they are doing very well, including the percussionists.*
- C) *Putting instruments away is not as good individually, but many students ask if they can help straighten-up the entire room after rehearsal.*
- D) *Signing out instruments is still not foolproof and takes more time and energy than I'd like to spend on it. This is definitely something that needs my attention.*
- E) *I should give the Instrument Managers and Attendance Leaders more actual responsibilities. Attendance Leaders can write absence slips for those who were not in class. Instrument Managers can check that all instruments in their section are where they belong after class. These jobs could easily rotate throughout the year. I will create a chart to better keep track of them.*

I also took time to reflect on our progress through the stages of group development.

Stage 1) Psychological Membership – Bonding, Inclusion, and Friendships. *We have accomplished this through Community Circles, get-to-know-you activities, me being open and available to students and their concerns before, during, and after school, involving them in the set-up and care-taking of the class and classroom, and by simply working at performing music together.*

Stage 2) Shared Influence – Shared Decision Making and Shared Responsibility *is the stage we are in now. The classes have made some decisions and continue to be responsible for some routines. They have also elected a fellow student to represent them on the Band Board, who is now taking over much of the shared decision making. Students continue to learn that a lack of responsibility on the part of their peers affects each and every one of them individually. Hopefully*

they will understand this consequence in the larger picture and note that their personal responsibility affects the group.

Stage 3) Pursuing Academic Goals – Setting & Attaining Personal & Group Goals, Recognizing & Accommodating Individual Feelings, Develop Student Skills. *It is my goal to formally begin this stage at the beginning of next year. I expect our wonderful leadership will help me make this our first priority.*

Stage 4) Self-Renewal – Accept responsibility for the quality of band life and continuously strive to improve it. *I will focus on making the first three stages happen well and continuously for two or three years. Then, I believe, this stage will emerge on it's own.*

We are currently in stage two and are working towards students treating each other respectfully. Because I speak to my students as mature beings and respect their opinions, I believe they feel I am approachable. Because I encourage my students to try new things and I am excited when they understand or perform correctly, my students have started to believe in themselves and their abilities – their worth and dignity. Through Community Circles and class discussions, my students now have a voice in how the band community functions. As I have said before, sometimes I forgive too much. Students are not reprimanded when they make mistakes, as long as they learn from them and do not repeat the mistake needlessly. I say, “Everyone makes mistakes, just be sure to fix one every time you practice.” (Mar 30, 2002)

Knowing that my marching band experience may provide even more solutions to my questions, I borrowed another Northwestern tradition:

The Beginning and Intermediate Bands respond well when I say or yell, “Hey band...” They say, “Hey what?” and then (usually) become quiet and listen to me. It's a great way to get their attention and it reinforces the sense of group with a unified vocal response.

Last week I had each instrument section create a "rest position" so they look more uniform when not playing. Now I can say “rest position” or “instruments up” and they move simultaneously. It looks really cool and is another way to bind us as an ensemble and community. (Mar 26, 2002)

Chapter 3
Concluding the Year
April to June, 2002

D) STAGE THREE: ACADEMIC CONTENT

1) Authentic Learning

Without really trying to, or knowing it, I have modeled good rehearsal techniques throughout the year. Enough so, that the students have accepted it as “the way it is” and they mimic me. Modeling is one of my natural strengths as a teacher. I already model good rehearsal techniques in class.

This week, Alex became the teacher for the fourth and fifth grade trumpets. Alex is a fifth grade trumpet player who is always eager to play his trumpet. He can't wait! He's the first one in the room with his trumpet out. He plays while the others set-up, he plays while I'm talking (which I'm trying to eliminate), he plays while others are cleaning up, and I even have to make it a point to ask him to leave when class is over. I love his enthusiasm, but trying to find a way to capture his energy and focus has been challenging. Last week Alex and Nelida, another wonderful leader in the fourth grade trumpets, took turns leading the group. They both did a great job.

This week, I was tired on Wednesday when they had class, and Alex was overly energetic as usual. At the beginning of class he was ready to play, so instead of asking him to wait until everyone was ready, I just said, “Instead of playing by yourself, why don't you count-off and have the others join you. You lead.” That was all the encouragement he needed. I sat back and watched as he counted-off and led the entire rehearsal. He even remembered to say “Instruments Up” before playing each time. (The kids always remember that better than I do.) By the end of class, he was standing up in front of the group with his music stand, facing the rest of the class, like I usually do. I was so thrilled, I just sat and watched in amusement and enjoyment at his wonderful leadership and rehearsal techniques.

After class I said, “That was the best rehearsal we've had in a long time. You guys did the whole thing and I got to sit back and watch.” Nelida, who is always wonderfully observant and honest, said to me, “So you get paid to just sit there?!” With my quick thinking, I was glad to be able to respond with “I think I had something to do with the fact that Alex knew what to do.” Nelida replied, “Well, I guess that's true.” (May 17, 2002)

Now I need to more consciously model the basics of setting-up, warming-up, and practicing by oneself at home. These are the skills my current students are lacking. I plan to consciously model these and include them as skills to assess next year.

Another instance of students following my lead, are the eager fourth and fifth graders who constantly come visit me to help. They WANT to do things; be helpful; make a difference; get to say that THEY did it – whatever “it” is. In the last few weeks two fourth grade boys – Jean and Jose Luis – have come faithfully every morning, and for the last ten or fifteen minutes of their lunchtime. A few weeks ago I started teaching them how to fix instruments. A few days ago they came in the morning asked if there was anything to do. They helped move a power cord, plugged things into it, moved papers from one place to another, and organized the recorders. They WANT to do something helpful - anything.

Because I have so much equipment to inventory, organize, fix and keep track of, I have always asked my students to help. Everywhere I have taught, I have consistently asked the students to help whenever possible. Sometimes I have to think very hard about what the students can do, but whatever I come up with, they always want to be "the one" to do the job. Jobs have included collecting papers, putting away equipment, setting up chairs and music stands, taping signs up, or dusting the computer. Sometimes my students create jobs I have not even thought of yet.

Most importantly, I allow and encourage them to find ways in which to be helpful. The purpose is twofold – to help lighten my load, and teach them new skills through authentic experiences. I did not realize the second purpose until this year, probably because I had no name for it. Now the students come to me looking for authentic experiences in which to engage.

I now realize I have a particular style and way in which I encourage my students to help, and how I model the tasks. When something needs to be done, I ask the students around if they will help me. I tell them what needs to be done, show them how to do it, and begin by both of us doing the task together. Once they understand what to do and have a handle on it, I discretely move to another duty, leaving them to finish it on their own. I have noticed myself doing this a lot lately, and as I think back over the years, this is what I have always done. It means that they learn how I would do the task, then have to apply that knowledge by extrapolating it over the entire task. The exciting part for me is not only seeing them excited to help, but also watching them discover new and often better ways to complete the assignment. In the end, my students know that if I asked them to do it again, they would be able to do all of it without my help.

These last few weeks of school, most teachers have finished teaching the bulk of their academic content, and are encouraging students to organize materials and help cleanup the rooms. Many kids are looking for things to do – essentially authentic experiences related to end-of-the-year clean up. Again, students WANT to do something helpful, otherwise they will be bored. Some students helped me remove all the posters from my walls, put new bulletin boards up, inventory my band music and supplies, inventory my own books, and more. Because I provide authentic learning opportunities, students are drawn to me. I ask them to do things that make them feel useful because they ARE. (June 16, 2002)

F) INTERPRETING THE DATA: 1) OBSERVATIONS

Theron's Revelation:

During our last class together I had a very interesting conversation with Theron and the other sixth grade percussionists. While complimenting each other, Theron said that Twjuan helped fix the instruments a lot. Then with a slight snicker he said "Hey, well. He likes to feel needed!" I stopped dead in my tracks, because of course that's what I found a few months back and what I was trying to get across by doing this exercise in the first place. He had hit on the answer, but thought it was something negative, something to be ashamed of.

I said, "Theron, that's exactly the point!" He made a funny, confused face, and said, "Huh?" I replied, "We all like to feel needed. We all have strengths that we can contribute to the group. We all need each other to make this group work well." He paused, and then looked at

Lamar, then thought about himself, and said, "Well, we need Lamar for his humor – he keeps us laughing – and we need me to lead the music – I'm the best player." "Right!" I said. The whole group paused and let it soak in. I said, "We are all good at different things, and when we all use those things to help each other, the group becomes stronger!" After thinking about it for another few minutes Theron acknowledged that he, too, liked to feel needed for his excellent playing, and that everyone had the same basic need. (June 16, 2002)

Chapter 4 **Revising My Curriculum** **Independent Study Project**

A) IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

I chose group development as my main research focus because the nature of music making and curriculum fundamentally rests on groups, and the intricacies continue to baffle me, but the reason I chose this graduate program is so I could rewrite my classroom curriculum. I want to feel in control of it; I want to see the whole as well as the parts; I want to justify it all against the given standards; I want to enjoy teaching it; and I want to be comfortable with it.

One question when creating lesson plans or an entire curriculum is deciding if the instruction should be linear, circular, or experience based. I have been struggling with this for years. Should I immerse my students in an experience or activity and hope they learn what I wanted them to, or should I painstakingly set out precise units of information for them to learn, memorize and try to apply? I have tried both, with a smattering of success and failure.

I learned from Methods that Matter (1998) that students learn best during authentic experiences, yet for me it is easiest to organize and deliver instruction in logical, linear and circular units of information. In order to get the positive effects of both, I aim to include them both in my curriculum. I will create Music and Concept Packets of information and worksheets to be sure students get the basics, while using rehearsals and learning centers to provide authentic learning experiences in which to use their acquired knowledge and skills.

All of my research has led me to believe wholeheartedly in the stages of group development (Schmuck, R. P., 2001). My research has also led me to base my entire curriculum around the first three stages – psychological membership, shared influence, and academic goals. Considering that band is definitely a group that must work well together for numerous years, I believe the group stages are a valid outline for my curriculum.

As I chose what to include in my classroom curriculum. I based my decisions on the following questions:

- A) How can I continually reinforce aspects of the group development stages?**
- B) What instructional methods are best for engaged and authentic learning?**
- C) What assessments most accurately represent student learning?**
- D) How can I cover the national, state, and CPS music standards within this framework?**
- E) How can I communicate my philosophies and goals to the students?**
- F) How can I organize my classroom space, time and resources most effectively?**
- G) How can I incorporate the monthly school themes and character traits, too?**

C) OBJECTIVES AND ASSESSMENTS

After choosing classroom systems that I want to use, I studied the Illinois Music Standards and reviewed performance objectives set forth by other band directors. Based on my student population, others' standards, and my new classroom systems, I created an outline of objectives for my students by grade level. I also included the assessment rubrics used by Mrs. Madden and myself to grade our students accurately.

Activities for Psychological Membership

	Social	Organizational	Academic
Expectations, Rewards, and Consequences	Collective agreement of what is socially acceptable behavior	Logical rewards and consequences for each action Regular contact with parents for good or bad actions	Immediate consequences for student actions Allows the rest of the class to continue learning
Community Circles	Is the Class Meeting Equalizes everyone Allows everyone to see each other Students are free to ask questions or voice concerns	Time for logistical announcements	Time to review Unit, Group and Personal Goals
Get-to-Know You Activities	Students can learn about each other on a deeper level Student interact with all other students Provides the basis for students to trust one another		Trust and increased communication increases academic productivity
Teamwork Activities	Compete as part of a group Sense of personal and Small Group pride and accomplishment		External motivation to achieve academically

Activities for Shared Influence

	Social	Organizational	Academic
Regular Classroom Routines	Daily framework for all social interactions	Students know what to expect	Daily timeline for academic learning
Student Leadership: Attendance, Librarian, Equipment, Instruments, Music Leader & Student Teacher	Individual responsibility to the group and its members Sense of individual self-worth and self-esteem Provides long-term leadership goals for individuals	Prevents and solves logistical problems effectively Organizes and schedules class time based on members' needs	Students regularly evaluate individual and group strengths and weaknesses Efficiently uses class time based on students' learning needs
Band Board	Same as Student Leadership Creates helpful group activities and social events Assess and accommodates group feelings, dynamics, and concerns	Centralized, democratic organization Problem-solving and long-term planning	Decreases class time spent on larger logistics Increases class time spent on academic content
Social Events	Provides more time to interact with peers Provides a different setting in which peers can interact	Gives members a sense of the whole band	Increases friendships and group cohesion, and therefore increases the ability to work with peers effectively

Activities for Authentic Learning

	Social	Organizational	Academic
Full Band Rehearsals	<p>Students participate in something larger than themselves; a part of the whole</p> <p>Students encourage and trust each other, and work together</p> <p>Creates a sense of team pride and accomplishment</p>	<p>Provides an efficient and effective use of class time</p>	<p>Students learn aural skills, musicality, and large ensemble skills</p> <p>Group leaders and members reflect on goals through performance assessment</p>
Small Group Rehearsals	<p>Students begin to trust, work with, compromise with, and encourage their peers</p> <p>Students learn to voice their opinions and critique appropriately</p> <p>Increases individual and small group pride and accomplishment</p>	<p>Provides an efficient and effective use of class time</p>	<p>Students learn music notation, reading, aural skills, musicality, small ensemble skills, and technical skills specific to each instrument</p> <p>Group leaders and members reflect on goals through performance assessment</p>
Five-Week Units: Concept Packets Music Packets	<p>Student directed learning</p> <p>Students are resources for each other</p>	<p>Creates organized and chronological student portfolios</p> <p>Decreases daily paper shuffling</p>	<p>Curriculum is taught in a cyclical, logical progression</p> <p>Provides concrete academic content, goals and rubrics</p> <p>Students work at their own pace within each unit</p> <p>Teacher can provide remedial or advanced projects if appropriate</p>
Learning Centers: Rhythm Rap Perfect Pitch Functional Forms Thinking Theory Computer Corner Composer Collection Incredible Instruments Where in the World?	<p>Same as five-week units</p> <p>Students must share material resources and cooperate</p>	<p>Provides a more efficient and effective use of class time and material resources</p>	<p>Students use authentic materials as resources</p> <p>Provides a large variety of authentic, hands-on learning</p> <p>Teacher can easily provide extra remedial or advanced projects when appropriate</p>

Assessments to Show Authentic Learning

	Social	Organizational	Academic
Checklists	Students can work together to check their progress	Clearly outlined expectations	Concrete goals make success achievable and assessable
Rubrics	Students can work together to achieve these concrete goals	Clearly outlined expectations	Concrete goals make success achievable and assessable
Individual & Group Performance Assessments	Students can assess each other using rubrics Students learn to compliment and critique constructively	Clearly outlined expectations	Concrete goals make success achievable and assessable Rubrics used to objectively measure skills
Written Tests			Objectively assess much of the student's knowledge
Portfolios	Students can share, review and discuss their work with their peers	Collects all student work in one place	Objective and subjective assessment of the student's knowledge, work, and progress over a long period of time
Conferences	Opportunity for students to interact one-on-one with the teacher Together, teacher and student can assess student progress on social skills	Ensures that the teacher speaks with each student one-on-one at least every five weeks	Reviews academic work, assesses student progress, and creates new realistic personal goals
Anecdotal Records	Objective and subjective record of student behavior	Cumulative and chronological record of student behavior	Subjective record of student's overall progress

Chapter 5 Resource Research

This chapter began as a search for pieces of information I felt I was missing: 1) characteristics of an ideal community, 2) community-building activities, and 3) leadership skills I could teach and assess. While searching the library and reading my sources, I soon realized that I work with a specific type of community called a group (or class), and in looking for ideal community characteristics, I am really looking for characteristics of an “effective group.”

As I searched for fun and engaging activities to build the strength of my classroom community, I found that most activities should not only be get-to-know-you activities, but should also correlate to the group development stage which the group is in at the time (Schmuck, R. P., 2001). These should include activities ice-breaking activities that build trust and cooperation, set and achieve goals, and self-assessment activities.

Finally, when searching for teachable leadership skills, I found that many of the skills listed under leadership were also included in lists of member behaviors for effective groups. Ideally, all group members should be leaders because diffuse leadership leads to efficient groups – which leads me back to my first question, but with a slightly different perspective.

Clearly my search for the missing pieces led me in a complete circle. I am grateful that my missing links are interconnected because now I feel that I was only missing one piece instead of many. In the end my questions and sections changed a bit. They now are:

- 1) What are the qualities of an effective group, and what are activities to strengthen and assess these qualities?**
- 2) What are teachable member and leadership skills, and how can I assess them?**

PERSONAL, GROUP, AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS

1) Personal Organization and Learning Skills

a) Organizational

Arrive on Time
Bring All Necessary Materials
Follow Instructions

b) Personal Motivation

Ask Questions
Work Independently
Complete all Homework
Practice Regularly
Apply Knowledge to New Tasks

c) Emotional Well Being

Have Self-Control and Avoid Self-Centered Behaviors
Express Feelings Appropriately
Be Positive and Motivated
Have Self-Respect and Self-Confidence
Have a Good Self-Image and Self-Understanding

d) Goal Setting

Know Personal Talents and Weaknesses
Set Appropriate Personal Goals
Achieve Personal Goals

2) Basic Group Participation Skills

a) Communication

Listen Attentively
Speak Clearly
Read Accurately
Write Clearly
Use Appropriate Body Language and Behavior

b) Social/Emotional Roles

Interact with Others
Accept Other's Talents and Emotions
Listen to Everyone
Make and Trust New Friends
Provide and Accept Support and Encouragement
Give and Receive Compliments
Give and Receive Constructive Criticism
Compromise with Others
Respond Appropriately to Others' Feelings
Relieve Tension / Mediate / Resolve Conflict

c) Task Roles

Cooperate with Others
Complete Assigned Tasks
Trust Others to Complete Their Tasks
Coordinate Members to Complete Tasks
Help Choose Group Goals
Beginning Leadership Skills:
Initiate Tasks
Model Tasks
Focus the Group
Problem-Solve:
Define Problem
Clarify or Elaborate Ideas
Give Information or Opinions
Seek Information or Opinions
Implement Someone Else's Ideas
Summarize Ideas

3) Advanced / Procedural Leadership Skills

Observe and Assess the Group Situation
Praise and Reprimand Appropriately
Set Goals Using Various Strategies
Create and Follow a Lesson Plan

Create and Follow an Agenda
Use Problem-Solving Strategies Well
Use Decision-Making Strategies Well
Create and Follow a Group Development Plan

Chapter 6
The New Year
August 2002 to February 2003

B) STAGES ONE AND TWO: ORGANIZATION, ROUTINES, STUDENTS, AND LEADERSHIP

In previous chapters I discussed each stage of group development separately. As I began to write this chapter I found that stages one and two are interdependent. I also found that stages three and four depend on each other because authentic learning and assessment should be integrated. Therefore, I have combined the discussion of the stages in this chapter.

9) Stuck in Stages One and Two

My experiences this year uphold the research on group development. Members who do not act in accordance with group expectations of routine, preparedness, and interpersonal skills stifle the later stages of group development. Because these members cannot participate fully or appropriately within the group, they decrease the productivity and cohesiveness of the group, and generally lead the group away from accomplishing its goals in stages three and four. Although a few small group classes were cohesive socially and musically from the start, most classes were not.

Of the fourth grade groups, the only class that is having trouble is the clarinets and saxophones because many of them are missing mouthpieces, and there are behavior problems (October 22, 2002)

It is November and the mouthpieces are still a large problem. Approximately 25-35% of each class still does not have mouthpieces. The percentage is even higher with the upper grades, so the band that is theoretically most advanced is NOT the best as a whole. My seventh-and-eighth grade woodwinds are great, but the brass players have no mouthpieces, and the percussionists have personal and teamwork problems. The sixth grade is a mess because I have a few advanced players, but the rest are beginners or don't have mouthpieces. Essentially, this group cannot perform by themselves because they are not a cohesive musical group. The advanced students will play with the seventh-and-eighth band, and the beginners with the fifth graders.

Until now I had been very discouraged by the fourth grade band because so many students were without mouthpieces, and the others had a rough start. Maybe I don't remember how long it took for my beginners to gel last year, but this group just started sounding good last week. Students who do have mouthpieces finally started making a decent sound, and my trumpets and trombones are finally playing more than talking. The learning curve is steeper on woodwind instruments, so kids are having a hard time making a good sound. I have to continually convince them AND myself that it will be fine. I give the woodwinds weekly pep talks to keep them from being discouraged. I remind them that, "I wouldn't have given you that instrument if I didn't think you could play it. It just takes time and practice."

Because I have been stressed about numerous projects, my attitude has not been the greatest. It has improved, but it is a daily struggle to be positive when there are so many obstacles in my way: lack of mouthpieces and other materials, scheduling issues,

behavior issues, and lack of functioning computers and music programs. (November 2, 2002)

Because a musical ensemble *should* be a unified group, Ana and I agreed that students who did not sign contracts, pay group fees, bring permission slips, or wear their uniform would not perform in our December concerts. This affirmed that many students lived up to our expectations and it helped unite the performers. Unfortunately, it also divided the group as a whole by making obvious who had *not* done what was expected.

Our concerts went well, but I was disappointed that many students did not perform. Our strong stance on who could perform *did* have some positive consequences. I soon started to receive contracts and money from those students who still owed me.

By the end of January, most students who wanted to continue in band had turned in their contracts and money and I was able to give them mouthpieces. There were also some students who chose not to continue second semester, so I removed them from the roster. By the beginning of February, every student in band finally had a mouthpiece, and I hoped we could finally work as a group towards our academic and musical goals...but some still forget their music, and are *still* stuck in stages one and two.

C) STAGES THREE AND FOUR: AUTHENTIC LEARNING AND ASSESSMENTS

5) Authentic Group Learning

Why discuss this teaching method last? Because it solves all of the problems associated with other teaching tools, *and* includes assessment. This is *really* the answer to everything. People learn best by *doing* and learning from their actions. People need to *use* a skill they have learned by performing it again immediately. Then they can be assessed. Because authentic learning is *active*, lessons and performance assessments also help eliminate discipline problems stemming from student boredom.

In December and January I kept in mind what a colleague once said to me: "Do you know how to avoid having discipline problems? Keep the students busy!" First and foremost I need to focus our energy towards accomplishing the *purpose* of the group. In band that means to make music as much as possible and let other issues disappear.

For various reasons in the last month I have realized that the most important thing is the MUSIC. In all my research about group cohesion, the first rule is that there must be a common purpose - in essence, a reason for being. In band the purpose is to learn to make music together - not to talk, spell, write or play computer games! (Dec 21, 2002)

Students can learn by doing and can use their new knowledge through numerous authentic experiences. I just need to assign more of them: *warm-ups, leadership roles, cooperative learning, vocabulary usage, and composing.*

Warm-Ups

At the Midwest Band and Orchestra Festival in December, I was reminded that warm-ups teach important techniques and they are not to be skimmed over or eliminated. The students should apply these techniques throughout rehearsals and keep them in mind when assessing themselves or others.

One of the ways in which I have yet to challenge my students is with warm-ups and scales. Scales are patterns, or groups of notes, used throughout compositions. If the band is going to improve and play pieces in more than one key, we obviously need to learn many scales first. I have printed and copied scale sheets for my advanced band but have not used them regularly.

This week I spent much of our small group class working on the first three scales in preparation for the more difficult music we will play for contest. I also gave the scales to the sixth graders to reinforce the fundamentals, and the jazz band students because they are more advanced. None of the students found them as difficult as I thought they would, and were eager to learn more. (Jan 11, 2003)

Student Leadership

Because there are always logistical problems at the beginning of rehearsals, I instituted student leaders so the class could get started quickly without me. Although these have helped with some tasks, they have not worked well for others. I still have faith in the leadership roles' ability to teach students responsibility, cooperation, and generosity, and I will continue to use them. Leadership roles *are* authentic learning opportunities and should be used to benefit the group's experience.

Music Leader is the most important and active role and I must conscientiously teach and model it. The leader should help the group tune and warm-up at the beginning of class and lead at least one part of a rehearsal every few weeks. (Appendix p. 206) After all the students learn how to play it, the role should rotate among members of cooperative learning groups.

Cooperative Learning

One tool that I seem to have forgotten that might solve some behavior, ability, and individual versus group issues is cooperative learning groups or partner practicing in our small groups. I have noticed that the students WANT to help each other, but if I am directing the class all the time, they do not have time to help one another, or get to know each other. Ideally, the students should do warm-ups together, choose the goal for the day or week, and should split into learning groups to accomplish it. That will allow me to circulate, and help those who need it. I hope to use a lot less teacher-directed time and more student-directed time in the future. (Jan 11, 2003)

Vocabulary Usage

Although students should not write as much in band as they do in other classes, reading and writing in band will help improve our students and our school. They must learn a large and unfamiliar vocabulary in band in order to grasp new concepts. I would like to reinforce reading and writing by working on vocabulary and musical composition.

Band students must use musical *vocabulary* every day. When learning a new word or symbol, each student should write it and its definition in a vocabulary and musical symbol log. Most importantly, students should *use* the new vocabulary when *critiquing or assessing* their own or their peers performances, or when *describing or defining* a concept.

A lot of music vocabulary is based on German, or Italian—which is conveniently related to Spanish. Perhaps this will increase the native Spanish speakers' vocabulary. If students learn the spelling and meaning of musical words, they will start to recognize roots of words and infer meanings of similar words when reading in other contexts. Increasing the students' vocabulary skills in third, fourth, and fifth grades is one of the best ways I know to help the students with life-long reading and learning.

Because students should also be able to *write* using their musical vocabulary, a practice or rehearsal journal would be ideal. There they can take time *outside* of class to write down *what* they practiced, what they did *well*, what they need to *work* on, and what they have *questions about*. Although I will continue to guide the overall direction of the band's long-term goals, we can use the students' list of problems and questions in small group classes to help direct our focus each day. This *student directed learning and assessment* is the beginning of group development stage four: self-assessment.

Composing

Composing music is just like writing an essay. You must write down exactly what you mean and you must go through a similar editing process to get the final product. You must think of something to express, write it down, read it, revise it, and have someone else read it to be sure it makes sense.

Again, third, fourth, and fifth graders seem to be the best groups to teach composition to because they are learning how to express themselves appropriately and they are refining their language and writing skills. Teaching reading, writing, and composition in English and in music simultaneously will help both their linguistic and musical reading and writing. To that end, my students should write a short composition of some sort every five weeks.

Research Support

Authentic learning of academic content can always be facilitated better and more efficiently. Research shows that students learn and retain more information through *hands-on activities, discovery learning, and through immediate and continual use* of the new information. This means that most of our class time should be spent on these activities.

In Chapter 5, I wrote that without continued planning of group development, and reminders of the group goals, "the group may mistakenly ignore its members' needs, let the procedures fall by the wayside, work towards tangential goals, and forget to evaluate themselves." All of these authentic learning opportunities are ways in which the students and I can work towards our group goals, while having fun, making music, and assessing our progress.

Tell me, and I'll forget.
Show me, and I may remember.
Involve me, I'll understand.
- Anonymous

7) Self-Assessments

Learning to play a musical instrument is an authentic learning experience in which students must assess themselves constantly. When practicing, every individual must assess each note he or she plays and determine if it has the correct tone, pitch, and duration. More advanced students must also determine if the note had the correct intonation and articulation. When playing with others, all members of the group must evaluate if the group members all played at the same tempo, started and ended each note together, and played in tune with each other. These are the musical skills listed on my curriculum rubrics and assessments that I continue to teach, use, model, and assess daily.

Personal Reflection

I used only one written self-assessment so far this year: a reflection after the winter concert. (Appendix p.177) It asked students how well they used their personal and musical skills in the months leading up to the concert. It asked them to describe what they learned about different aspects of music and teamwork while preparing for the concert and during the concert. I also asked what they did well and what they still need to work on individually. I will continue use this type of self-assessment after each concert and will file them in the students' portfolios. I look forward to increasing specificity as they critique themselves and the group.

Unfortunately the majority of my students did not complete this assignment, so I only heard from the more responsible students. Although their responses were not as thorough as I would have liked, I am

glad to know that they do have some positive feelings about band and self critiques that they can express. It is reassuring to learn that many of them enjoy band, are eager to play music, and want to improve.

WINTER CONCERT REFLECTION RESPONSES

What did you learn while we were preparing for the concert?

Bianca, 8 th	"to be cooperative"
Daisy, 7 th	"how to read the music"
Ivan, 6 th	"nothing"
Franzetta, 6 th	"that I should have followed directions and I could have played."
Stephanie, 6 th	"I learned new songs"
Alex, 6 th	"that I needed a better posture"
Anna, 6 th	"that working together is better"
Noemi, 6 th	"new notes"
Jessica, 5 th	"not to be nervous or we could mess up"
Raul, 5 th	"I learned to be faster to prepare."
Luis, 5 th	"nothing"
Nelida, 5 th	"to keep more quiet"
Monica, 4 th	"not to be scared"
Leticia, 4 th	"It's important to play together."
Carmen, 4 th	"not to be afry [afraid] and learn more music"
Guadalupe, 4 th	"That all were performing good."
Brianna, 4 th	"I learned that to do what you have to do."
Mayra, 4 th	"I leared that the hole [whole] band has to sound like one person."
Crystal, 4 th	"I love muice [music]"

What did you learn during the concert?

Tawain, 8 th	"working and playing with others"
Bianca, 8 th	"be comfortable performing"
Daisy, 7 th	"to be prepared"
Ivan, 6 th	"nothing"
Anna, 6 th	"that music is nice"
Jessica, 5 th	"to take a deep breath before we start playing"
Raul, 5 th	"I learned how to play new music in front of people."
Luis, 5 th	"nothing"
Nelida, 5 th	"To listen to the rests in the music. They are important."
Monica, 4 th	"that I did not need to be nervous"
Carmen, 4 th	"not be embereance [embarrassed]"
Guadalupe, 4 th	"Some music that I didn't now [know]"
Crystal, 4 th	"I like to be playing muisc in front of people."

How do you feel about your performance [after watching the video]?

Bianca, 8 th	"I feel good. I feel like I did a good job."
Daisy, 7 th	"great"
Stephanie, 6 th	"I was proud of me"
Alex, 6 th	"I feel much better"
Noemi, 6 th	"that it was better than I had expected"
Jessica, 5 th	"I feel great of doing that performance"
Raul, 5 th	"I feel happy"
Luis, 5 th	"When I saw the video it was good."

Nelida, 5 th	"I feel it was nice but I messed up a couple of times."
Monica, 4 th	"I feel good."
Carmen, 4 th	"very good [good]"
Brianna, 4 th	"I feel very proud."
Mayra, 4 th	"I think it was funny because when I saw the video the camera was looking right at me."
Crystal, 4 th	"I lucky to be in band"

What do you still need to work on?

Tawain, 8 th	"playing with others"
Bianca, 8 th	"my posture"
Daisy, 7 th	"tone"
Ivan, 6 th	"on trying to quit [band]"
Franzetta, 6 th	"how to follow directions"
Alex, 6 th	"my high note"
Anna, 6 th	"remember assemblies [dates] of the concerts"
Noemi, 6 th	"fingerings"
Jessica, 5 th	"sounds of the trumpet"
Raul, 5 th	"pushing keys quickly, blowing in air and practicing more at everything"
Luis, 5 th	"reading notes"
Monica, 4 th	"my fingering a little"
Leticia, 4 th	"hi note"
Carmen, 4 th	"nothing I guess"
Guadalupe, 4 th	"the tone"
Brianna, 4 th	"My mouthpiece"
Mayra, 4 th	"I need to work on my fingering."
Crystal, 4 th	"Posture"

Did you like the pieces we learned for the concert? Why?

Tawain, 8 th	"no because it sounded boring"
Bianca, 8 th	"yes, because they were fun to play"
Daisy, 7 th	"yes because I like them"
Ivan, 6 th	"no"
Franzetta, 6 th	"yes I did because it was very nice"
Stephanie, 6 th	"Yes, I like it because the pieces sound like the ones the professional musical players play."
Alex, 6 th	"yes because they are fun to play"
Anna, 6 th	"yes because everyone plays it"
Noemi, 6 th	"yes because they were creative"
Jessica, 5 th	"yes because it sounded beautiful"
Raul, 5 th	"yes I liked the rhythm"
Luis, 5 th	"some because they sounded nice"
Nelida, 5 th	"yes because they were loud, but nice"
Monica, 4 th	"yes because they were not hard"
Carmen, 4 th	"yes because I just like it"
Guadalupe, 4 th	"Yes. Because we all learn something and because the pieces are good."
Brianna, 4 th	"Yes because these were good songs."
Mayra, 4 th	"yes because everybody thought we did well"
Crystal, 4 th	"yes, because it's easy"

Chapter 7
Overall Conclusions
2001-2003

I believe I chose the right masters program and appropriate questions to help me in my career as a band and orchestra teacher. West Park Academy was a great place to do my research because I had flexibility, my co-workers and students generally trusted me, its relatively small size was not overwhelming; and I had plenty of opportunities to be involved.

I tried many schedules, teaching methods and assessments. Although not all of my data collection methods were successful, a few of them worked well. Student questionnaires, self-evaluations and conversations worked best, and I continued to record my observations in my journal.

A) STAGES ONE AND TWO: MEMBERSHIP AND INFLUENCE

When developing a group, the most important thing to keep in mind is *why* the members join in the first place, and have appropriate activities in which they can *participate*. In band, that means continuing to *make music* and *have fun*, or members will leave. In addition, each member must *have the materials they need in order to participate*, or they will feel left out and leave the group. At West Park, we must create a specific *plan to deal with monetary issues* before next year, so they do not continue to be problematic.

Expectations from the leaders and members regarding behavior and routines effect the daily functioning of the group and should be planned ahead of time. Plans should include *rules, rewards, consequences*, and a system of *checks and balances*.

Members must also have a reason to *continue* to participate in the group long-term, or there will not be a solid core, and the group will disintegrate. Having *leaders* in the structure gives new members something to look forward to, while seasoned members experience a high level of personal satisfaction and a sense of achievement beyond themselves. To create long-term interest, the first two years should focus on personal and group skills so they become routine, and eliminate potential problems. Beyond the second year, members should start to focus on group and leadership skills, solidifying the sense of group and giving the members a more active role in the group's development.

At West Park with my current band schedule, *Small Group time should focus on the individuals* and their musical, group, and leadership skills. More time should be spent in buddy pairs or cooperative learning groups *for hands-on, authentic learning* using teamwork skills. Small group classes should

include *less teacher-directed* time, although I should prepare a few "mini-lessons" for each five-week unit to teach specific techniques or skills.

Full Band should focus on the large group playing and working TOGETHER. Pride within each instrument section is wonderful, as long as it stays positive and motivates the members. To foster cohesiveness within the large group the students must know that each section has talented musicians and leaders. Thus, *Full Band warm-ups should be led by students from different sections* every few weeks.

In a "compliment exercise" with my older students last year, I found that it was obvious to the students *and* me, what each member's strengths were. Before leadership jobs are chosen or assigned in the future, we should complete this same exercise to openly acknowledge each student's ability to contribute to the group.

B) STAGES THREE AND FOUR: ACADEMIC GOALS AND SELF-RENEWAL

1) Authentic Learning

Last year I approached my teaching more from experiential- not research-knowledge. I naturally teach by modeling, and did well modeling various jobs and skills. I am excited that group development stages three and four are interdependent, because most authentic learning experiences involve integrated learning *and* assessment.

Authentic learning includes life skills, life lessons, and academic content. *Life skills* are a very important part of the school environment, and band provides opportunities for learning many. Everything students experience in group development stages one and two—as well as the personal, group, and leadership skill lists I created—are essentially life skills learned through authentic experiences. We should teach these skills consciously, and should assess students on each one.

Life lessons to be learned in band include: learning to read a contract before signing it; trying something new for more than a few days; making decisions and following through with them; being responsible for your time, money, actions, and materials; being responsible to others in the group; sharing, cooperating, and working with others; as well as dedication and loyalty to others.

Academic content in band includes the knowledge, skills, and techniques necessary to read music, play an instrument, and perform in a group. Many teachers use lessons, worksheets, and drills specific to each knowledge or skill item in a linear fashion in order to teach and assess their students. This is not authentic learning and students will not retain much of the material. When revising my curriculum, I chose teaching methods and classroom systems based on authentic learning. Each technique or activity requires the students to use numerous skills and a variety of knowledge all at once, so they will retain the information much more completely. Most importantly, from the students' point of view, authentic learning experiences are active, engaging, and fun.

2) Contrasting Methods

I feel that my teaching styles are sometimes incongruent and confusing for the students, although I know in my heart that I use each style for a reason. Rereading Group Processes in the Classroom I found a comforting quote about contrasting emotional styles. The three styles listed are: tender, tough, and rational. "Most classrooms over time require all three of these emotional styles for productive learning to occur." (Schmuck, R. P., 2001, p. 86) This makes me feel much better and lets me know that I *am* doing the right thing. As a teacher I should model leadership by working through the four situational leadership roles. Ultimately my role should not be to direct, coach, or facilitate, but to delegate responsibilities to the students and leaders.

I am again reminded of the essay The Art of Transformation: Jazz as a Metaphor for Education (Montuori, 1996). An orchestra conductor is compared to an authoritarian teacher and its members' activities are limited, while jazz combos are compared to a true learning community, where members are free to work towards their goals by interacting through experiences within the provided structures. Having been a member of both ensembles, one definitely feels better than the other. (Epigraph)

D) ANSWERS TO MY QUESTIONS

- 1) What activities, classroom philosophies, and traditions help create the sense of community and a cooperative learning environment?**
- 2) Why do some students feel connected, while others feel left out?**
- 3) What is the relationship between building a sense of community and making good music in band?**

The *same* philosophies, traditions, structures, routines, teaching methods, and activities create a sense of community *and* a cooperative learning environment in any size group. They go hand in hand. Once group members *trust* each other, and are *dependent* on each other to accomplish their goals, a cooperative learning community will form.

Members of the group will *not* gain entrance to the community if they cannot contribute significantly towards reaching the group's goals. The group must be able to trust each individual, depend on each member, and believe in his or her value to the group. *I have found these truths both in my classroom community as well as the school community.*

Researching group development and my curriculum content helped me choose *what* I truly want to teach, and find the best *methods* by which to accomplish it. The future challenge is to keep structures, methods, activities and assessments streamlined, and teach more by doing less. "Do fewer things more in depth, rather than many things poorly." (Jan, 2003) I teach the bulk of my content through *authentic learning* experiences, while *modeling* the leadership jobs teaches social and organizational skills. *By*

methodically choosing authentic learning opportunities and modeling skills and I will get the results I want.

Epilogue

Contest, Fundraiser, and Reflections Answering the Final Question

Within one week, three events became the culmination of my action research. The West Park Band attended the Chicago school *music contest*; we had our first music department *fundraiser*; and the band students wrote wonderful *reflections* on their band experience so far and their dreams for the future.

CONTEST & STUDENT REFLECTIONS

On Tuesday, March 18, 2003, the West Park Band participated in the Chicago City Elementary Music Festival at Curie High School. This time, instead of answers to specific questions about band and the contest, I wanted open-ended reflections, so we took time in class to write journals. I asked the students to tell me whatever they wanted about band, jazz band, the contest, or music in general. Then we watched the video of the contest and I encouraged them to add comments about that, too.

The student reflections fell into four categories, generally based on the student's status in the group. Here are some examples from each.

Because the good and exceptional students and the frustrated and discouraged students voice their opinions frequently, their reflections did not surprise me. (pp.154-156)

Reflections from the students who have been struggling, trying very hard, and *did* perform in the contest touched me the most. They enjoyed the challenge, felt proud of the band's accomplishment and want to work harder in the future to improve themselves and the group. (pp.157-158)

Students who have been struggling and trying hard but *did not* attend the contest, surprised me. After watching the video, they were sad they did not participate and want to work harder in the future so they can be a part of the ensemble. (p.159)

Although I'll deeply miss my seventh and eighth graders when they're gone, their reflections gave me much hope for their musical futures, and a good feeling about the experience I provided them at West Park. (p.160)

THE FINAL QUESTION

What is the relationship between building a sense of community and making good music in band?

Dr. Fischer suggested I add this question to my research. I already knew the answer in my heart so I did not pursue it directly. The fact that a good band has a strong sense of community just *is*, for reasons that are seemingly intangible and inexplicable. Thankfully, our contest judge put into words many of the specific actions necessary for a band community to make good music. The reasons that bands have a strong sense of community are much more real to me now.

Judge's Comment about Our Band	How it Relates to a Good Community
"We had some individuals who got lost which I think doesn't make it flow."	Members must know what is expected of them and be prepared to follow-through with it completely because others are depending on them.
"Everybody needs to be together on beat one."	Members must work together and act as one or the group's goals will not be accomplished.
"I suspect this band has practiced, and they haven't all been together. When you're not all together then you don't have that precision."	All members must regularly participate in group activities so that every member is aware of the whole.
"One thing that will help in the beginning is if you breathe together as an ensemble. Just before you come in, not only will you have air to start it, but you will come in together. An ensemble that rehearses the breath instead of the first note will always be together."	Preparation and unity is key. If members are prepared, have one goal in mind, and act in unison, the outcome will be wonderful.
"A couple of things we need to do to make this a First Division Band: First of all, everybody needs to know their notes, and then everybody needs to watch [the conductor] and listen to be together. You need to balance and play in precision with your section, and you have to count."	Members must know what is expected and act with enough confidence to support others. They must know the back-up plan, they must use all their senses to work effectively with others and act as one, and they must move deliberately—not aimlessly—toward the goal.

The judge said that each individual must come fully prepared, and implied that the whole band, and each section within it, must be synchronized in mind, breath, air, tongues, tone, arms, and fingers. And they must have an agreed-upon back-up plan—watching the conductor—when things get tough. Being a part of a community is about knowing what is expected of you, playing your part reliably so others can trust you, contributing to the groups' accomplishments, and doing it all with an unselfish dedication to the whole.

Although our band is not perfect, in one week it became evident that my students had already started to become a learning community. On the morning of the contest, everyone arrived on time with their materials, asked if I needed any help, warmed-up on their own, and acted as a single unit throughout

the day. The judge's comments indicated that we have started to act as one and that it shows through in our music.

You really look nice.

I see some really good posture.

Nice lower wind sound. Nice precision.

Nice clean, precise performance. Nice overall spirit for the march.

You've got a good start, a good spirit, good style, and good tone—we've got good air going through the horns.

Good job keep up the good work.

While baking cookies, the basis of an effective community was also evident. Everyone arrived knowing what needed to be done, worked well together to accomplish the goal, and asked when they did not know what to do. The students were self-sufficient and I guided them when necessary instead of having to direct them constantly: situational leadership in action.

The routines that lead to an effective community become more engrained in my students each week. If we all continue to be mindful of these ideal routines, we will improve drastically. I am extremely proud of my students and their hard work over the last year and a half. I look forward to many more years with these young musicians, this growing and evolving band, and this school learning community.

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Appendices

Stages of Group Development			
<i>Questions to Assess Group Development and Effectiveness</i>			
Stage 1 Facilitating Psychological Membership	Stage 2 Establishing Shared Influence	Stage 3 Pursuing Academic Goals	Stage 4 Recognizing Conditions of Self-Renewal
<p>Are there procedures to get to know everyone?</p> <p>Is it all right for students to express their fears, concerns, and ideas?</p> <p>Do students and the teacher listen to one another?</p> <p>Do students interact with a variety of classmates?</p> <p>Is there sensitivity to and appreciation of the different needs and styles of others?</p>	<p>Can the students take constructive leadership?</p> <p>Can leadership be shared and rotated?</p> <p>Are new and different ideas listened to and evaluated?</p> <p>Are conflicts openly recognized and discussed?</p> <p>Are the skills of all members being used?</p>	<p>Are individual differences respected?</p> <p>Are students motivated to study?</p> <p>Can the group set some long-range goals?</p> <p>Do students support one another in learning?</p> <p>Is there a balance between group and individual accountability?</p> <p>Can problems be specified and resolved?</p> <p>Can conflict be used creatively?</p>	<p>Can the group evaluate its own effectiveness?</p> <p>Can the group solve its own problems?</p> <p>Can individuals evaluate themselves and set goals for personal improvement?</p>
Schmuck & Schmuck © 2001			