

Quantitative Research Journal 1

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The school I attended for this part of my observation was Johann Sebastian Jr. High. I observed Mr. Graham with three bands; his Advanced Band and two Beginning Bands. The classroom has many posters around the room. Some of the sayings on them included: "Perfect Practice Makes Perfect", "Perfect Playing Posture". There are also posters with fingering charts for each instrument around the room. I thought that this was good because it set up the tone for a friendly learning experience.

September 23, 2005
9:00-10:00 AM

Advanced Band

At the beginning of class, the students entered and got out their instruments. I noticed some students took the time to warm-up, while other students took the time to socialize with their friends. During this time the teacher was doing administrative duties, such as signing permission slips for a 5K run, taking care of some notes that had arrived from the front office, etc.

When it was time for class to begin, Mr. Graham put on a microphone head set, and began taking roll. Does this simply raise the noise level in the classroom. Would it be better if the students had to be quieter so they could hear the teacher? After the roll, Mr. Graham asked a student to direct the band in playing their "Scale Patterns 1-6." While the student led the group, Mr. Graham picked up his instrument, (a trumpet) and played along with the group. The student that "led" the group clapped their hands to the beat. Students have opportunities "to teach" or feel like the teacher. At first I thought that they should conduct the group, but I also realized that this was a good way for the student to learn how important it is to keep a steady beat. I did notice that they did not take the time tune.

After they were done warming up, Mr. Graham said, "We are going to start where we ended last class, Carol of the Bells." date? After the group pulled out the music, he turned to the saxophone section and said, "I need a little separation between the notes at the beginning." He then demonstrated by singing the style that he wanted. Effective teachers are able to provide their students with aural models by singing and/or playing instruments. The saxophone section then played the section indicated by the teacher, but not separated. Mr. Graham then said, "No, no, no. You weren't listening to me. (This wasn't harsh, just a reminder to listen). We need that separated because this piece will be going a lot faster. We don't want it to sound like mush." He then

picked up his instrument and played the style that he wanted them to use. The saxophone section played the part again, this time correct. (I thought that it was good that Mr. Graham could demonstrate to students more than one way what he wanted. I also liked how he did not keep persisting on a method that was not getting across to the group.) “I hope all of you were listening. I want this beginning part to be separated.” (I liked how he applied what had been taught to the saxophone section to the whole group.) He then conducted the whole group, and those who needed to play separated did. While the whole group was playing, Mr. Graham was counting the beats out loud for the whole group and clapping his hands. I later found out that the group had only been playing this piece for 1 day.

The sections that were playing on beat one did not play together, so Mr. Graham isolated them from the rest of the group, and had them work on getting a full sound, but together. The first time, it wasn't together, and someone squawked on the first note, which caused some students to laugh. Mr. Graham said, “All of you should have heard that it wasn't together. And as for (student who squawked), leave him alone, he is just getting ready for goose hunting season.” (I thought that this was a good way to get the students to hear that there was a problem with playing together. I also liked how he handled the student who had squawked on their entrance. It took a lot of the embarrassment away from him.)

The piece continues on, and there is a problem with a chromatic run. He takes each section that has this problematic area, and has them play their parts. Some students are not putting enough air into their instruments. He says, “I know this is only the second time you have played this piece, but don't make two mistakes. What I mean is you are going to get some notes wrong, but make sure you do not back off on the air.” He continues on, and the air problem isn't getting fixed. He tries a different approach. “When the melodic line goes up we should do what class?” The class responds, “Crescendo”. Mr. Graham says, “Good. We should crescendo. And when we crescendo, we need the air there to help us. This passage is going up, so we should all work on our crescendos.” After this, the clarinets were able to use their air for support. He moves on to the trumpet section, who had the same chromatic passage. They did not play with a lot of air support. Mr. Graham says, “You need to take in enough air to be able to hit those high notes. Right now you are only filling your lungs half full, and you need to fill them all the way.” He then picks up his trumpet and demonstrates playing the same passage without enough air, and with enough air. The trumpets get better after his demonstration.

A little further on in the piece there was a flute solo. This student played really quietly, which affected her air support. To give her some help he said, “It has all the right notes, but I need it played braver.” metaphor After this she did play braver, but the notes were out of tune. He said, “Play that note”, and after she played it he said, “push in”. (I think it might have been a little better if he let her decide if it was flat or sharp, so that she get her ears used to listening to her pitch.) I agree. We want to nurture our students' independence.

At one point, the rhythm of the main melody changes, which caused some problems. He said, "Change is good. If the piece was the same, it would be boring to play and listen to." He tells the group that at this point it is triplets instead of eighth notes. After he said this, the group was able to pull the music back together. As they continue on to a part that they have under their fingers he says, "Let's not forget the dynamics. We have four measures that are really loud, and then we have four measures that are really soft. **This sounds like one child who is crying and screaming at their parent, and then the well behaved child.**" (I thought that was a good analogy for the students.)

The piece moves on to a part that is similar to the beginning, but slurred instead. He stops the group. He says, "We did staccato at the beginning because I want to hear a difference between the tongued parts and the slurred parts." (I thought that this was a good way to tie what the class had learned at the beginning to what they were currently learning) The group plays it slurred, and he stops them and compliments them.

At this point, there is a percussionist who has a question regarding a marking in her part. It was a thumb roll on the tambourine. He says, "I had this explained to me, but I can't get it down yet." He walks back to the percussionists, and shows them how to hold the tambourine, and the movement of the hand for the thumb roll. He then explains how the sound is made, and what it sounds like. After this demonstration, all of the percussionists take a turn trying to do a thumb roll. (While this is going on, the rest of the band is listening as well, because they are interested.) A couple of the percussionists are able to do it, and the rest of the band cheers. Mr. Graham says, "**See, I told you that you would be better percussionists than me! Good job!**" The group continues on in this song to a designated spot. After realizing that this was the groups second day with the piece, I was surprised by how far along they were with the piece.

After they finish working on this song, Mr. Graham says, "It is important to try and fix something, and to remember to keep it fixed." He then addresses each section individually. He talks about what they worked on in the piece, and what they need to remember to practice. They then end the class period by playing a piece that several students wanted to work on. For this piece, Mr. Graham is conducting with a band, and not counting out the beats for the students. As the class ends, Mr. Graham says, "We were better than we were when we started, but we still aren't as good as we can be."

Some things that I noticed during this class period was that **Mr. Graham was very encouraging to all of his students, but able to joke around with them at appropriate times also.** It made for a very enjoyable learning environment for the students. I did notice however that when Mr. Graham **was working with individual sections, the rest of the class seemed to get rambunctious at times.** After they were released to pack up their instruments, the noise level rose a lot, but I also noticed that this group of students seemed to also be a big group of friends, that supported each other.

October 6, 2005
10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Beginning Band (both classes)

As the class came in, Mr. Graham told the students that he was going to write their names next to a rhythm pattern on the board. Their job was to write the counting below the notes. As they were doing this he said, "After you are done, make sure you know how to clap it too." Were there rhythms connected to music literature the students had played, sung, or experienced in other ways? Would this activity be more meaningful if it was tied to real music? The first beginning band class was a little less focused than the other group, probably because they were just coming back from lunch. The second group that came in was quiet and attentive to Mr. Graham as he explained the procedure. Mr. Graham had to call several students up to the board to do their example in the first group.

After the students had all written their counting underneath the rhythm patterns, Mr. Graham got up in front of the class. He explained to them that band was a cumulative class, which meant that everything that you have learned from day one on up, was important and was always going to be part of their instrument playing. He said, "I hope that when you had questions about rhythm that you weren't afraid to ask me. I will explain it to you until you are able to understand it. It does not bother me. Now, I am going to look over your work up here, and if it isn't right, I am going to call you to the board to fix it. Don't worry I will help you through it. Those of you that are in your seats, listen. You can learn stuff from your classmates. This might get a little repetitive, but do you know why I am doing this? Am I testing you on how you learned it, or me and how I taught it to you?" The class says, "It is for you to see how you taught us." He says, "That's right. I need to make sure that I taught it to you so that you understand it." He checks the examples and calls down each student that has a mistake. He gives each student a general idea of what they have done wrong. They try to work through it while he is checking the rest of the problems. Mr. Graham then checks those that have been re-done. If it is still incorrect, he will walk the student through the problem. He would never give them the answer, but instead walk them through the thought process. Promoting musical independence. There were a couple of students that were completely clueless. He did not get frustrated with them at all. With these students, he went right back to the basics with the students. He said, "Please do not let me move on, unless you are sure you understand this. I don't want you to be lost."

After all of the written parts are correct, Mr. Graham says, "When I call your name, I want you to stand up and clap the rhythm." Most of the students get this correct, but there are some students that have problems. Mr. Graham patiently walked them through the process, telling them where they messed up, and having them try again.

This whole process took most of class, but I thought it was a very good example of evaluating the students and the teaching process. Mr. Graham was

able to see which students need help. One student had a really hard time and Mr. Graham said, "I think that we should have another study session. Let me know when you want to come by." The student then said, "What about Thursday or Friday?" Mr. Graham said, "I would love to, but we won't be in school those days. What about Monday?" I thought it was neat of Mr. Graham to show the students that he really wanted them to exceed. **It was also cool that the student was not scared to come to Mr. Graham for help.**

After the rhythm part was done, Mr. Graham said, "Make sure if you had problems you understand what you did wrong. There is going to be a written test on this in a few weeks. Do not hesitate to ask for help."

The last few minutes of class were spent on reviewing music. The drummers counted while they played, and Mr. Graham counted with them. They also went over a piece that the group was going to play for a playing test the following week. At the end of class, Mr. Graham said, "Very good job! We got a lot accomplished today. There is long weekend coming up. Make sure that you practice so that we can continue in this direction. When we come back, I want you to be able to play the seven notes that we have worked on." The group was dismissed to put their instruments away.

Summary

Overall, I was impressed with everything that I saw. **I thought Mr. Graham was very supportive. He had the respect of his students. His students were all so excited to be in band, and it was apparent that they really enjoyed their class and learning about music. Mr. Graham was encouraging to those students that were having problems, and never demeaning. It was also neat to see the friendships that these students had developed. The students were excited about their progress as a group, as well as individuals who were able to succeed. Mr. Graham had a way of helping those students who were shy about being in front of the class, or playing in front of the class.**

50 points for this assignment.