

*O*BSERVING  
IN  
MUSIC CLASSROOMS

COLLEEN M. CONWAY  
EDITOR

ZACHARY S. NENABER  
ASSISTANT EDITOR

# Observing in Music Classrooms

Colleen M. Conway (Ed.)  
Zachary S. Nenaber (A. Ed.)  
University of Michigan

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## **Observing in Music Classrooms**

Colleen M. Conway, Editor

*Observing in Music Classrooms* is a resource designed for music education students who are conducting observations as part of their preparation to become music teachers. In some teacher education programs, music students observe classrooms as a group and have the opportunity to discuss their experiences. In other settings, students may be required to complete a minimum number of observation hours with little opportunity for interaction about these visits. This resource is intended to be useful in both types of circumstances, as well as everything in between. Course instructors may choose to utilize the observation protocols as writing assignments, group discussion prompts, prompts for student video responses, or tools for in-person classroom observations. These tools are also suitable for observations conducted via Zoom or using pre-recorded videos. A PDF of the complete resource/book is available on the website under the "Music Education" category. Additionally, each observation protocol can be easily copied as a Google Doc by clicking the provided chapter links in the table of contents.

It is unlikely that students will have the time or opportunity to visit all types of music classrooms described in this book. However, it is hoped that the protocols will still provide valuable context for courses that might be unfamiliar to students, even without direct observation. All of the contributing authors have experience teaching in the settings about which they write, as well as experience working in teacher education. Every observation protocol includes sections similar to the following: classroom setup/classroom environment, teacher–student interaction/classroom management, musical activities, pedagogical principles, assessment, questions to ask the students, and questions to ask the teacher.

## **Need for This Resource**

Teacher education researchers have suggested that observation in P–12 classrooms is important for helping teacher candidates connect the theories and pedagogical approaches they are learning in class to the practices found in today's schools and classrooms (Cross & Bayazit, 2014). Noguera (2018) argued that classroom observations serve as a catalyst for critical thinking about teaching and learning. However, I have documented that observations lacking context are considered by new music teachers to be among the least important assignments in teacher preparation programs, whereas observations in which context is provided by course instructors are reported as some of the most meaningful aspects of undergraduate music teacher education (Conway, 2002). Young and Bender-Slack (2011) also support the need to "scaffold preservice teachers in the use of appropriate and effective observational skills and tools" (p. 335).

## **Overview of Text**

The Music in Elementary School section includes separate observation tools for P–5 general music, beginning strings, beginning band, and elementary choir. Observers should note that the number of class meetings per week, minutes per week, and the number of students in each class will vary greatly by setting. Policies also differ by state. Most states require elementary music; however, some do not. In some states, instrumental music instruction begins as early as first or second grade for strings and third or fourth grade for band, while in other states, instrumental music does not start until sixth or seventh grade. An important purpose for asking music education students to complete observations is to help them understand the varied ways in which music instruction is implemented in different contexts.

The Music in Middle School section provides observation tools for middle school orchestra, band, and choir. The Music in High School section features tools for observing high school band, orchestra, choir, marching band, show choir, musical theater, vocal jazz, a cappella choir, and music theory. The section Music Classes Offered at Various Grade Levels includes observation tools for instrumental jazz ensembles, music composition and creation, music production, guitar, modern band, steelband, and mariachi. Finally, the book concludes with a section on Music in Community Settings, offering observation tools for early childhood music (birth through age three), church and community choirs, and community bands and orchestras.

This resource is offered at no cost by Conway Publications, and we encourage you to share it with anyone who might find it helpful. We also invite you to explore other useful resources for music and music education at [[conway-publications.com](http://conway-publications.com)].

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## Colleen Conway – University of Michigan

[conwaycm@umich.edu](mailto:conwaycm@umich.edu)



Colleen Conway is Professor of Music Education at The University of Michigan. She has published over 115 research articles in all the major music education journals and her books include: *Great Beginning for Music Teachers: A Guide to Mentoring and Induction* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2003); *Handbook for the Beginning Music Teacher* (GIA, 2006); *Teaching Music in Higher Education* (Oxford, 2009, 2019); *Handbook for the Music Mentor* (GIA, 2010); *Handbook of Qualitative Research in American Music Education* (Oxford, 2014); *Musicianship-Focused Curriculum and Assessment* (GIA, 2015, 2024); *Teaching Private Music Lessons: A Manual for Teachers* (Conway Publications, 2019); *The Oxford Handbook on Preservice Music Teacher Education in the United States* (Oxford, 2020), and *Focusing on Musicianship in Elementary and Middle School Band* (Conway Publications, 2025).

## Elementary General Music (Grades P–5) Observation Overview

Corinne Galligan

This observation form is meant to guide preservice teachers' attention and reflection in the elementary (grades P–5) general music classroom. It is divided into five main categories: (a) learning environment, (b) instruction, (c) interactions, (d) assessment of student learning, and (e) looking forward. When considering the *learning environment*, think about how aspects of the physical organization and classroom setup affect teaching and learning. When noting *instruction* throughout the lesson, pay attention to how the teacher creates, sequences, and transitions between learning activities that support the range of students' developing musical understandings and abilities. Be aware of how the *interactions* in the classroom affect the learning environment and, therefore, the teaching and learning. How do the teacher and students *assess* learning progress to inform instruction and future goals? Finally, *looking forward* to your own teaching, what key takeaways and follow-up questions do you have from this observation that will help you grow in your understandings and abilities as a music educator?

Elementary general music requirements and teacher support vary across states and local education agencies (LEAs, also known as districts, counties, corporations, etc.). Classroom observations offer just a snapshot of the job of an elementary general music teacher, and there might not be sufficient time for an in-depth conversation with the teacher. If possible, it is valuable to talk with a number of elementary general music educators in different locations to get an idea of the wide variety of real-world scenarios that exist. Knowing the range of possibilities within the position, especially those outside of teachers' control, offers helpful context for observations. Consider things like:

- Instruction-related numbers (at each school, if multiple):
  - Grade levels, sections, length and frequency of lessons, schools, students (and various student demographics), music teachers
- Additional contract language:
  - Definition of 1.0 FTE (e.g., a certain number of sections taught per week)
  - Amount of prep time (per building, if they teach in multiple)
  - “Other duties as assigned”
- Learning space provided (own classroom, shared spaces, shared students, cart)
- Type of grading (standards-based, letters, behaviors only, comments only, satisfactory/unsatisfactory, etc.)
- Music performance expectations, via contract language or school administration
- Consistency of student population throughout the school year
- Scope and sequence, curricular expectations
- Classroom budget, district-provided curriculum and materials
- Opportunities for collaboration with colleagues to support student learning (classroom teachers, special education teachers, English language teachers, interpreters, interventionists, paraprofessionals, speech/occupational/physical therapists, etc.)

## ELEMENTARY (GRADES P–5) GENERAL MUSIC OBSERVATION FORM

Date	Location	Teacher	Class/Ensemble/ Age/Level	Number of Students

### LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- What does this learning space look like (posters, books, manipulatives, instruments, board, classroom technology, etc.)? Which are “background” objects in today’s context, and which do you see being actively used during this lesson?
- How many students are in the class? What do you notice about them?
- How are the students physically organized in the room (risers, rug, sit spots, chairs, etc.)?
- Are there different areas in the room for different types of activities? If so, how do the teacher and learners navigate transitions between areas?
- Does the teacher have voice amplification?
- Describe the general vibe or atmosphere of the room itself.

### INSTRUCTION

- How does the teacher greet students? How do students enter the room (if applicable)?
- List the different learning activities, circle the mode(s) of learning (aural, visual, kinesthetic) utilized, and list what you think is the primary learning goal for each activity:

Learning Activity	Learning Modality <i>(circle as applicable)</i>	Primary Learning Goal
	Aural   Visual   Kinesthetic	
	Aural   Visual   Kinesthetic	
	Aural   Visual   Kinesthetic	
	Aural   Visual   Kinesthetic	
	Aural   Visual   Kinesthetic	

- How does the teacher support different levels of understanding and abilities?
  - How does the teacher transition between activities?
  - How long does each activity last, and how long does student engagement in each activity last?
- List the repertoire and materials (musical and non-musical) used in the lesson.
- Describe the use of technology in the lesson.
- How are multiple kinds of music literacy incorporated in the lesson?
- Where is the teacher throughout the lesson?
- Which aspects of the lesson are student-centered? Which are teacher-centered?
- How did the teacher end class and prepare students to exit the room (if applicable)?

## INTERACTIONS

- Describe the style of the teacher (personality, demeanor, interactions with students and other adults, etc.).
- How do the students interact with each other? With the teacher/other adults? With the music?
- How does the teacher guide or model interactions?
- Does the teacher use students' names? Do they have any visible supports for this?
- What does it seem like "engaged learning behaviors" might look like to this teacher?
- What does student participation look like throughout the lesson?
- How does the teacher respond to unexpected behaviors?
- Are there things you are able to notice in your role as an observer that might be more challenging to notice if you were teaching the lesson?
- What do you notice about the classroom culture? Think about things like the overall tone of interactions, student talk, language/verbiage, cultural competency, and relationships.
- Describe procedures the teacher used to gain/regain individual and group focus.
- What components of the classroom environment contribute to classroom management?
- Are there any paraprofessionals, interpreters, or other adults in the room? Describe their role(s), locations, interactions with students and teachers, etc.

## ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

- Did students get opportunities to self-assess their progress?
- For each of the activities you listed earlier, how do you think the teacher actively assessed the learners' progress towards meeting each learning goal?
  - Would you describe these assessments as informal or formal? Formative or summative?
- Based on your own observation and informal assessment of student understanding, what do you think could be logical next steps for these students in their next lesson?

## LOOKING FORWARD

- What specific questions do you have for the teacher and/or students?
- Describe something you learned from observing this lesson that you can use in your own teaching.
- If applicable, describe something you saw today that you might approach differently in your future classroom and why.

## NOTES

Notes/Questions/Observations:

## Corinne Galligan – University of Michigan

[cgalliga@umich.edu](mailto:cgalliga@umich.edu)



Corinne Galligan is a PhD student in Music Education at the University of Michigan. Prior to that, she taught elementary general music in Pulaski, Wisconsin, for nine years, where she was a Golden Apple Teacher of Distinction and was nominated for a Grammy Music Educator Award. Corinne holds a BME (Eastern Michigan University), MM in Music Education – Kodály Emphasis (Silver Lake College), Certificate in Teaching World Music (University of St. Thomas, MN), and Certificate in Learning Differences and Neurodiversity – Specialization in Executive Function (Landmark College). She is a National Board Certified Teacher and has presented at a variety of state, regional, and national conferences and colloquia. While teaching, Corinne served three years as the Wisconsin Music Educators Association Elementary General Music Chair while also on the Association of Wisconsin-Area Kodály Educators board. She recently concluded her service as editorial assistant for the *Journal of Historical Research in Music Education*. Corinne's scholarly interests include sea chanteys, neurodivergent music teachers (inservice and preservice), Universal Design for Learning, and preservice music teacher education.

## **Beginning Strings Observation Overview**

Daniel Fecteau

Beginning strings classes can vary greatly depending on the school, district, region, and state. While it is common for instrumental instruction to begin in middle school, many programs begin orchestra classes in the fourth and fifth grade years of elementary school. In some cases, lessons can start as early as first or second grade because string instrument sizing can accommodate very young learners. In addition, class size, instrument make-up, frequency of instruction, and other factors will have a significant impact on an instructor's approach to teaching beginning orchestra.

The habits and techniques that students learn in beginning strings classes have a long-lasting impact as they continue their musical development. Establishing proper position, bow hold, and technique is of the utmost importance to students' future success. When visiting beginning strings classes, observers should pay careful attention to how technical concepts are introduced and addressed by the teacher and notice how students respond.

Some string pedagogues advise teaching students completely by ear at the start of instruction. The Suzuki method has made a tremendous impact on the string education community and it traditionally introduces notation after years of learning aurally. Learning by ear can have many positive impacts for students, allowing them to focus on their technique, tone, pitch, audiation, rhythm and more. However, music literacy must also be addressed in beginning orchestra classes to facilitate an ensemble-style learning environment, give students autonomy over their learning, and create well-rounded musicians that are ready for future grade levels. While observing beginning string classes, be curious about how and when music literacy is being taught. Orchestra teachers that work with beginners are challenged to find a balance between fostering good foundational technique, musical skills, and note-reading competence.

## BEGINNING STRINGS OBSERVATION FORM

Date	Location	Teacher	Class/Ensemble/ Age/Level	Number of Students

### CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

*Reflect upon the classroom environment. Consider some of the following:*

Physical Space:

What is in the classroom, and why might it be there? (furniture, charts, decorations, etc.)

Where are students in the space, and how are they oriented? Are they standing or sitting?

How might the physical space affect the students' experience?

Routines:

How do students enter the room? How do students unpack their instruments?

How are student's instruments being tuned?

What other routines are evident in this classroom?

Relationships:

How does the teacher speak to the students? How do the students speak to the teacher?

How do the students speak to each other? How does the classroom feel?

### INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

What **instructional strategies** are you noticing in this lesson?

Modeling	Physical corrections	Play-alongs	Other (List below):
Conducting	Nonverbal cues	Small group work	
Explaining	Call and response	Singing	

What strategies seemed to be the most effective for student learning?

What phrases or activities might you use in your own classroom?

LESSON OBJECTIVES		
What aspects of <b>technique</b> are being taught/reinforced?	What <b>musical skills</b> are being taught?	What elements of <b>music literacy</b> are being taught?
Position	Tone	Identifying notes parts of the staff
Bow hold	Pitch	Singing/speaking the notes/counts
Left hand technique	Rhythm	Reading music with instruments
Other:	Other:	Other:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What objectives are being taught? What did the instructor seem to prioritize in this lesson?</li> <li>• Was the lesson successful in teaching the content and objectives? How do you know?</li> </ul>		

REFLECTIONS
<p>Potential questions to ask the <b>students</b>:</p> <p>How do you feel when you are in orchestra class?</p> <p>What did you learn in today's lesson?</p> <p>What helps you learn in orchestra?</p> <p>Potential questions to ask the <b>teacher</b>:</p> <p>How did you feel about this lesson?</p> <p>What advice do you have for a future educator?</p> <p>Potential questions to ask <b>yourself</b>:</p> <p>What will I remember about this class?</p> <p>What other elements might have affected this lesson that I do not know about?</p> <p>What would I have done the same or differently?</p>

NOTES
Notes/Questions/Observations:

## Daniel Fecteau – University of Michigan

[danieljamesviolin@gmail.com](mailto:danieljamesviolin@gmail.com)



Daniel Fecteau is a music educator, violinist, composer, and live-looping specialist. He taught elementary orchestra for seven years in Connecticut before moving to Michigan to pursue his Master's in Music Education. He is passionate about inspiring motivation in students, using effective sequencing during instruction, and fostering students' musical creativity. While at the University of Michigan, he spearheaded inclusion initiatives by creating the Queer Social program, which earned him an MLK Spirit Award. In addition to his work as a teacher and leader, Daniel is also a skilled musician. His live-looping electric violin performances won the Gottlieb Variations Award and the Michigan Prize at the Briggs Competition, and his chamber group has performed at international conferences and alongside the acclaimed music group Time for Three. He believes that curiosity is key to growth as a musician, teacher, and person, and is happy to be part of this project which develops curiosity in teacher observations.

## **Beginning Band Observation Overview**

Mike Vecchio

The specific grade level that students begin playing a band instrument may range from third grade through high school (and beyond). For this observation protocol, we will assume that students are in an elementary beginning band setting in fourth or fifth grade.

Since beginning band may be students' first experience in an ensemble setting, the structure of the space and the protocols and guidelines for students will be important to observe. How do the students enter the room? Where do they put their cases? What are they instructed to do once they find their seat? These procedures are crucial for a safe and welcoming learning environment, but can easily be overlooked by an observer.

Other aspects for which to be aware include the ways students appear to be motivated to play (games, a reward such as stickers, the music itself, etc.), the physical characteristics of students (their ability to hold the instrument properly and adequately reach all keys/valves/slide positions), and the types of questions the teacher asks the students (and the ways in which students respond).

## BEGINNING BAND OBSERVATION FORM

Date	Location	Teacher	Class/Ensemble/ Age/Level	Number of Students

### THE PHYSICAL SPACE

Describe the Physical Space:

1. How is the space organized? Why do you think space is organized in this way?
2. What elements are meant to catch students' attention?
3. What does the physical space tell you about the teacher, the music program, the school, the students?

### THE STUDENTS

Describe the Students:

1. What is the age range of students included here?
2. If you had to guess, how many years have they been playing their instrument?
3. How are they engaged with making music?
  - a. Note the behavior of a student who is fully engaged with the rehearsal process - why might they be so engaged?
  - b. Note the behavior of a student who is disinterested in the rehearsal process - why might they be so disengaged?

### THE MUSIC

Describe the Music:

1. What is being played (warm-up routine, method book, band pieces)?
2. How does it fit the ability level of students?
3. What specific musical elements are being addressed through this music (key signature, time signature, rhythm, style, etc.)?

## THE INTERACTIONS BETWEEN TEACHER AND STUDENTS

Describe the Interactions Between Teacher and Students:

1. What is the teacher's general demeanor during the rehearsal (e.g., friendly, angry, excited?).
2. Describe how the teacher attempts to get the attention of all students in this space.
3. How does the teacher communicate nonverbally?
4. Within this rehearsal, what do you feel is most important to the teacher? What types of student behavior are rewarded vs. thwarted?
5. How are students being assessed?

## QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS

1. What do you enjoy most about band?
2. What made you choose the [instrument]?
3. How is band different from other activities/sports you've done?

## QUESTIONS TO ASK THE TEACHER

1. Why do students begin band at this grade level?
2. Why are these instruments included as potential beginning band instruments for students to choose?
3. How does learning to read notation fit into beginning band?
4. What other materials/resources do you utilize in beginning band?
5. What's the main goal of beginning band? [For the observer: How does this response compare to what you observed?]

## NOTES

Notes/Questions/Observations:

## Mike Vecchio – University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

[vecchiom@illinois.edu](mailto:vecchiom@illinois.edu)



Mike Vecchio serves as Assistant Professor of Music Education at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign where he teaches undergraduate and graduate courses throughout the music education curriculum. Prior to joining the faculty at Illinois, he earned his PhD in Music Education at the University of Michigan where he also completed a cognate in wind conducting with Prof. Michael Haithcock. He previously taught band in the public schools of New York and the northern suburbs of Chicago. Dr. Vecchio's primary research focuses on creative musical activities within instrumental ensembles and the development of creative musical agency. His research interests also include the role of large ensembles within instrumental music teacher education, the preparation and experiences of music teaching artists, and the Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP) within instrumental music methods courses. Dr. Vecchio's research has been presented at state and national conferences, and has appeared in publications of *International Journal of Music Education*, *Journal of Music Teacher Education*, and *Arts Education Policy Review*. He earned his Bachelor's Degree in Music Education and Euphonium Performance from Ithaca College and Master's Degrees in Music Education and Euphonium Performance from the University of Michigan.

## **Elementary Choir Observation Overview**

Victoria Devine

The introduction to choral singing begins here. The foundational skills a young singer learns are first taught in their elementary choirs. This leaves many elementary choir directors planning around the questions: What should a choral singer know by the time they leave their elementary choir experience? How do I, the teacher, get them prepared to leave my ensemble and thrive in middle school choir?

From classroom expectations to the development of vocal, aural, and ensemble skills, there are a multitude of pedagogical ongoingings in an elementary choir classroom. In this chapter, the observation form will provide examples of what to look for when observing an elementary choir. First, consider how the classroom environment is designed to support student learning. Then, observe how the teacher interacts with their students in general and identify how that affects the energy of the class. From the decorative elements to the consistency of class procedures and sequence of instruction, the teacher ultimately sets the tone for the class.

The form will then go on to question how the rehearsal itself is structured. What warm-ups does the teacher start rehearsal with? What repertoire is being taught and how? What pedagogical elements are you observing in the three main categories: vocal, choral ensemble, and general instruction? All three of these categories should blend together to create an engaging lesson. Finally, determine and reflect on how assessments are used to gauge student understanding.

Elementary choir is about foundation, but it is also about FUN. These students are likely in 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grade. By balancing focus and fun, a choir director can help students develop their musicianship while also nurturing a love for singing in choir.

## ELEMENTARY CHOIR OBSERVATION FORM

Date	Location	Teacher	Class/Ensemble/Age/Level	Number of Students

### CLASSROOM SETUP/CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

*Reflect upon the classroom environment. Consider some of the following:*

- What does this classroom look like in relation to elementary choir (posters, risers, materials, etc.)?
- How are the students physically organized and seated in the rehearsal (by class section, by voice part, in height order, etc.)?
- How do the students enter and exit the rehearsal space?
- Where does the teacher spend their time during the rehearsal (podium, at the piano, in front of the students, etc.)?
- Do the students utilize chorus folders or read music/lyrics on the board?

### INTERACTIONS BETWEEN TEACHER AND STUDENTS

Describe the teacher's "persona."

- How do they generally interact with the students?
- How do they redirect student focus/behavior?

Describe the students' overall behavior.

- How engaged are they in the lesson?
- How do they interact with each other?

Describe the overall culture or "vibe" of the classroom.

- How are class expectations communicated and upheld?
- Does the teacher foster an inclusive and equitable learning environment? If so, how?

### ELEMENTARY CHOIR PROCEDURES OBSERVED

#### Warm-Ups

What warm-ups does the teacher utilize?

- Physical, Breath, Range, Flexibility, Other (explain)

#### Lesson

Repertoire worked on during this lesson:

How many different voice parts are present in each piece?

Overall: How does the teacher teach voice parts?

- Does the teacher use a piano or recorded accompaniment to assist in music teaching, or does the teacher primarily teach by rote?
- Are the students reading notated music while learning? If not, are there other visuals?

### PEDAGOGY-FOCUSED OBSERVATION QUESTIONS

#### Vocal Pedagogy

- How does the teacher address pitch matching issues?
- What is the teacher's approach to teaching singers to shift between their vocal registers?
- Does the teacher use vocal terminology such as "chest" or "head" voice to describe changes in vocal registers? If not, what language do they use?

- How does the teacher address resonance quality (brightness or darkness to the tone)?
- What attention is given to diction and pronunciation of words?

#### Choral Ensemble Pedagogy

- What method(s) does the teacher use to clarify entrances and cutoffs?
- How does the teacher maintain tempo consistency and rhythmic alignment?
- What is the teacher's approach to exploring expressive elements such as dynamics and phrasing?
- What conversations are had regarding connection to the lyrics of the piece(s)?
- How does the teacher encourage part independence, especially if more than one voice part is taught?
- How does the teacher explain vocal blend and balance to the ensemble?

#### General Instructional Pedagogy

- How does the teacher demonstrate sequential instruction and scaffolding to facilitate student understanding?
- What methods of reinforcement does the teacher use to keep students engaged?
- How does the teacher "manage" student behavior? Are the class expectations clear?
- Are there any accommodations or modifications made to meet the learning needs of students with exceptionalities?
- How is student questioning managed (raising hands, calling out, etc.)?
- How did the teacher end class? Was there a sense of completion to the learning for that class?

### **ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING**

Overall: How were the students assessed during this lesson?

- How did the teacher identify and respond to student errors?
- What were the skills/principles being evaluated during this lesson?
- Were students assessed individually, as a class, or in small groups?
- What kinds of formative or summative assessments were used by the teacher?
- Was the evaluation style effective for what was being evaluated?

### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

- What questions would you ask the teacher after watching this lesson?
- What questions would you ask the students after watching this lesson?
- What are your main takeaways from this observation?
- What might you implement in your own teaching?
- Is there anything you would have done differently, and why?

### **NOTES**

Notes/Questions/Observations:

# Victoria Devine – Manorhaven Elementary School

[victoriamdevine@gmail.com](mailto:victoriamdevine@gmail.com)



Victoria Devine is a music educator, vocalist, and pianist based in Long Island, NY. She currently teaches K–5 general music and chorus at Manorhaven Elementary School in Port Washington. There, she also advises the Manorhaven Drama Club, where she directs students in grades 3–5 for various performances. In addition to her elementary teaching, Victoria works with students in grades 7–12 as the vocal music director for musical productions at both Oyster Bay High School and Valley Stream South High School. Victoria has also served as an All County Chairperson with the Nassau Music Educators Association, organizing the selection process, rehearsals, and performances for countywide choral festivals. She holds a Bachelor of Music in Music Education with a Concentration in Voice from Ithaca College and is currently pursuing her Master of Music in Music Education at the University of Michigan through the Summer MM program.

## **Middle School Orchestra Observation Overview**

Kelsey Dewar

This observation guide is designed for preservice music educators to use in the middle school orchestra classroom. In addition to the specific questions and targeted reflection offered in the observation protocol, preservice teachers should also consider larger questions of program structure, course offerings, and instrumentation.

The structure of middle school orchestra programs varies widely. Some programs offer rehearsals before or after school, while others offer orchestra as a curricular class. Some programs start beginner string players, while other programs act as a bridge between elementary and high school programs. All orchestra programs will have regular performances throughout the school year, but may also include competitive performances and extracurricular/alternative styles ensembles.

Classes in each middle school orchestra program may be offered as one combined orchestra or divided by grade or ability level. The program might also include sectionals or small group lessons in addition to the large group rehearsal. There will also be a variety of instrumentation in middle school orchestra programs. The standard instruments (violin, viola, cello, bass) will be included, but there may also be additional instruments, including piano, guitar, or harp. In any program students will perform at a variety of levels and directors must work to meet their needs and help them grow as musicians.

As you observe in the middle school orchestra classroom, identify what makes the program unique. Learn how the program is structured and what the director's goals are for the program. Make note of what worked in the rehearsal and what classroom structures are in place to help the rehearsal run smoothly. Observing multiple directors and in multiple programs will help you get an idea of the variety in middle school orchestra programs and will also give you many ideas for your own teaching and program direction.

## MIDDLE SCHOOL ORCHESTRA OBSERVATION FORM

Date	Location	Teacher	Class/Ensemble/ Age/Level	Number of Students

### CLASSROOM SETUP/CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

1. How is the classroom organized (lockers, instrument racks, projector, storage, etc.)?
2. How is the classroom decorated (posters, pictures, etc.)?
3. How are the students physically organized and seated in class (desk, chairs, stands, etc.)?
4. Are there any systems in place around the classroom to help with the flow of rehearsal (i.e., rosin station, extra music, tuners, etc.)?

### INTERACTIONS BETWEEN TEACHER AND STUDENTS "CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT"

1. How does the teacher generally interact with students?
2. How does the teacher engage with participating students? How does the teacher redirect students who are not participating?
3. How does the teacher interact with students before and after class?
4. Are there any procedures in place for the teacher to gain the focus of individual students or the group?
5. Are there consistent redirects or cues given by the teacher to indicate successful or unsuccessful student engagement in the content/lesson?
6. What components of the classroom environment contribute to classroom management?

### MUSICAL ACTIVITIES OBSERVED

1. How does the teacher structure the rehearsal?
2. How does the teacher warm up the orchestra?
3. What pieces did the orchestra rehearse?
4. How does the teacher differentiate instruction during the rehearsal?
5. How long does the teacher spend on each element of the rehearsal?
6. Does the lesson include any games or activities to aid in student learning?

### PEDAGOGY PRINCIPLES OBSERVED

1. What musical techniques did the teacher focus on during rehearsal? (Intonation, rhythm, dynamics, bowing/articulation, etc.)
2. Where is the teacher during rehearsal? (On podium, move around room, etc)

3. Is there anything clever or memorable that the teacher said to reinforce what students are learning in rehearsal?
4. How often does the teacher model for students or play along with them?
5. How much time does the teacher spend talking vs. playing?
6. What does the teacher work on with each section vs. the entire group?

### **ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING**

1. What questions did the teacher ask students throughout the lesson?
2. What assessment techniques did the teacher use?

### **QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS**

1. What was the goal of today's rehearsal?
2. What does your teacher do to help you be successful in rehearsal?
3. What do you most enjoy about your experience in orchestra?

### **QUESTIONS TO ASK THE TEACHER**

1. How is your orchestra program structured?
2. Do you offer any extracurricular ensembles?
3. How many performances do you have per year?
4. Did you make any adjustments to the lesson today based on your informal assessment during the rehearsal?

### **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION**

1. What stood out to you from today's rehearsal?
2. What would you like to incorporate into your future classroom? What, if anything, would you have done differently?
3. How is this program the same or different from others you have observed?

### **NOTES**

Notes/Questions/Observations:

## Kelsey Dewar – University of Michigan

[kdewar@umich.edu](mailto:kdewar@umich.edu)



Kelsey Dewar has been an elementary and middle school orchestra director for over ten years. She is currently a PhD student and Graduate Instructor at the University of Michigan. Previously, she served as the Orchestra Director at Monroe Middle School where she directed the 6th-8th Grade & Chamber Orchestras. She was also a member of the Monroe Brave Spaces Team, a group of teachers committed to creating equitable spaces and structures for all students. Kelsey received her Master of Music in Music Education from the University of Michigan and her Bachelor of Music in Music Education from Wheaton College. She has presented at both the state and national level, including at the American String Teachers' Association National Conference and the Illinois Music Education Conference. Her teaching and research interests include culturally responsive/sustaining pedagogies and alternative styles in the classroom. She is passionate about creating musical spaces where all students are welcomed and able to participate.

## **Middle School Band Observation Overview**

Thomas Flynn

Band at the middle school level may take a variety of formats. All students may meet at the same time to rehearse as a full ensemble. These full rehearsals may or may not be supplemented by small group lessons during students' other classes. Or, students may regularly meet in groups of like instruments and only rehearse with the full ensemble in the days leading up to a performance. Consider asking the teacher how the current format for band rehearsals was decided and whether there are other formats they have tried or would prefer.

The format of the class you observe will impact how the teacher structures their lesson. In a small group setting, fewer independent parts will be present, allowing the teacher to spend significant time with each part and hear more individual students performing. In a full ensemble setting, it is likely that the teacher will constantly alternate between working with the full ensemble and smaller groups of students, isolating areas for improvement and then putting those back into the context of other parts. As you observe, pay close attention to how the teacher directs their instruction and navigates which students are engaged at any moment.

Throughout the class, you will observe the teacher informally assessing the ensemble's progress and providing feedback accordingly. One challenge the teacher of a large ensemble faces is how to formally assess individual student learning. Teachers may ask individuals to perform during rehearsals or small group lessons, or they may ask students to submit recordings of themselves performing outside of class. Consider asking the teacher which approaches to formal assessment they have tried and what they have found to work best for their students.

## MIDDLE SCHOOL BAND OBSERVATION FORM

Date	Location	Teacher	Class/Ensemble/ Age/Level	Number of Students

### CLASSROOM SETUP/CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

1. What does this classroom look like? Describe its physical characteristics and appearance.
2. How are the students seated in the ensemble? Provide a diagram identifying each section of instruments.
3. What equipment or technology does the teacher use during the class?

### INTERACTIONS BETWEEN TEACHER AND STUDENTS "CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT"

1. How would you describe the overall level of engagement among students? How does the teacher make an effort to engage all students throughout the class?
2. List any routines that you observe students engaging in, either at the beginning/end of class or during class.
3. How does the teacher regain ensemble focus when needed? What about individual focus?
4. What aspects of the classroom environment contribute positively to classroom management? What aspects may be hindering classroom management?
5. Describe the balance of time between teacher talking and student activity throughout the class.

### MUSICAL ACTIVITIES OBSERVED

1. What music, books, or other resources do the students use to warm up or develop technique?
2. What literature do the students rehearse? List all titles, composers, and grade levels.
3. What are students asked to do beyond playing their instruments? How are breathing, singing, counting, chanting, and physical movement incorporated into the class?
4. Consider the following performance concepts: pitch, rhythm, articulation, dynamics, tone, intonation, balance, blend, pulse, phrasing, and style. Which concepts are addressed the most during this class? Which concepts are not addressed?

## PEDAGOGY PRINCIPLES OBSERVED

1. Are students provided with objectives for their performance before they start playing? List some of these specific objectives.
2. Does the teacher model by singing or playing an instrument? What do you think is the goal of this modeling?
3. Does the teacher always conduct while students are playing their instruments? If not, what else does the teacher do to facilitate student performance?
4. Does the teacher teach in front of the class at all times? If not, how do they move throughout the ensemble?
5. How often does the teacher isolate sections to listen to their performance? How often does the teacher isolate individuals?

## ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

1. What evidence is there that the teacher is assessing student learning during the class? What aspects of student learning are being assessed?
2. What verbal or nonverbal feedback does the teacher provide while students are performing?
3. What verbal feedback does the teacher provide after students have performed? What is the balance of positive to constructive comments?
4. Does the teacher make connections to any past or upcoming formal assessments during the class?

## QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS

1. What was your teacher's goal for today's class?
2. Why did you decide to be in band this year?
3. What is your favorite piece of music you've played in band?

## QUESTIONS TO ASK THE TEACHER

1. What instrumental experience did these students have prior to joining this band?
2. Where does today's class fit into your larger rehearsal cycle?
3. How do you formally assess student learning in the large ensemble setting?

## NOTES

Notes/Questions/Observations:

## Thomas Flynn – University of Michigan

[flynntp@umich.edu](mailto:flynntp@umich.edu)



Thomas Flynn is a PhD student in Music Education at the University of Michigan, where he has taught undergraduate music education courses and served as assistant conductor of the Michigan Youth Symphonic Band. He has presented his research at the AERA and NAFME national conferences and has presented clinics at the state music education conferences in Illinois and Florida, where he taught music for nine years. From 2016 to 2021, he was a member of the band faculty at LaVilla School of the Arts in Jacksonville, Florida, where he directed the Symphonic Band. During Thomas's time there, the National Band Association awarded LaVilla the National Programs of Excellence Blue Ribbon Award. He has been recognized as an Emerging Leader by the Florida Music Education Association and awarded the Citation of Excellence by the National Band Association. He earned a bachelor's degree in music education from Illinois State University and a master's degree in music education from Northwestern University.

## Middle School Choral Observation Overview

Sean Grier

This observation form is designed for use by preservice music teachers observing choral/vocal classroom instruction at the middle school level. The form is broadly organized into the following five central thematic categories: (a) classroom environment, (b) choral music instruction, (c) assessment and evaluation, (d) classroom interactions, and (e) looking forward. Sample questions/considerations are provided in each thematic category and are designed to be transferable to most middle school choral classrooms while still allowing for preservice teachers to notice and address context-based, nuanced, and critical implications at specific observation sites. Preservice teachers are encouraged to notice and reflect upon questions/considerations not included in the observation form template.

When examining aspects of the *classroom environment*, consider components of the physical setup/structure of the classroom space and how those components might inform/impact student learning. When observing aspects of *choral music instruction*, look for the types/sequence of learning activities, the pacing of instruction, repertoire explored, student voice part assignments, attention to adolescent voice change, accommodations of student learning needs, specific modes of learning (aural, visual, kinesthetic), and developmentally appropriate instruction. Reflections related to *assessment and evaluation* might address the types of informal and/or formal assessment included in the lesson as well as the balance between teacher-driven assessment/evaluation and student-driven assessment/evaluation. When examining aspects of *classroom interactions*, consider how the teacher interacts with their students, how students interact with the teacher and each other, ways that the teacher redirects student focus/behavior, and whether/how principles of equity and inclusivity are woven into the classroom. Finally, when *looking forward*, contemplate “big picture” takeaways from this observation and how that might impact a future classroom.

## MIDDLE SCHOOL CHORAL CLASSROOM OBSERVATION FORM

Date	Location	Teacher	Class/Ensemble/ Age/Level	Number of Students

### CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

*Reflect upon the classroom environment. Consider some of the following:*

- Describe the physical setup of the classroom:
  - What does the classroom look like (posters, instruments, materials, resources, items on the board, etc.)?
  - Where are students during learning (chairs, risers, stage)?
  - Where does the teacher spend their time when teaching (podium, at the piano, in front of the students, moving throughout students, etc.)?
  - What else did you notice?

### CHORAL MUSIC INSTRUCTION

*Reflect upon the choral music instruction you observed. Consider some of the following:*

- How did the teacher begin class?
- What aspects of vocal/choral pedagogy did the teacher focus on during the warm-up (breath, vowels, intonation, articulation, dynamics, range, etc.)?
- Did the teacher include any learning activities directly related to music reading (sight singing, rhythm reading, etc.)?
- Did the teacher include any learning activities directly related to aspects of notation, music theory, composition, and/or creativity?
- What repertoire was explored during this class period?
  - What musical/vocal/cultural concepts did the teacher/students focus on?
  - How long did the teacher/students spend on each piece (balanced across pieces, more/less time on specific pieces, etc.)?
- What voice parts were present in this class period?
  - How many voice parts? What types of voice parts (Unison, Two-part/SA, Three-part/SAB, Four-part/SATB, something else?)?
  - Were students sitting/standing in voice parts? Mixed formation?
  - Were voice ranges/parts were male-identifying/presenting students singing (Soprano, Alto, Alto-Tenor, Tenor, Baritone, Bass, shifting, etc.)?
  - Did the teacher address the adolescent voice change in any way?
- Did the teacher incorporate learning activities rooted in the 'big three' modes of learning (Aural, Visual, Kinesthetic/Movement) into their lesson? How?
- How does the teacher teach vocal lines (by piano, singing, rote learning, all)?
- Did the teacher conduct during the lesson?
- Were there opportunities for student agency, choice, and/or decision-making?

- Did the teacher incorporate any accommodations/modifications/supports to meet the learning needs of students with exceptionalities?
- Which components of instruction seemed particularly aligned with the developmental learning needs of middle school students?
- How does the teacher transition between lessons/activities?
- How did the teacher end class?

### ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

*Reflect upon the modes of assessment and evaluation you observed. Consider some of the following:*

- How does the teacher identify and respond to student errors?
- What were some of the main principles/skills evaluated (by teacher and/or students) during this lesson?
- What examples of informal assessment were incorporated into the lesson?
- What examples of formal assessment were incorporated into the lesson?
- Were students involved in individual and/or group assessment/evaluation during the lesson? If so, how?

### CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS

*Reflect upon the classroom interactions you observed. Consider some of the following:*

- List 3-5 adjectives that describe the teaching “persona” of the teacher.
- List 3-5 adjectives that describe the temperament of the students.
- List 3-5 adjectives that describe the overall relational/social atmosphere and “energy” of the classroom.
- How does the teacher interact with students? How do students interact with the teacher and with each other?
- What does the teacher do to redirect student focus/behavior and uphold classroom standards/expectations?
- Did you notice the teacher (or students) intentionally fostering a learning environment that was equitable and inclusive? If so, how?

### LOOKING FORWARD

- Do you have any specific questions for the teacher? Students?
- What are your central takeaways from this observation? What stood out? What resonated?
- Is there anything you might do differently in your future classroom? If so, what and why?

### NOTES

Notes/Questions/Observations:

## Sean Grier – University of North Carolina

[sgrier@unc.edu](mailto:sgrier@unc.edu)



Sean Grier, Ph.D., teaches undergraduate courses in music education and conducts the Treble Voice Glee Club at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Dr. Grier also teaches graduate-level music education coursework at The University of North Carolina Greensboro. After completing undergraduate degrees in Vocal Performance and Music Education at Michigan State University, Sean Grier taught middle and high school choral music for nine years in North Carolina. Eight of those years were with the Durham Public Schools (DPS) as a member of the Durham School of the Arts (DSA) Choral Department. While in North Carolina, Sean Grier was the co-director of the Community Chorus Project's Summer Glee musical theatre program for middle school students at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Dr. Grier's time with Summer Glee, within DPS, and at DSA grounded his commitment to building secondary choral settings that support, nurture, and empower adolescent singers. This commitment informed his graduate work at The University of Michigan—Ann Arbor where he received his Master of Music and PhD in Music Education. Echoing his experiences at DSA, Dr. Grier's dissertation—*"The vulnerability in singing comes from trust in the relationship first: Perceptions of human connection in the high school choral classroom"*—examined the importance of care, trust, the support of vulnerability, and a sense of community and belonging in high school choral music environments. In addition to his pedagogical and research experience, Dr. Grier has extensive experience as an administrator of university and P-12 Arts programming and as a facilitator of equity-focused professional development at the university level.

## High School Orchestra Observation Overview

Kathleen Stebal

This observation is designed to be used by preservice music teachers observing orchestra at the high school level. The form is organized into the following categories: (a) classroom environment, (b) classroom management, (c) orchestra instruction, (d) assessment of student learning and (e) reflection questions. Sample questions are included for each category and are designed to be transferable to most high school orchestra classrooms. The form guides the pre-service teacher to observe specific aspects of quality teaching in the classroom while allowing space for the nuance of each unique classroom setting. Preservice teachers are given the opportunity to reflect on their overall experience during the observation and identify key takeaways from the lesson.

When observing the *classroom environment* and *classroom management*, notice aspects of the physical space, classroom procedures, as well as the social environment that create structured classroom rehearsals and a safe learning environment for all students. When observing the *orchestra instruction*, notice the lesson structure, repertoire, musical skills addressed, how feedback is used to address errors, teachers' use of modeling/conducting, and students' technique. During the observation, notice the informal/formal *assessment of student learning*, as well as the verbal and nonverbal feedback provided by the teacher. When considering the *reflection questions*, take a step back to identify positive aspects of the lesson and make note of helpful comments or procedures from the observation.

## HIGH SCHOOL ORCHESTRA OBSERVATION FORM

Date	Location	Teacher	Class/Ensemble/ Age/Level	Number of Students

### CLASSROOM SETUP/CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

1. Describe the physical classroom. What does it look like? (Posters, Instruments, Materials, Resources)
2. Where are students learning? (e.g., seated, standing, with or without music stands, etc.)
3. Where is the teacher located during instruction? (e.g., podium, behind the ensemble, in sections)
4. What classroom systems are in place to facilitate rehearsal? (e. g., rosin station, tuner bin, etc.)
5. Are the instrument sections balanced in the ensemble?
6. How does the teacher foster a learning environment that is inclusive to all students?

### CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

1. How does the teacher start class? (e.g., signal to start, announcements, tuning, etc.)
2. How does the teacher gain and maintain student attention throughout the lesson?
3. How does the teacher connect learning to students' lives? (e.g., cross-curricular connection)
4. Use 3-5 adjectives to describe the teacher's style of interaction with students.
5. What cues are given by the teacher to indicate successful or unsuccessful engagement?
6. Are the interactions in the lesson teacher-centered or student-centered?
7. What classroom procedures are in place to facilitate rehearsal?

### ORCHESTRA INSTRUCTION

1. How is the lesson structured?
2. What tuning procedure is utilized during rehearsal?
3. What warm up is utilized during rehearsal?
4. Name the title(s) and composer(s) of the pieces rehearsed during the lesson.
5. What musical skills were addressed during the lesson? (Bowings, articulation, intonation, etc.) How does the teacher work on these skills?

6. Describe how the teacher models during the lesson. How often do they model? Do they model on a stringed instrument, piano, or voice?
7. Describe how the teacher uses conducting during the lesson. How often do they conduct? Do the gestures provide clarity and musical direction for students?
8. Does the teacher address each section of the orchestra throughout the rehearsal?
9. Describe the students' technique. Do they start in the same place in the bow? Are they in tune?
10. Do students have the opportunity to make decisions about their own learning?
11. Does the teacher modify instruction for students with exceptionalities?
12. Were activities included to address music notation (e.g., sight reading, music theory, composition) ?
13. Were activities included to address cultural connections for students? (e.g., music history)
14. How did the teacher conclude the class?

### **ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING**

1. How does the teacher assess students throughout the lesson (informal/formal)?
2. How did the teacher address student errors? What verbal/non-verbal cues did the teacher display?
3. Were students provided the opportunity to assess themselves? If so, how?
4. What questions did the teacher ask?

### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

1. After watching the lesson, what questions do you have for the teacher/students?
2. What are the main takeaways from the observation? What would you like to do in your future classroom?
3. Is there anything you might do differently in your future classroom?

### **NOTES**

Notes/Questions/Observations:

## Kathleen Stebal – University of Michigan

[schnerk@umich.edu](mailto:schnerk@umich.edu)



Kathleen Stebal is a PhD student and graduate student instructor at the University of Michigan. Prior to this appointment, she taught orchestra for ten years at Perrysburg Schools in Perrysburg, Ohio. She taught 5th-12th grade orchestra, developed the district music curriculum, and established an extracurricular multi-styles string ensemble. Kathleen conducts the Toledo Symphony Youth Orchestra Concert Strings and is Secretary of the Ohio String Teachers Association. Kathleen has presented at the Michigan and Ohio Music Education Conferences, as well as the American String Teacher Association conference. She was published in the American String Teachers Journal. Her research interests include preservice teacher education and motivation. Kathleen earned a Bachelor of Music in Music Education from Bowling Green State University and a Master of Music in Music Education from the University of Michigan.

## **High School Band (Concert Ensemble) Observation Overview**

Doris Doyon

Every high school band is as different as its director, school, and community. As preservice educators, we may reflect on our own experience in band with strong feelings, both positive and negative. As you enter other band environments as a guest, keep an open mind to differences that you may see. What worked at your own high school might not make sense for another community. As you observe differences, reflect on how promising pedagogy and student growth are centered.

Some schools have concert ensembles year-round, serving as the pedagogical heart of the program. Others may have marching band locked into the school day, causing concert programming to be pushed to the winter or even spring. Year-round, robust concert programs with differing levels throughout the school day are not only the result of committed teachers (including those in the matriculating programs), but a commitment by counseling and administrative teams that music is an important part of the core curriculum. Leveled ensembles are a complicated scheduling puzzle reliant on buy-in from the organizational and leadership staff at the school.

Ensemble culture is often a reflection of the teacher's philosophies, rehearsal style, and chosen repertoire (assuming they are not new to the position, it often takes three years to truly influence a culture). As you observe with curiosity, see if you can discover the philosophies of the program through what you see and hear during the rehearsal.

## HIGH SCHOOL BAND OBSERVATION FORM (CONCERT ENSEMBLE)

Date	Location	Teacher	Class/Ensemble/ Age/Level	Number of Students

### CLASSROOM SETUP/CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

1. How do the students come into the classroom? What are they doing? What is the teacher doing? What is the routine?
2. How are things organized in the room? (instruments, chairs/stands, music, etc.)
3. What is on the walls? (Information? Colleges? Musicians represented from various groups? Trophies? Other?)
4. How are the students physically organized and seated in the rehearsal? How are the wind sections organized? How is the percussion section organized? Are any instrument sections over- or underbalanced (or missing)?

### INTERACTIONS BETWEEN TEACHER AND STUDENTS "CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT"

1. Describe the general atmosphere of the room.
  - a. How do the students behave and treat each other and the teacher?
  - b. How does the teacher treat the students?
  - c. Is the "vibe" serious? playful? organized? chaotic? Are all sections/students always engaged?

### REPERTOIRE SELECTION

1. Is the repertoire varied in terms of style and composer? What pieces/composers might you want to program in the future?
2. Can you tell how the students feel about the piece(s)? Do they seem developmentally appropriate?

### REHEARSAL ACTIVITIES OBSERVED

Theory Skill Development	Creative Skill Development
Technical Skill Development	Contextual Understandings

Listening Skill Development	Other Activities
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<b>TEACHING STYLE</b>
<i>Describe:</i> 1. Teaching style (on/off podium? verbal/nonverbal? energy level?)

<b>ELEMENTS OF ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING</b>
1. What objective feedback was observed? 2. What subjective feedback was observed?

<b>QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS</b>
1. What improved today? 2. What do you like most about band?

<b>QUESTIONS TO ASK THE TEACHER</b>
1. How many other concert ensembles do you have, and where does this group fall? ("top" group, middle, etc.)? Are students placed in the different groups by grade, audition, or other? 2. What types of performances does this group participate in? (festivals? graded or non/graded? other types of events?) 3. Is there a solo/small ensemble curriculum for this group? How does it run? 4. How many students take private lessons? Who pays for those? 5. Did today go as planned? What was your plan and did that change? What is the plan for tomorrow?

<b>NOTES</b>
Notes/Questions/Observations:

## Doris Doyon – University of Michigan

[ddoyon@umich.edu](mailto:ddoyon@umich.edu)



Doris Doyon has been a conductor and music educator for over twenty years, leading instrumental ensembles at the college, high school and middle school levels. She most recently served as Director of Bands at Mt. San Antonio College in Walnut, CA, and she previously served as Director of Instrumental Music at Norwalk High School (Norwalk, CA). During her tenure the band earned a six-year designation as a *Grammy Signature School Program*.

A GIA artist, the book *In Pursuit of Great Conducting*, a book co-authored with H. Robert Reynolds, was released in December 2024. Doyon is an active clinician, presenter, and guest conductor. Recent appearances include CBDNA, The Midwest Clinic, The Oral History Association Convention, and others. She currently serves as the conductor of the Cereal City Concert Band.

Doyon completed a DMA in wind conducting at UCLA in December of 2022, and is a PhD Music Education candidate and Rackham Fellow at the University of Michigan. She earned a MA in conducting and percussion performance from Truman State University and bachelor's degrees in music education and performance *cum laude* from Pacific Lutheran University. Her primary conducting teachers include Raydell Bradley, Travis J. Cross, Michael Haithcock, and Dan Peterson.

## **High School Choral Observation Overview**

Katie Smith

This observation rubric is designed to guide preservice music educators in developing a critical, reflective lens for analyzing instructional practices in secondary choral classrooms. Specifically tailored for high school choral rehearsals, this tool encourages structured attention to classroom environment, pedagogical strategies, teacher-student interactions, and assessment practices. By prompting focused observations and targeted reflections, the rubric fosters a deeper understanding of how effective music instruction unfolds in real time. This rubric also provides a loose lesson structure that can springboard for discussions about the teaching process, warm-ups, repertoire selection, and lesson planning.

My students are always excited to observe high school ensembles but often get distracted by personal interactions or focus on the teacher's role. I created this rubric to guide them in considering the lesson sequence and factors beyond just repertoire and choir sound. Undergraduates tend to comment mostly on the ensemble's sound or individual singers, rarely recognizing the many influences behind it, such as student age, experience, or concert planning. Therefore, this rubric doesn't evaluate choir sound directly, though questions 14, 15, and 20 allow some commentary on it.

Independently, I suggest spending time in class listening to recordings and adding to this rubric with additional questions as needed later in the semester. Once the students have a foundation for critical listening, it may be beneficial to use other rubrics, such as state adjudication rubrics, to encourage discussion.

## HIGH SCHOOL CHORAL OBSERVATION FORM

Date	Location	Teacher	Class/Ensemble/ Age/Level	Number of Students

### CLASSROOM SETUP/CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

1. What voice parts were present in this class period?
  - a. How many voice parts? What types of voice parts (Unison, Two-part/SA, Three part/SAB, Four-part/SATB, something else?)
2. How were the voice parts seated/organized?
  - a. Consider drawing a diagram if it helps clarify your description.

### BEGINNING OF CLASS

1. How did the teacher begin the class?
  - a. Did anything occur before the warm-up?
2. Notate each warm-up below. Mark the boxes for which vocal/choral skills each exercise develops (could be more than one), and briefly describe any movement that was used.

Order	Notate the warm-up below	Skills Practiced/Purpose					Describe movement OR write N/A
		Body or Mind	Breath	Range	Flexibility	Other (Describe)	
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							

## PEDAGOGY

1. Did the teacher include any learning activities directly related to music reading or notation (sight singing, rhythm reading, music theory, composition, etc.)?
2. In what ways did the teacher “teach” parts? (reading, rote, etc.)
3. Name the repertoire sung during this class period. Do the pieces match the ability level, voicing, and size of the ensemble?
4. What musical/vocal/cultural concepts did the teacher/students focus on within each piece?
5. How did the teacher end the class?
6. Can you tell how the students feel about the piece(s)? Do they seem developmentally appropriate?

## INTERACTIONS BETWEEN TEACHER AND STUDENTS

1. How does the teacher generally interact with students?
2. Describe any procedures the teacher has established to gain student focus.
3. Were there opportunities for student agency, choice, and/or decision-making?
4. Did the teacher incorporate any accommodations/modifications/supports to meet the learning needs of students with exceptionalities?

## ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

1. How does the teacher identify and respond to student errors?
2. Did the teacher evaluate students during the lesson? If so, how?  
*What examples of informal or formal assessment did you recognize? Were students assessed as individuals, small groups, or as the whole ensemble? What was it that the teacher was evaluating? Did the style of the evaluation seem effective for what was being evaluated?*

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Look back at the warm-up chart at the beginning of this form. Reflect on the warm-up sequence. Did it serve the needs of the rehearsal today?
2. Does the teacher play the piano? Does the teacher conduct? Both?
3. How does the teacher transition between lessons/activities?
4. How was the rehearsal paced? How much time was spent on each activity and piece of repertoire?
5. What is one thing you would have done differently? Why?

## Katie Smith – University of Michigan

[kmschram@umich.edu](mailto:kmschram@umich.edu)



Katie Smith is a choral music educator currently pursuing her PhD in Music Education at the University of Michigan. She taught in West Virginia public schools for ten years. In her nine years as a high school choir director, she doubled the size of the choir program and mentored multiple student teachers. Katie earned her Bachelor of Music and Master of Music in Music Education from West Virginia University. During her master's program, she taught undergraduate music education courses, including choral methods and voice class, and supervised student teachers at WVU. Katie served as the All-State Chorus chairperson and co-chair of Honor Ensembles, among other roles on the WVMEA and WVACDA executive boards throughout her time in WV. She has presented her research on culturally sustaining music education and teacher agency at state and national conferences. Her current research projects focus on contextual factors and feedback processes during fieldwork for preservice music teachers.

## **Marching Bands Observation Overview**

Daniel Taylor

Marching bands are one of the quintessential aspects of instrumental music programs throughout the United States. In fact, the marching band is the most publicly visible element of music education in many communities. If you were in a marching band, you might remember performing in many venues during your experiences: football games, parades, community celebrations, and contests, to name a few. Community members often take pride in their local school marching band and may be inspired to support music education because of this visibility.

There are a wide variety of philosophies when it comes to establishing the curricular aims of marching band programs. In recent years, some marching bands have grown in curricular scope as band directors aim to make their marching band performances an artistic production that can participate in local, regional, state, and national competitions. Other band directors continue to form non-competitive marching bands that primarily perform tunes that audience members can recognize at football games and other community events. Differences in these philosophies have many consequences for how marching band rehearsals operate, including how many staff are present, if students are required to participate, how teachers and students interact with each other, what music is performed, how marching and music are rehearsed, and the list goes on.

The observation tool for the marching band rehearsals on the next two pages is flexible so that you can capture useful information from watching any type of marching band. Whether it is a competitive corps-style marching band that includes flowing dance instruction because of an artistic interlude or a traditional-style marching band that uses commands and stationary maneuvers to inspire group uniformity, the questions are meant to prompt you to notice various elements of a marching band rehearsal. Pay special attention to the rehearsal environment, teacher-student interactions, student leadership (if applicable), and rehearsal procedures.

## MARCHING BAND OBSERVATION FORM

Date	Location	Teacher	Class/Ensemble/ Age/Level	Number of Students

### CLASS SETUP/ENVIRONMENT

- Create a “thick description” of the physical rehearsal environment. What does this rehearsal space look like in relation to marching band? Is it indoors or outdoors? Is it in a parking lot, a practice field, or a stadium? Are there lines on the field?
- How are the students physically organized throughout the rehearsal? Do they begin in a block, an arc, or in drill spots? How does this change through your time observing?
- What is the approximate instrumentation of the ensemble? Include details on winds, percussion (drumline vs. front ensemble, etc.), color guard (flags, weapons, dance team, etc.), and electronics (if used).

### INTERACTIONS BETWEEN TEACHER AND STUDENTS “CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT”

- How does the teacher generally interact with students?
- Is there a difference between participating students and not engaged students? What happens when student(s) are not engaged during rehearsal?
- Are the established rehearsal procedures keeping students focused?
  - Individual
  - Group
- How does the teacher indicate successful or unsuccessful student engagement during rehearsal?
- What components of the rehearsal environment contribute to classroom management?
- Is there an evident marching command system in place (e.g., calls to attention, parade rest, horns up, etc.)? If so, describe which commands you observed and how it influenced student behaviors.
- How many teachers are present for rehearsal? What are their roles (e.g., band director, drumline technician, color guard staff, etc.)?
- Is there evidence of a student leadership program in this marching band? If so, what are the roles that you observe them taking? Are they helping with

logistics? Do they help with behavior management during rehearsal? Are they involved in any peer teaching

### **PERFORMANCE SKILL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES OBSERVED**

- What activities did you observe that dealt with developing *individual* marching skills vs. *ensemble* marching skills?
- What activities did you observe that developed *individual* musical skills vs. *ensemble* musical skills?
- What activities did you observe that developed *the coordination of marching and playing at the same time*?

### **PEDAGOGY PRINCIPLES OBSERVED**

- Processes for Teaching New Material (musical and/or marching):
- Processes for Reviewing Previously Learned Material (music and/or marching)

### **ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING**

- Did the teacher state rehearsal objectives?
- How did the teacher assess student learning during rehearsal? How were students made aware of their progress?

### **QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS**

- What is the most exciting thing about being in marching band?
- What is a challenge that you have faced while being in marching band?
- What does a typical rehearsal feel like for you?
- How does being in marching band affect how you feel about school?
- What do you think future teachers should know right now about students and marching band?

### **QUESTIONS TO ASK THE TEACHER**

- How do you structure rehearsals to balance all of the musical, marching, and teamwork aspects of marching band?
- How do you differentiate for students with varying skills?
- What is your overarching vision or plan for the marching band season?
- What do you love most about marching band?
- What advice do you have for a future teacher about marching band?

## Daniel Taylor – Vanderbilt University

[daniel.taylor@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:daniel.taylor@vanderbilt.edu)



Dr. Daniel Taylor is an Assistant Professor of Music Education at the Vanderbilt University Blair School of Music and Peabody College of Education. He earned his Ph.D. in Music Education at the University of Michigan and an MA in Music Education from The Ohio State University in 2021. Prior to graduate study, he taught middle school music in Florida for nine years. He graduated *summa cum laude* from Florida State University in 2010 with a bachelor's degree in music education and remains active in school music programs as an adjudicator and clinician. His research interests include teacher education throughout the career, inclusive teaching practices, and education policy. His dissertation explored in-service music teachers' sensemaking of a statewide professional development conference to study how music teachers continue to learn over time. He has presented at numerous research and practice-based conferences including at the *Society for Music Teacher Education*, *Society for Research in Music Education*, *American Educational Research Association*, *Instrumental Music Teacher Education*, *National Association for Music Education*, and *The Midwest Clinic*, as well as at statewide professional development conferences across the midwestern and southern regions of the United States.

## **Show Choir Observation Overview**

Sarah Inendino

Show Choir is a style of choral performance that blends vocal singing with energetic choreography and theatrical staging. The music often features pop, rock, or contemporary genres, and performances frequently highlight soloists within the ensemble. The ensemble typically performs in performance attire that is vibrant and allows for movement. Show choirs can be competitive and attend competitions throughout the school year.

This observation protocol is designed to guide pre-service teachers in developing a comprehensive and reflective understanding of Show Choir instruction. Rather than simply observing classroom activities, It prompts reflection on how the physical environment, instructional strategies, student engagement, and assessment practices all work together to shape a productive and inclusive learning experience.

Observers are encouraged to look beyond surface-level routines to notice how teachers cultivate a culture of artistic growth, collaboration, and student agency. The protocol highlights the importance of thoughtful transitions between singing and movement, the integration of vocal and choreographic instruction, and the ways in which teachers differentiate support to meet diverse student needs.

Interpersonal dynamics are also central to the observation protocol. Pre-service teachers are encouraged to observe how teachers build relationships, foster ensemble cohesion, and invite student voice and leadership in the classroom. Ultimately, this protocol not only supports the development of critical observation skills but also challenges pre-service teachers to imagine how they might apply, adapt, or reimagine these practices in their own future classrooms.

## SHOW CHOIR CLASSROOM OBSERVATION FORM

Date	Location	Teacher	Class/Ensemble/ Age/Level	Number of Students

### CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

*Reflect upon the classroom environment. Consider some of the following:*

- Describe the physical setup of the classroom:
  - What is the rehearsal space (classroom with desks and chairs, stage, dance studio with mirrors, choir room with risers)?
  - Does the learning space work well for what is being rehearsed that day (movement, singing, blocking)?
  - Does the rehearsal ever change spaces?
  - What else did you notice?

### SHOW CHOIR INSTRUCTION

*Reflect upon the Show Choir instruction you observed. Consider some of the following:*

- How did the teacher welcome the students into the space?
  - Is there more than one teacher?
- How did the teacher vocally warm-up the students for the rehearsal?
  - What was the focus of the warm-up (breath, intonation, vocal technique, dynamics, phrasing, blend, balance)?
- Did these warm-ups lead into what was being rehearsed that day?
- Was there any type of movement warm-up?
- What style or genre(s) of repertoire were rehearsed?
- Did the teacher give clear learning objectives for the class (that go beyond what they hoped to accomplish that day in the rehearsal)?
- Did the teacher teach any vocal or performing concepts that day? (sight-reading/solfege, vocal technique, dynamics, phrasing, rhythm, blend, balance, expression, specific dance technique)?
- Did the teacher use tracks or live music for the rehearsal?
- How were the students positioned when working on vocals (in vocal parts, mixed formation, in their staging positions)?
- Did the class focus on music or staging/choreography?
- Did the movement support the music (and vice versa) and was it accessible to everyone?
- How were all the students engaged in the rehearsal if their part or section was not actively being rehearsed?

- Were there opportunities for student voice or artistic freedom in the learning process?
- Were there any student leaders or students that were part of the artistic team (student music director or student choreographers)?
- Did the teacher differentiate instruction for students that needed more support?
- How does the teacher transition between different activities (between singing and moving or between different musical numbers)?
- How did the teacher end the class or rehearsal?

### ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

*Reflect upon the modes of assessment and evaluation you observed. Consider some of the following:*

- How does the teacher communicate errors to the students?
- How does the teacher communicate feedback to soloists?
- Were the students able to sing while doing movement or did the movement take away from the vocal sound?
- Was the movement well executed and in sync?
- How do the students know what is being assessed or evaluated that day?
- What were some examples of formative assessment you saw in the lesson?
- Was there any type of check-out or group evaluation of the rehearsal?

### CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS

*Reflect upon the classroom interactions you observed. Consider some of the following:*

- How does the teacher build relationships with the students?
- Are students asked for their input when making artistic choices?
- How do the students interact with one another?
- What does the teacher do to redirect students and keep everyone focused?
- Is this a competitive ensemble? Do you feel that changes any of the classroom interactions?

### LOOKING FORWARD

- Do you have any specific questions for the teacher? Students?
- Did you observe anything that you could see using in your own classroom?
- Did you observe anything you would do differently in your own classroom?

## Sarah Inendino – Northwestern University

[sarah.inendino@gmail.com](mailto:sarah.inendino@gmail.com)



Sarah Inendino, PhD, is originally from Northern Michigan, where she studied voice and graduated with high honors from Interlochen Arts Academy. She attended Northwestern University and earned a Bachelors of Music in Music Education with a specialization in choral education. Sarah completed her Masters of Arts in Music and Music Education at Teachers College, Columbia University in New York City. Recently, she earned her PhD in Music Education at the University of Michigan and completed a professional certificate in Vocology through New York University. Her specializations include voice pedagogy, vocal health, and choral conducting.

Sarah currently serves as a Visiting Assistant Professor and Vocology Consultant at Northwestern University where she teaches private voice lessons, group voice, and teaching artistry in the music theatre department. Additionally, she is an Artist Faculty at Roosevelt University where she teaches private voice lessons in musical theatre. Sarah also teaches at Lake Forest College in the Music Education and Education Departments. Additionally, Sarah works with the Harper Festival Chorus, an adult community choir as their assistant conductor, and as the director of the Cantabile ensemble, a middle school choir with Schaumburg Youth Choir program.

Sarah is passionate about community arts and bringing quality music instruction to all artists. Her passion for community arts can also be found in her research interests. As an active researcher and presenter, Sarah has presented at state, national, and international conferences on student assessment, adult learning, teaching artistry, community music making, and teacher wellness. Additionally, she serves on the Musical Theatre Education Association editorial board, and is part of the ILMEA General Music Council.

## **Musical Theatre Observation Overview**

Sarah Inendino

This observation protocol is designed to guide preservice teachers in critically reflecting on key aspects of a musical theatre learning environment. Musical Theatre learning can occur as an extracurricular activity or in some school settings as part of a class. The tool emphasizes a holistic approach, encouraging observers to consider not only instructional techniques but also classroom dynamics, space utilization, and student engagement.

Pre-service teachers are invited to assess how effectively the physical space supports rehearsal activities, how the instructor scaffolds student learning through warm-ups and skill-building, and how inclusive and engaging the environment is for all learners. Special attention is given to differentiation, student leadership, engagement and opportunities for artistic choice, which are essential in fostering a collaborative and creative classroom culture.

The protocol also highlights informal and formal assessment strategies, offering insight into how feedback is delivered and how learning objectives are communicated. Finally, the “Looking Forward” section supports reflective practice by encouraging observers to connect what they have seen to their own emerging teaching philosophy.

This observation protocol serves as both a learning tool and a mirror, helping future educators deepen their understanding of effective musical theatre instruction.

## MUSICAL THEATRE CLASSROOM OBSERVATION FORM

Date	Location	Teacher	Class/Ensemble/ Age/Level	Number of Students

### CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

*Reflect upon the classroom environment. Consider some of the following:*

- Describe the physical setup of the classroom:
  - What is the rehearsal space (classroom with desks and chairs, stage, dance studio with mirrors, choir room)?
  - Does the learning space work well for what is being rehearsed that day (movement, singing, blocking)?
  - Does the rehearsal ever change spaces?
  - Are there students in multiple spaces?
  - What else did you notice?

### MUSICAL THEATRE INSTRUCTION

*Reflect upon the musical theatre instruction you observed. Consider some of the following:*

- How did the teacher welcome the students into the space?
- How did the teacher warm-up the students for the rehearsal?
  - Was there a focus on vocal warm-ups, acting warm-ups, or movement warm-ups?
- Did these warm-ups lead into what was being rehearsed that day?
- Did the teacher use tracks or live music for the rehearsal?
- Did the teacher give clear learning objectives for the class (that go beyond what they hoped to accomplish that day in the rehearsal)?
- Did the teacher teach any vocal, acting, or movement concepts that day (sight-reading/solfege, vocal technique, objectives/tactics, character development, specific dance technique)?
- How were all the students engaged in the rehearsal?
  - Was the rehearsal focused on a large group number that included everyone in the cast?
  - Was the rehearsal focused on scenes that did not include everyone in the cast?
    - How were students with downtime still engaged in learning and the rehearsal?
- Were there opportunities for student voice or artistic freedom in the learning process?

- Were there any student leaders or students that were part of the artistic team (student directors or student choreographers)?
- Did the teacher differentiate instruction for students that needed more support?
- How does the teacher transition between different scenes or musical numbers being rehearsed?
- How did the teacher end the class or rehearsal?

### ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

*Reflect upon the modes of assessment and evaluation you observed. Consider some of the following:*

- How does the teacher communicate errors to the students?
- How does the teacher communicate feedback to soloists?
- How does the teacher guide artistic choices in character development?
- How do the students know what is being assessed or evaluated that day?
- What were some examples of formative assessment you saw in the lesson?
- Was there any type of check-out or group evaluation of the rehearsal?

### CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS

*Reflect upon the classroom interactions you observed. Consider some of the following:*

- How does the teacher build relationships with the students?
- Are students asked for their input when making artistic choices?
- How do the students interact with one another?
- What does the teacher do to redirect students and keep everyone focused?

### LOOKING FORWARD

- Do you have any specific questions for the teacher? Students?
- Did you observe anything that you could see using in your own classroom?
- Did you observe anything you would do differently in your own classroom?

### NOTES

Notes/Questions/Observations:

## Sarah Inendino – Northwestern University

[sarah.inendino@gmail.com](mailto:sarah.inendino@gmail.com)



Sarah Inendino, PhD, is originally from Northern Michigan, where she studied voice and graduated with high honors from Interlochen Arts Academy. She attended Northwestern University and earned a Bachelors of Music in Music Education with a specialization in choral education. Sarah completed her Masters of Arts in Music and Music Education at Teachers College, Columbia University in New York City. Recently, she earned her PhD in Music Education at the University of Michigan and completed a professional certificate in Vocology through New York University. Her specializations include voice pedagogy, vocal health, and choral conducting.

Sarah currently serves as a Visiting Assistant Professor and Vocology Consultant at Northwestern University where she teaches private voice lessons, group voice, and teaching artistry in the music theatre department. Additionally, she is an Artist Faculty at Roosevelt University where she teaches private voice lessons in musical theatre. Sarah also teaches at Lake Forest College in the Music Education and Education Departments. Additionally, Sarah works with the Harper Festival Chorus, an adult community choir as their assistant conductor, and as the director of the Cantabile ensemble, a middle school choir with Schaumburg Youth Choir program.

Sarah is passionate about community arts and bringing quality music instruction to all artists. Her passion for community arts can also be found in her research interests. As an active researcher and presenter, Sarah has presented at state, national, and international conferences on student assessment, adult learning, teaching artistry, community music making, and teacher wellness. Additionally, she serves on the Musical Theatre Education Association editorial board, and is part of the ILMEA General Music Council.

## **Vocal Jazz Ensemble Observation Overview**

Andrew Dahan

Compared to other disciplines within secondary music education, Vocal Jazz is relatively new. It is a hybrid of traditional Choral ensembles, Jazz Bands, and Show/Swing Choirs, combining close vocal harmony, vocal improvisation (also known as “scatting”), the use of sound equipment, and an emphasis on stage presence. In most high schools, the Vocal Jazz Ensembles are an offshoot of the Choral program, and are usually offered as an extracurricular activity, though there are rare cases where they are included in a teacher’s curricular teaching load.

Due to the lack of Vocal Jazz education in music teacher education programs, the genre can be an enigma to many music educators. Unless they were also instrumentalists, many vocal music educators may have never played/sung in any kind of Jazz ensemble, which can put them at an experiential disadvantage compared to their primarily instrumental peers.

Vocal Jazz Ensembles can look different depending on the schools/regions in which they are located. In some places, they may be as large as 20–24 singers, while some schools may have a more combo-like approach, with 4–5 singers. In some schools, they may work with a rhythm section comprising piano, bass, drumset, and guitar, where in other schools they may be completely a cappella or work with only piano. And finally, there may be schools where the ensemble has full access to a sound system where each student gets their own microphone, while other schools may not utilize sound equipment at all.

The inclusion of Vocal Jazz in a music program can create a challenging and rewarding experience for musicians of all levels. All of the skills learned in a Vocal Jazz Ensemble can help reinforce and expand students’ understanding of music theory and aural skills. And perhaps most importantly, singing in a smaller ensemble like this can create wonderful opportunities for bonding and team building amongst the group members.

This observation form brings attention to a variety of things to look for during the rehearsal period. It asks the observer to take into account not only musical aspects of the rehearsal, but also non-musical aspects of the rehearsal, including the rehearsal space, the available resources in the rehearsal room, and the interactions between the group members and the director.

## VOCAL JAZZ ENSEMBLE OBSERVATION FORM

Date	Location	Teacher	Class/Ensemble/ Age/Level	Number of Students

### CLASSROOM/ENSEMBLE SETUP

1. Describe the space. What do you see in the room that you would expect to see in a vocal ensemble rehearsal room?
2. How many students are in the ensemble, and how are they arranged for the rehearsal? Are there students who are not singers (rhythm section, sound crew, etc.) in the room?

### REHEARSAL ATMOSPHERE

1. Describe the overall atmosphere of the room. What types of interactions do you see between students? Between the director and students?
2. Is the plan for the rehearsal visible anywhere in the room? How do students know what will be happening?
3. How engaged are the students throughout the rehearsal? Does the director need to get students' attention often, or are the students generally aware of what is happening?
4. Is the rehearsal always led by the director, or are there times when the students take the lead?

### REPERTOIRE SELECTION

1. To the best of your ability, list the following information about each chart being worked on:
  - a. Title
  - b. Composer
  - c. Arranger
  - d. Voicing
  - e. Style (Swing, Latin, Straight 8th, Ballad, etc.)
  - f. Accompaniment (a cappella? Rhythm Section?)

JAZZ-SPECIFIC PEDAGOGY
<p>Using the list below, briefly describe any activities/rehearsing that was geared toward skills specific to vocal jazz</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Jazz Theory &amp; Ear Training (Scales, chords, intervals, etc.)</li> <li>2. Vocal Jazz Ensemble Sound (Tone quality, vowels, diction, etc.)</li> <li>3. Improvisation</li> <li>4. Historical context of tunes</li> <li>5. Listening to recordings</li> <li>6. Sound system usage</li> </ol>
ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Did you see more formative (informal) or summative (formal) assessments during this rehearsal?</li> <li>2. Looking back at the jazz-specific pedagogy categories above, which of those did you see being assessed?</li> <li>3. How were the assessments done?</li> <li>4. Was the director always assessing, or was there student reflection involved?</li> </ol>
POTENTIAL QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Why did you choose to do vocal jazz in addition to other choral ensembles?</li> <li>2. What is your favorite part of being in this ensemble?</li> <li>3. For you, what is most different about this ensemble than a typical choir?</li> <li>4. What do you like most about the tunes that you sing/play in this ensemble?</li> </ol>
QUESTIONS TO ASK THE TEACHER
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does the ensemble participate in festivals or competitions?</li> <li>2. How did you decide on the charts that you chose for this particular ensemble?</li> <li>3. What do you find to be the most challenging part about teaching jazz to students?</li> <li>4. Why do you believe that singing in vocal jazz ensembles is of value to students?</li> </ol>
NOTES
<p>Notes/Questions/Observations:</p>

## Andrew Dahan – Niles North High School

[anddah@d219.org](mailto:anddah@d219.org)



Andrew Dahan holds a Bachelor of Music degree in Music Education from Northwestern University, and a Master of Music degree in Jazz Pedagogy from the University of Miami. Since 2021, he has been the Director of Choirs at Niles North High School (Skokie, IL), where he directs the curricular choirs, oversees the extracurricular Vocal Jazz program, and directs the award-winning vocal jazz ensemble Take One. Previously, he was the Head of Music Education at Illinois Wesleyan University (Bloomington, IL).

Dahan has presented at the Illinois Music Education Conference, the Jazz Education Network Conference, and the National Association for Music Education Conference. He recently contributed a chapter to *Rehearsing the Vocal Jazz Ensemble*, published by GIA Publications. He has also been a clinician and guest director for numerous vocal jazz and choral festivals.

As a performer, Dahan has had the privilege of singing the National Anthem for the Miami Heat, and performing as a background vocalist for performers such as George Benson, Gloria Estefan, and Ben Folds. He has performed and recorded with the Final Fantasy Distant Worlds Chorus and Orchestra, directed by Arnie Roth, and currently performs around Chicago with the American Caroling Company and the Lola Bard Holiday Carolers.

## **Contemporary A Cappella Ensemble Observation Overview**

Evan Powers

Contemporary a cappella ensembles, often referred to as “pop a cappella groups,” are an exciting addition to many secondary choral programs around the country. In these ensembles, students sing vocal arrangements of contemporary popular music from varying genres (e.g., pop, R&B, country, singer/songwriter) without instrumental accompaniment. These ensembles may be extracurricular or could meet as a class during the school day. Though they include potentially unfamiliar components including vocal percussion and specific sound equipment, many aspects of rehearsal and performance are very similar to “traditional” choirs. They provide excellent opportunities for teaching different styles of singing, student leadership, independent musicianship, and unique physical performance. Due to their typically small size (most groups have 12–24 singers) and young audience-friendly repertoire, many programs use this type of ensemble for program recruitment, local gigs, festivals, and/or competitions.

The purpose of this classroom observation form is to help preservice music teachers, especially those who are unfamiliar with contemporary a cappella ensembles, focus on varying aspects of a typical contemporary a cappella ensemble rehearsal. As is reflected in the observation form, students may notice that there are many shared components between contemporary a cappella ensemble rehearsals and “traditional” choral rehearsals. There are also important components that make this type of ensemble unique (e.g., ensemble structure, vocal style, choreography). Following the observation, preservice music teachers are encouraged to reflect on similarities and differences and, if time allows, to ask the teacher some or all of the suggested questions related to starting and maintaining such an ensemble.

The observation form contains many questions separated into six sections: Classroom Environment, Ensemble Structure, General Rehearsal Technique, Ensemble-Specific Activities, Teacher Questions, and Reflection Questions. Rather than tracking and answering all questions during the observation, preservice music teachers are encouraged to read all questions ahead of the rehearsal, use the final “Notes” section to write down everything they observe during the rehearsal, then use their notes to answer specific questions following the observation. Finally, once the preservice teacher has answered all of the questions, they might consider whether they may want to have their own contemporary a cappella ensemble and what aspects of the rehearsal they could incorporate into their own teaching.

## CONTEMPORARY A CAPPELLA ENSEMBLE OBSERVATION FORM

Date	Location	Teacher	Class/Ensemble/ Age/Level	Number of Students

### CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

1. Describe the physical classroom space. Does it appear organized and conducive to learning? What visual aids are present?
2. What were student social interactions like before, during, and after rehearsal?
3. How would you describe teacher-student interactions (e.g., tone, familiarity)?
4. What routines did you notice before, after, and throughout rehearsal?
5. How did the teacher help students to meet behavior expectations?

### CONTEMPORARY A CAPPELLA ENSEMBLE STRUCTURE

1. What is the voicing of this ensemble (e.g., treble, SATB)?
2. How does the ensemble handle vocal percussion (VP)? Is there one dedicated VP, do singers take turns on VP, or something else?
3. In what formation did the ensemble sit/stand during rehearsal? Did their formation change, or was it static?
4. Did the ensemble use sound equipment in rehearsal?
5. Was the ensemble directed by a teacher, students, or a combination thereof?

### GENERAL REHEARSAL TECHNIQUE

1. Describe the vocal/physical warm-up. What was the order of exercises, and which concepts did each exercise address (e.g., intonation, tone, expression)?
2. What non-repertoire activities (e.g., ear training, games) did you observe?
3. For each song rehearsed: What were the rehearsal goals? How did the teacher approach those goals (include specific rehearsal tools)?
4. How did the students learn pitches and rhythms (e.g., by rote during rehearsal, reading during rehearsal, at home through practice tracks)?
5. Regarding rehearsal accompaniment: did the teacher use a piano, was the rehearsal a cappella, a combination thereof, or something else?
6. What instructional accommodations or modifications for students with learning exceptionalities did the teacher implement?
7. What formative and/or summative assessment(s) did you observe?

### CONTEMPORARY A CAPPELLA-SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES

1. Was this rehearsal focused on choreography, singing, or both?
2. Did the students engage in any improvisation or composition activities?
3. How did the teacher instruct Contemporary Commercial Music (CCM) vocal technique?
4. How were soloists and vocal percussionists incorporated into the rehearsal?
5. Did students sing one assigned voice part, or did they periodically switch?
6. What examples of student leadership, creativity, and/or independent musicianship did you observe in this rehearsal?
7. Did you observe any layering techniques during rehearsal (for example, starting with bass, adding pads, adding percussion/solo, etc.)?

### POTENTIAL QUESTIONS TO ASK THE TEACHER

1. What is your audition process for this group? How do you select soloists?
2. How do you select songs and attain vocal arrangements (e.g., teacher/student arrangements, buying stock arrangements, hiring arrangers)?
3. Does this group participate in competitions and/or festivals?
4. What additional logistical/administrative processes are involved in running a contemporary a cappella group?
5. Why do you have a contemporary a cappella group as a part of your program?

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What about this rehearsal, including the style of singing, was similar to what you would consider a “traditional” choral rehearsal? What was different?
2. What is at least one rehearsal strategy you would keep for your own toolbox?
3. What might you do differently in your own classroom?
4. What were your biggest takeaways from this rehearsal?

### NOTES

Additional Notes/Questions/Observations:

# Evan Powers – University of North Texas

[Evan.Powers@unt.edu](mailto:Evan.Powers@unt.edu)



Evan Powers is currently pursuing his Ph.D. in Music Education at the University of North Texas. He holds Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Music Education from the Florida State University. He previously taught middle and high school choir and musical theatre in Florida, and was named "Teacher of the Year" for the 2012–2013 and 2020–2021 school years. As a classroom teacher, he also supervised preservice music educators and hosted field experience opportunities for choral methods courses at the University of Central Florida. He has served on the boards for the Florida and Southern Region chapters of the American Choral Directors Association, and served for many years as a Producer with Varsity Vocals for the ICHSA (International Competition of High School A Cappella). He is an active adjudicator, presenter, choral clinician, and choral arranger. He is passionate about service through music and was the inaugural recipient of the Orange County Public Schools Arts Community Impact Award in 2018 as well as the 2020–2021 Florida Music Education Association Exemplary Model Program Award for the "Songbird" program. His current research interests include empathy development in music education, choirs with special populations, and professional development.

## **Music Theory Observation Overview**

Molly Baugh

Music theory provides musicians with a way to describe and explain the relationships we hear in music. Much like the study of grammar empowers us to examine and discuss language, music theory empowers us to examine and discuss what is happening in the music we listen to, perform, and study.

Music theory course offerings at high schools vary from a single semester music theory course to sequences of multiple courses. Many high schools offer Advanced Placement Music Theory or International Baccalaureate Music Theory. To offer AP Music Theory, the course must be approved through the AP Audit process. To offer IB Music Theory, the school must be designated as an IB School. Both the Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs have detailed descriptions of their respective music theory courses on their websites. If you are observing an AP or IB music theory course, consult the related website to learn more about the course.

Written and aural skills comprise the content of music theory courses. Written skills consist of music fundamentals (identification and notation of pitch, rhythm, scales, intervals, and chords), analysis, and part-writing. Aural skills consist of sight-singing, aural identification of musical elements, aural analysis of recorded excerpts, and dictation (harmonic and melodic). As you observe, consider carefully the ways in which educators balance and integrate written and aural skills throughout the lesson.

Outside the traditional rehearsal learning environment, the music theory teacher employs approaches to assessing student learning and designing learning activities that differ from those used in the ensemble classroom. Consider how the learning activities help students achieve the learning outcomes for the lesson. Observe how the teacher uses informal assessment during the lesson to check for student understanding. Reflect on how the teacher engages students throughout the learning process. Lastly, carefully consider how the teacher makes the class a musical experience for students. When students apply their learning in musical contexts, they are making the connections between the theory and practice of music.

## MUSIC THEORY OBSERVATION FORM

Date	Location	Teacher	Class/Age/Level	Number of Students

### CLASSROOM SETUP/CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

1. What does this classroom look like in relation to the subject taught?
2. How are the students physically organized and seated in class (desk, chairs, stands, etc.)?
3. If this class is taught in space typically used for ensemble rehearsals, how is the space adapted for a theory class?

### INTERACTIONS BETWEEN TEACHER AND STUDENTS "CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT"

1. How does the teacher generally interact with students?
  - a. Is there a difference between participating students and not engaged students?
2. Describe any procedures the teacher has established to gain student focus?
  - a. Individual
  - b. Group
3. Are there consistent redirects or cues given by the teacher to indicate successful or unsuccessful engagement in the content/lesson?
4. What components of the classroom environment contribute to classroom management?
5. Are the interactions in the lesson teacher centered or student centered?

### MUSICAL ACTIVITIES OBSERVED

1. What musical concepts were the focus of the lesson? Be specific. For example, harmonic minor scales or chord inversions.
2. Which of the following did the teacher use to teach/apply these concepts?

#### **Aural Skills:**

- Singing
- Melodic Dictation
- Harmonic Dictation
- Aural Identification of musical concepts including scales, intervals, chords, cadences
- Aural analysis of musical excerpts

#### **Written Skills:**

- Labeling or constructing intervals, scales, chords
- Harmonic analysis of a printed score

- Roman Numeral Realization
  - Figured Bass Realization
  - Melodic Harmonization
3. What materials/resources were used in the lesson?
- Textbook(s): List titles and authors
  - Music Anthologies: List title and editor
  - Printed musical excerpts – List source and title/composer if known.
  - Recordings (and source)
  - Technology
  - Other

### **PEDAGOGY PRINCIPLES OBSERVED**

1. How did the teacher explain, break down, or model new concepts for students?
2. How did the teacher provide opportunities for students to practice new concepts?
3. How did the teacher integrate aural and written approaches in the lesson?
4. How did the teacher use solfege and counting syllables in the lesson?

### **ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING**

1. What did the students do to demonstrate their learning?
2. How did the teacher provide feedback to students about their learning? (Consider verbal, written, and non-verbal forms of feedback).
3. Discuss any differences you observed between the assessment of aural and written skills.

### **QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS**

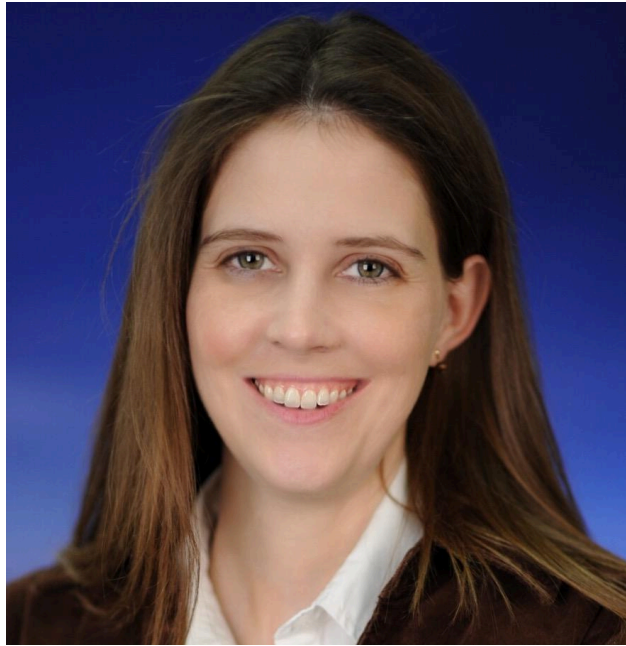
1. How do you practice singing and dictation outside of class?
2. How have you applied your music theory skills to your other music classes, rehearsals, composing, etc.?
3. What is the most useful thing you have learned from this course so far?

### **QUESTIONS TO ASK THE TEACHER**

1. How and to what extent do you integrate written and aural skills?
2. How did you choose the singing system (solfege, numbers, etc.) and counting systems you use?
3. What is your perspective on homework?
4. How do you make music theory a “musical” learning experience?

## Molly Baugh – Indiana University

[molbaugh@iu.edu](mailto:molbaugh@iu.edu)



Molly Baugh is an assistant professor of music education and instrumental music at Indiana University Southeast in New Albany, IN where she teaches courses in music education, music theory, and conducting; directs the IU Southeast Orchestra; and coordinates the music program. Previously she taught elementary, middle, and high school orchestras for 13 years in Oklahoma and Texas. She holds a PhD in music education from the University of Michigan and a BME and MME from the University of Oklahoma.

## **Instrumental Jazz Ensemble Observation Overview**

Zachary Nenaber

While jazz music has solidified its place in American music education, the format will look different in every school setting. Curricular classes are common at the high school level with a big band focus and possible combos with 9th through 12th grade students. While before or after school jazz ensembles are common at the middle school level for 6th through 8th graders. In both cases, there will be students with a mix of playing experience.

The instrumentation of each ensemble may also look different. The traditional jazz ensemble format includes five saxophones (two altos, two tenors, and one bari), four to five trombones, four to five trumpets, piano, guitar, bass, and drums. The number of each may differ based on the school offering and student interest with possibilities of non-traditional instruments. Additionally, some ensembles are audition based while others are volunteer and may change the instrumentation showing. Each section requires a deep understanding of how each instrument functions in the band. More successful ensembles have directors who focus on the rhythm section and intricate job to set the style of the piece the band is playing.

Finally, the most unique aspect of jazz music is improvisation. Some teachers focus on improvisation as a cornerstone of their program while others might focus on ensemble skill development. This is due to several different factors including unfamiliarity of improvisation pedagogy. There are two main types of improvisation instruction: theory-based and practice-based. In theory-based models, instruction centers on jazz theory development through chord building, use of scales, and memorizing licks. Practice-based models focus on aural skill development through call and response, transcriptions, and personal motif development. Keep in mind how these factors influence the class you are observing.

JAZZ ENSEMBLE OBSERVATION FORM				
Date	Location	Teacher	Class/Ensemble/ Age/Level	Number of Students
CLASSROOM SETUP/ENSEMBLE SETUP				
1. What does this classroom look like in relation to the Jazz Ensemble? 2. How are the students physically organized and seated in the rehearsal? 3. How are the wind sections organized (by part or other)? 4. How is the rhythm section organized?				
INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES				
Consider the interactions between teacher and students: 1. How does the teacher generally interact with students? 2. Describe any procedures the teacher has established to gain student focus? a. Individual b. Group 3. Are there consistent redirects or cues given by the teacher to indicate successful or unsuccessful engagement in the content/lesson? 4. What components of the classroom environment contribute to classroom management? 5. Are the interactions in the lesson teacher centered or student centered?				
REPERTOIRE SELECTION				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To the best of your ability, list the pieces, composer, and style (Swing, Latin, Ballad, etc.) being worked on in this class period.</li> <li>In your opinion, how educationally effective are they and did this piece honor the art form?</li> </ul>				
JAZZ SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES OBSERVED				
What jazz specific <b>activities</b> are you noticing in this lesson? Do they address the following?				
Jazz Theory Skill Development (Scales, chords, etc.)	Improvisation Skill Development (Aural skills, lick development, etc.)	Ensemble Skill Development	Creative Skill Development (Interaction, exploration, etc.)	
Historical Understandings	Context Understandings	Other Activities		

## DIRECTOR PEDAGOGY

*Describe the Director's Instrumental Pedagogy regarding the following:*

Conducting/Directing	Guitar
Saxophone	Bass
Trombone	Drums
Trumpet	Vibes
Piano	Auxiliary Percussion

*Did the director address all instruments appropriately and equally?*

## ELEMENTS OF ASSESSING STUDENT LEARNING

How did the teacher assess student learning?

What skills were assessed?

Individually or groups

Formative (in the moment) or Summative (end of class)

Looking back at the director-specific pedagogy categories above, which of those did you see being assessed?

## QUESTIONS

Questions to Ask the **Students**

1. Do you know what the objective is for class today?
2. How much do you practice outside of class?
3. What do you like most about jazz band/combo/improv?

Questions to Ask the **Teacher**

1. Does the ensemble participate in festivals or competitions?
2. How many and how frequent are concerts/performances?
3. How many students take private lessons in jazz?
4. What were some decisions you made during the lessons that supported your students' success?

## NOTES

Notes/Questions/Observations:

## Zachary Nenaber – University of Michigan

[znenaber@umich.edu](mailto:znenaber@umich.edu)



Zack Nenaber is a PhD student and graduate student instructor at the University of Michigan, where he has taught undergraduate and graduate courses. He also served as an adjunct professor, where he taught saxophone lessons and undergraduate music education courses. His research interests include creative music making, jazz pedagogy, and instrumental music teacher education practices. He has presented his research at AERA, NAFME, and the Michigan Music Conference. Prior to this appointment he held a graduate teaching assistantship at the University of Missouri, where he assisted with Marching Mizzou, concert ensembles, and music education coursework. He taught for seven years, teaching in P–12 classrooms in Missouri and Casablanca, Morocco. He primarily taught bands at the middle and high school level. Zack holds a masters of music education degree from the University of Missouri-Columbia and a bachelors of music education degree from the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

## **Music Composition and Creation Observation Overview**

John Churchville

The formal instruction of music composition and creation can take many forms. In any creative classroom endeavor, there are three essential elements that the teacher needs to work with: 1. Providing the tools for creation, 2. Allowing plenty of time for the creative process to take place, 3. Providing guidance where needed.

The tools provided will affect the creative process the most. Creativity can take place with nothing more than a voice, like you might see in an elementary classroom, or it can involve fully outfitted Digital Audio Workstations. Either way, the creative process must happen within the confines of the tools available. Composition involves the recording, refining, and repetition of the created content. Whether it is with a paper and pencil, notation software, or multi-track recording, the teacher is the point person between the creative process and the documentation of that process.

For students to properly develop a creative process, they must be provided with significant time within the creative environment to do their work. Each student will vary in their approach, understanding, aptitude, and inspiration. Providing time to explore, iterate, refine, and reflect on their process is essential to creative development. From the teacher's perspective, creative development is about the process over product. The goal is to develop and refine the process, rather than to judge a final product.

Within the confines of the tools and time available to the students, the teachers main focus is to provide good guidance. This, again, should be focused on the process of creating, rather than the results, or an end product. It is important to keep in mind that success in the creative process is as differentiated as the students practicing it. In other words, success will look different for each student. A student who is adept at using a DAW compared to a student who has never used the provided software will have end products that are vastly different. The teacher's job is to identify that each student is applying what they know and keeping their focus on the task at hand.

Teaching music composition and creativity can be one of the most rewarding and fulfilling experiences for teachers and students alike. Developing creative skills in the music classroom provides students with the tools and skills to take on creative endeavors in many other aspects of their lives. This makes it one of the most valuable experiences a teacher can provide for their students.

## MUSIC COMPOSITION AND CREATION OBSERVATION FORM

Date	Location	Teacher	Class/Ensemble/ Age/Level	Number of Students

### CLASSROOM SETUP/CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

1. Is the classroom set up for individual/small group work? Are there 'stations' for working in small groups?
2. Is there a sound system in the room? Is there technology set up to aid in the songwriting/listening process?

### INTERACTIONS BETWEEN TEACHER AND STUDENTS "CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT"

1. How does the teacher generally interact with students?
2. Describe any procedures the teacher has established to gain student focus?
  - a. a. Individual
  - b. b.Group
3. Are there consistent redirects or cues given by the teacher to indicate successful or unsuccessful engagement in the content/lesson?
4. What components of the classroom environment contribute to classroom management?
5. What technology, instruments, or other classroom resources do students have access to?
6. Are the interactions in the lesson teacher centered or student centered?

### SONGWRITTING SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES OBSERVED

Capturing ideas (recording, transcribing, playing on instruments)

Expressing likes/dislikes and addressing issues in a productive manner.

The teacher takes the opportunity to deliver lessons on theory/skills, either individually or to the group.

Sharing...with the group and with individuals...to gain feedback and constructive criticism

The appropriate and creative use of technology.

Other Activities/space for exploration.

DESCRIBE THE DIRECTOR'S PEDAGOGY	
Theory	Clarity of the class goals
Skills	Criticism/Feedback
Use of Technology	Differentiation

ELEMENTS OF ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING
1. How did the teacher assess student learning? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What skills were assessed?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Individually or groups</li> <li>ii. Formative (in the moment) or Summative (end of class)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS
1. Do you know what the objective is for class today? 2. How much do you create outside of class? 3. What do you like most about creating music? 4. Do you see yourself using these skills in the future?

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE TEACHER
1. What opportunities do the students have to share their work? 2. What do they value most about teaching music creation/composition? 3. Have you ever been surprised by your students' work?

NOTES
Notes/Questions/Observations:

## John Churchville – Ann Arbor Public Schools

[johnchurchville@gmail.com](mailto:johnchurchville@gmail.com)



John Churchville is a Grammy Award winning tabla player and two time Grammy Music Educator award semi-finalist, he is a one time winner and two time nominee of a Detroit Music Award. He is the Coordinator of the Michigan Music Education Association's New Directions Committee which runs the State-Wide Young Composers of Michigan Premier Concert. John holds a BFA in World Music Performance from the California Institute of the Arts and a Masters of Music Education from the University of Michigan. Currently John is an Elementary General music teacher for Ann Arbor Public Schools where he focuses on the teaching the creative music making process with his students. John has composed hundreds of songs and has released over 20 albums of student created works in his 17 years as a classroom teacher.

## **Music Production Observation Overview**

Vinnie Inendino

Music production is an increasingly common offering in music education, providing students new ways to create, express, and engage with music through technology. In middle schools and high schools, music production courses frequently focus around digital audio workstations (DAWs) such as Soundtrap, GarageBand, or Logic Pro, where students learn to compose, arrange, record, and mix their own music. Music production classes often center on loop-based composition, sampling, and songwriting across diverse musical genres, especially those rooted in students' personal interests and identities. Elements of audio engineering may also be included in a music production course, as students learn about recording equipment and capturing audio in a studio setting.

Although the structure can vary significantly by school, music production courses are often based in project-based learning and emphasize student voice, creativity, and independence. Compared to an ensemble setting, teachers frequently act more as facilitators, helping students deepen musical thinking through both structured instruction and exploration. For preservice music educators, observing in a music production classroom is a great opportunity to see how our field can expand access, engagement, and relevance at the middle school and high school level.

## MUSIC PRODUCTION OBSERVATION FORM

Date	Location	Teacher	Class/Ensemble/ Age/Level	Number of Students

### CLASSROOM SETUP/CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

- What does the classroom look like?
- How are the students physically organized and seated in class? Does this remain consistent throughout the lesson?
- What resources are available to the teacher and students?
  - Technology (iPads, laptops, desktops, keyboards, MIDI controllers, projector, DAWs)
  - Audio equipment (headphones, speakers, etc.)
  - Instruments
  - Recording equipment
  - Culturally relevant music books, albums, posters, visuals
- Does the teacher display an agenda and/or objectives for the lesson?
- How does the physical setup of the room support collaboration and/or independent work?

### INTERACTIONS BETWEEN TEACHER AND STUDENTS “CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT”

- How does the teacher generally interact with students?
  - Is there a difference between participating students and not engaged students?
  - What does student engagement look like?
- Are the procedures the teacher has established focusing students?
  - Individual
  - Group
- Are there consistent redirects or cues given by the teacher to indicate successful or unsuccessful engagement in the content/lesson?
- How does the teacher leverage student leaders?
- Are there clear roles and expectations for how students use equipment?
- Does the teacher circulate or remain at a central location? How do they monitor engagement and provide feedback?
- Does the teacher need to navigate balancing student creativity/voice with school expectations (e.g. language in lyrics, mature themes, etc.)?
- What components of the classroom environment contribute to classroom management?
- What interactions in the lesson are teacher centered?
- What interactions in the lesson are student centered?
- How does the teacher foster respectful collaboration and communication between students?
- How does the teacher respond to technical issues without disrupting the flow of the lesson?

### **MUSICAL ACTIVITIES OBSERVED**

- What type of music making are students engaged in?
  - Original composition (music, lyrics)
  - Remixing
  - Sound design/audio engineering
  - Performance
  - Listening
- Are students composing using loops? Samples? Original work?
- What elements of music are being focused on in the lesson (e.g. form, rhythm, melody, harmony, timbre, texture, dynamics)?
- How much musical decision-making are students responsible for?
- Are students working from templates or creating original material?
- How can students incorporate their own creativity into the project/lesson (genre, structure, instrumentation, etc.)?

### **PEDAGOGY PRINCIPLES OBSERVED**

- How does the teacher structure musical and technical learning?
  - Direct instruction
  - Guided exploration
  - Peer collaboration
- What strategies are used to support different levels of experience?
- How is student voice/choice supported within the lesson?
- What culturally responsive strategies are present in the lesson?

### **ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING**

- How is student progress tracked (e.g. rubrics, checklists, informal feedback)?
- Do students know how their work will be assessed at the end of an assignment?
- How much choice do students have in how they show their knowledge?
- What is the balance between musical skill and technical skill assessment?
- Do students engage in self-assessment and/or peer assessment?

### **QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS**

- How did you come up with your ideas?
- What do you like most about the project you are working on now?
- Can you show me how you did \_\_\_\_\_?
- Do you write your own music outside of class?

### **QUESTIONS TO ASK THE TEACHER**

- How do you balance teaching both music and technology skills?
- How do you structure the class period to keep students engaged?
- How do you incorporate students' musical interests into the curriculum?
- How do you help students navigate group work?
- How do you assess musical creativity?

## Vinnie Inendino – Schaumburg High School

[vinendino@gmail.com](mailto:vinendino@gmail.com)



Vinnie Inendino is a band director at Schaumburg High School in Schaumburg, IL, where he teaches four curricular concert bands, the top extracurricular jazz ensemble, musical pit orchestra, marching band, and pep band. He also serves as music department chair, leading a team of faculty and adjunct staff across band, orchestra, choir, music production, and music theory programs that reach over 400 students each year. Vinnie Inendino holds a Bachelor of Music degree in Music Education (magna cum laude) from Northwestern University, a Master of Education degree in Educational Administration and Leadership from the University of Illinois, and a Master of Music degree in Music Education from the University of Michigan. He serves on the Illinois Comprehensive Musicianship through Performance Committee and regularly performs as a saxophonist throughout the Chicagoland area.

## **Guitar Class Observation Overview**

Anand Sukumaran

The guitar, long popular in private, studio, or self-study settings, has become a common offering in U.S. school music programs over the past three decades, joining choir, band, and orchestra. Its versatility across genres and styles leads to varied implementations in secondary schools, typically under two main domains.

### Overarching Domains for Guitar Programs

#### *A) Guitar Ensemble: Performance/Concertizing Model*

- Modeled after large ensembles like concert bands, with students facing a conductor.
- Students may participate in festivals like ‘all-state’ or ‘solo and ensemble,’ playing parts (e.g., Guitar 2) using standard notation or alternate formats like tablature, lead sheets, or chord charts, depending on the instructor, student demographics, or genre.
- Focuses on preparing repertoire for formal performances at school or community venues.
- Well-resourced schools may offer multiple levels (e.g., intermediate or advanced ensembles).

#### *B) Class Guitar: Group Instruction/Studio Model*

- Resembles private lessons scaled for multiple students, emphasizing fundamental techniques for beginners or building on intermediate skills.
- Public performances are secondary, though occasional performances for peers or lower grades may occur.
- Serves as preparation for performance ensembles or equips students for independent musical growth.
- Levels (e.g., Beginning or Intermediate Class Guitar) often start with folk-style accompaniment (chords, strumming) and progress to melodic or fingerstyle playing.

### **Instruments Used**

Most programs use nylon-string (classical) or steel-string (folk) guitars, with preferences varying by instructor. Some allow a mix, but solid-body electric guitars are typically discouraged, except occasionally for bass guitar accompaniment.

### **Genres of Music**

Common genres in K–12 guitar classes include classical, contemporary/modern classical, pop, rock, and country, reflecting the guitar’s broad stylistic range.

### **Closing**

Guitar classes, less standardized than traditional ensembles, often feature eclectic curricula due to the instrument’s versatility, diverse student demographics, and the lack of a defined teacher pipeline. Observing these classes, consider how their approaches intersect with your musical contexts. Reflect on: *What elements work well here, and could they enhance other settings?* and *What skills or knowledge do I have that could support teaching a guitar class?*

## GUITAR CLASS/ENSEMBLE OBSERVATION FORM

Date	Location	Teacher	Class/Ensemble/ Age/Level	Number of Students

### PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. How does the classroom reflect the type of guitar program (ensemble or class guitar)?
2. How are students seated (e.g., ensemble-style sections or circular arrangement)?
3. What guitar types are used (classical, folk, mixed)?
4. What environmental constraints exist, and how has the teacher adapted the space?

### INTERACTIONS BETWEEN TEACHER AND STUDENTS

1. Describe the teacher's general interaction style with students.
2. What is the balance of teacher-led (conductor/lecturer) vs. coaching/facilitator modes? Note verbal feedback, rehearsal instructions, or gestural cues.
3. Does peer-to-peer interaction support lesson goals?
4. How does the teacher maintain engagement or redirect students (verbal/visual cues)?
5. What procedures ensure smooth class operation (e.g., tuning, guitar case storage...etc.)

### MUSICAL CONTENT

**Content:** Document pieces and styles in a table following the template below:

Title / Composer	Genre	Playing Style (e.g., strumming / picking)

### ACTIVITIES

1. List observed learning activities and their rationale/relevance.
2. Categorize activities into:
  - a) Foundational Skills/Daily Routines (e.g., scales, chords)
  - b) Music Theory (e.g., song structure, harmonic progressions)
  - c) Techniques/Specializations (e.g., fingerpicking, hammer-ons)
  - d) Improvisation/Composition (e.g., creating riffs)
  - e) Learning/Rehearsing Repertoire (e.g., specific songs or pieces)
3. Note modality (individual, small group, or full ensemble).

<b>PEDAGOGICAL ASPECTS</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Describe teaching approaches, which may include:</li> <li>2. Direct Instruction: Teacher-led demonstrations and feedback.</li> <li>3. Constructivist/Discovery: Students problem-solve and explore independently.</li> <li>4. Collaborative: Peer learning and assessment.</li> <li>5. Integrative: Connecting to music theory or cultural history.</li> </ol>
<b>ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING</b>
<p>How is student learning assessed?</p> <p>What areas are targeted (e.g., performance skills, conceptual knowledge, creativity)?</p> <p>Is the assessment formal/informal or formative/summative?</p> <p>What is the format (e.g., written test, live performance, pre-recorded submission)?</p>
<b>QUESTIONS TO ASK THE TEACHER</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Why did you join this class, and what prior musical experience did you have? What are your goals as a guitarist/musician?</li> <li>2. Are you in other music classes/ensembles? If so, how does this class enhance your skills in those contexts?</li> <li>3. How do you assess your progress in today's lesson, and how will you address areas needing improvement?</li> <li>4. What skills should an ideal guitar teacher have?</li> <li>5. Should more schools offer guitar classes? If so, what are the benefits?</li> </ol>
<b>QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are your learning goals, and how do you assess progress?</li> <li>2. How did you choose the format/style of this guitar class?</li> <li>3. How does teaching guitar compare to directing traditional ensembles?</li> <li>4. How do you differentiate instruction for varied skill levels?</li> <li>5. What resources shape your lessons/concert programs?</li> <li>6. Does this group participate in regional/state events (e.g., solo and ensemble)?</li> <li>7. What is your stance on amplification or digital tools in class?</li> <li>8. What advice do you have for aspiring guitar class teachers?</li> </ol>
<b>NOTES</b>
<p>Notes/Questions/Observations:</p>          

## Anand Sukumaran – Hope College

[sukumaran@hope.edu](mailto:sukumaran@hope.edu)



Dr. Anand Sukumaran is an assistant professor of music at Hope College in Holland, Michigan. He is director of bands and teaches courses in instrumental music methods and administration, folk guitar, and world music. He provides reflective supervision to future music educators and serves as a faculty advisor for Hope's chapter of the National Association for Music Educators.

His research is oriented towards the phenomenon of multi-musicality and its pedagogical impact. These interests emerged in part from the intersections of his own musical pathways, which include orchestral horn playing, contemporary piano gigs, leading worship on guitar, ensemble conducting, and teaching in diverse contexts. Dr. Sukumaran enjoys finding ways to channel his (and his students') multi-musical affinities into academic and performance settings.

His creative output draws inspiration from his multi-hyphenated identity as a Malaysian of Indian descent who has put down roots in the United States. An example of this work is his composition "Trade Winds," written to help bridge the spaces between two global music traditions through merging Indian *ragas* (scales) with Western harmonies. Before working in higher education, Dr. Sukumaran spent a decade teaching band, piano, guitar, songwriting and general music in the Chicago Public Schools.

## Modern Band Observation Overview

David Dockan

Modern band has emerged as a class and ensemble option in school music programs in the United States, but the label itself was originally chosen by an arts administrator in the LA unified schools to have the class title be more aligned with other ensemble options. A common misconception is that “modern band” denotes a single, codified pedagogy. In reality, it rests on two foundational characteristics: popular music and instrumentation appropriate for the genre.

First, student selected repertoire is what counts as *popular*. Popular is a context-dependent term—music that is meaningful, relevant, and enjoyed by a group of students in a classroom. Teachers therefore begin by learning students’ musical preferences through surveys, playlists, informal conversations, and classroom music-making activities. Repertoire selection flows from the students by means of song selection and song writing.

Second, instrumentation should be flexible and genre appropriate to reflect the music students select. That may include traditional rhythm-section instruments such as guitar, bass, keyboards, and drum kit, as well as electronic tools like DJ controllers, loop stations, or laptops. This flexibility can be likened to an orchestra’s ability to add or subtract instruments. For example the Kentucky Honors Modern Band integrated steel pan and violin. In short, *any* instrument that serves the students’ music is welcome.

Because modern band does not adhere to any particular pedagogical approach, there are a variety of ways educators can teach this ensemble. Many adopt a democratic music-making approach in which students share decision-making and learn from one another. In this conception of modern band instruction, students have a voice in the rules and procedures, curriculum and content, and the pedagogy.

It is important to have a teacher-as-facilitator approach, where the instructor scaffolds learning without dictating every step. In this approach, a teacher adapts to students’ needs, adjusting how much control they exercise; offering help when necessary and stepping back when appropriate. Instead of prioritizing aesthetic aims like tonal blend, balance, and uniformity, they emphasize social goals: honoring each learner’s individuality, encouraging varied approaches, and fostering a sense of autonomy. Another approach might be a teacher-as-producer model, where teachers begin with whatever ideas the students offer, and then push them to pursue new, previously unimagined modes of expression. In this way, a teacher acts as a studio producer who helps students arrange, record, and refine their work. These roles are not fixed; teachers often move along a facilitator-to-producer gradient as performances draw near, gradually balancing student agency with pushing them to grow in new ways.

The observation form that follows translates these ideas into practices that might be observed in the modern band classroom. It offers specific indicators for repertoire selection, instrumentation, and teacher roles. By focusing the observation students will be able to capture the essence of a modern band classroom.

## MODERN BAND OBSERVATION FORM

Date	Location	Teacher	Class/Ensemble/ Age/Level	Number of Students

### REPERTOIRE

1. List the piece, composer, and style. (i.e., Not Like Us by Kendrick Lamar [hip-hop])
2. Who selected this and why?

### INSTRUMENTATION

1. What is the instrumentation?
2. Briefly describe how you see the students learning each instrument. Note: Students might also be learning extra musical skills stage presence, arranging, etc.

Guitar:

Vocals:

Bass Guitar:

Technology:

Keyboard:

Other:

Drum Kit:

### DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES

#### ***Rules and Procedures***

1. What are the rules/norms of the classroom?
2. How did students enter?
3. How did students set up the classroom?

#### ***Curriculum and Content***

1. What musical skills were the students working on?
2. What might be the next musical skills for these students to learn?

#### ***Pedagogy***

1. Mark on the line below how much the teacher vs the students were leading the instruction.

Student ←——|———|———|———|———|———|———|———|———|———→ Teacher

2. How are the students learning? What is their role? What is the teacher's role?

### TEACHER AS FACILITATOR

1. How did the teacher remove barriers or provide pathways for the students to be successful?
2. How did the teacher emphasize individuality in the students' performance?

### TEACHERS AS PRODUCER

1. How does the teacher push the students past their innate abilities and prompt their growth as musicians?
2. How does the teacher prompt the refinement of students' ideas?

### FACILITATOR TOWARDS PRODUCER

1. On the line below, try to depict where the teacher is in the continuum from facilitator to producer.

Director-----|-----|-----Facilitator-----|-----|-----Producer

2. In what ways is the teacher utilizing the students ideas and allowing them to still feel agentic in the music making process?

### NOTES

Notes/Questions/Observations:

What did students say about today's music making experience?

## David Dockan – Louisiana State University

[daviddockan@lsu.edu](mailto:daviddockan@lsu.edu)



David Dockan is Assistant Professor of Music Education at Louisiana State University, where he teaches courses in elementary music methods, popular/commercial music techniques, and teaching music in diverse settings. Committed to helping teachers design curricula that reflect students' musical worlds, his scholarship explores popular music pedagogies, music teacher agency, and belonging in music education. Dockan's research is published in the *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, *Journal of Music, Technology & Education*, *Journal of General Music Education*, *Music Educators Journal*, and *The Orff Echo*, as well as in Oxford and GIA book chapters. He has presented his research at national and international venues: National Association for Music Education, Society for Music Teacher Education, International Society for Music Education, and the International Symposium for Music and Fine Art Education. A sought-after clinician, he leads workshops nationwide on modern band, popular music, and Orff Schulwerk. Dockan also serves on the editorial board of *The Orff Echo*, NAFME's Council for Innovations, the leadership team of the Alliance for Active Music Making, and as co-coordinator of the Mountain Lake Colloquium.

## **Steelband Observation Overview**

Alexander Scott

Steelband is the term used in this text to describe the ensemble that includes and features the steel pan instrument. The ensemble may also go by similar names such as Steel Band, Steel Drum Band, Steel Pan Ensemble, etc. The steelband is a relatively newer addition to the American music education system, and as such can look different in various school settings. It is rare for a district to offer steelband at both the middle and high school levels. This naturally produces an ensemble that contains students with a mix of playing experiences, most notably beginners in a high school ensemble.

The most common American school-based steelband instrumentation includes the following instruments in descending score order: tenor, double tenor, double second, guitar, cello, 6-bass, drumset, and engine room. The number of each may differ based on available instruments, student interest, storage capacity of the teaching space, and the inclusion of Western instruments to supplement. Due to the oral musical tradition of Trinidad & Tobago, the instrument's country of origin, some instruments have more than one acceptable name (e.g., lead for tenor, gitta for guitar). The engine room refers to hand percussion instruments such as cowbells, claves, shakers, scratchers, agogo bells, and others which play standardized rhythms and patterns according to the style and genre of each piece performed. There is a significant upfront financial expense for the formation of a steelband and as such, teachers often supplement steel pans with similar ranged instruments found in the band and orchestra classrooms. For example, the 6-bass may be replaced by double bass or bass guitar.

Like instruments are traditionally grouped near each other to facilitate hearing shared musical lines. Due to the physical size of the instruments, the rehearsal space may not have the same set up as performance. In performance, the tenors are usually spaced in a line at the front of the ensemble, the bass instruments towards the interior of the group, and the drumset and engine room are located in the center of the entire ensemble.

Both improvisation and learning music by rote are authentic to the medium. Some teachers may focus on both concepts to different extents based on their own comfort level with instructing and implementing those pedagogical concepts.

## STEELBAND OBSERVATION FORM

Date	Location	Teacher	Class/Ensemble/ Age/Level	Number of Students

### CLASSROOM SETUP/CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

1. What does this classroom look like in relation to the Steelband ensemble?
2. How are the students physically organized and seated/standing in the rehearsal? How are the sections organized (by like-instrument or other)? How is the Engine Room organized?

### INTERACTIONS BETWEEN TEACHER AND STUDENTS “CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT”

1. How does the teacher generally interact with students?
2. Describe any procedures the teacher has established to gain student focus?
  - a. Individual
  - b. Group
3. Are there consistent redirects or cues given by the teacher to indicate successful or unsuccessful engagement in the content/lesson?
4. What components of the classroom environment contribute to classroom management?
5. Are the interactions in the lesson teacher centered or student centered?
6. How does the teacher maintain the ensemble's focus over the course of an entire rehearsal? What are students doing when the teacher is working with sections or smaller groups?

### REPERTOIRE SELECTION

1. List the piece, composer, and style (Soca, Calypso, Panorama, Pop, etc.).
2. How does the teacher divide the rehearsal time between the pieces rehearsed? Are there transferable skills between pieces addressed to save time?

### STEELBAND SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES

Knowledge and History of the Steelpan in the culture of Trinidad & Tobago

Creative Skill Development (Interaction, exploration, etc.)

Improvisation Skill Development (Aural skills, lick development, etc.)	Historical Understandings
Ensemble Skill Development	Repertoire Context Understandings
	Other Activities

DESCRIBE THE DIRECTOR'S PEDAGOGY	
Leader (Teacher/Conductor)	Bassline Instruments
Melodic Instruments	Drumset
Accompanimental (Strumming) Instruments	Engine Room

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How did the teacher assess student learning? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What skills were assessed? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Individually or groups</li> <li>ii. Formative (in the moment) or Summative (end of class)</li> </ol> </li> </ol> </li> </ol>

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you know what the objective is for class today?</li> <li>2. Can you practice outside of class? What is your access level to the instruments?</li> <li>3. What do you like most about steelband? What made you first want to be a member of the steelband?</li> </ol>

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE TEACHER
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How did you develop your readiness to lead a steelband ensemble? Was it a part of your undergraduate pre-service education, prior experience with the ensemble, in-service development, etc?</li> <li>2. How many and how frequent are concerts/performances?</li> <li>3. What were some decisions you made during the lessons that supported your student's success?</li> <li>4. How much do you include improvisation in your curriculum across the year?</li> <li>5. How much do you include learning music by rote in your curriculum across the year?</li> <li>6. What is the role of the steelband in the greater context of the entire music department?</li> </ol>

## Alexander Scott – University of Texas at Tyler

[alexanderscott@uttyler.edu](mailto:alexanderscott@uttyler.edu)



Alexander Scott serves as Director of Bands and Assistant Professor of Music at The University of Texas at Tyler. His responsibilities include conducting the Wind Ensemble and Symphonic Band, teaching courses in music education, and leading the university's band program. Dr. Scott holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Conducting and a Master of Music degree in Music Education from the University of Michigan, a Master of Music in Conducting from the University of Maryland, and a Bachelor of Music Education from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. Previously, Scott taught for nine years in Maryland public schools. For seven years, he was the Department Chair and Director of Instrumental Music at Meade Senior High School in Fort Meade, Maryland.

## Mariachi Ensemble Observation Overview

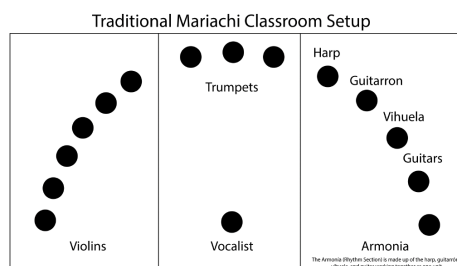
Michael Acevedo

Mariachi music is gaining momentum as a respected and increasingly integrated part of music education across the United States. While its roots are deeply embedded in Mexican tradition, mariachi programs in schools offer students a culturally rich and musically challenging experience that encompasses instrumental, vocal, and performance skills.

The structure and format of mariachi ensembles can vary significantly depending on the school setting. At the high school level, mariachi can be offered as a curricular class or after school only, and may consist of multiple ensembles including varsity-level and beginner groups. Middle schools may offer mariachi either during the school day or as an extracurricular program. In both settings, students enter with varying degrees of experience, ranging from complete beginners to those with several years of performance history.

Traditional mariachi instrumentation typically includes six to ten violins, three trumpets, one vihuela, one guitarron, two-three classical acoustic guitars, a harp and occasionally a Guitarra de Golpe. In a high school setting, you can see four trumpets, two vihuelas and two guitarrones and 2–5 guitars. Vocalists are an integral part of the ensemble, with every student expected to sing chorus and some will sing solo parts. Depending on the program and student interest, instrumentation may vary, and directors often need to adjust arrangements accordingly. The unique aspect of mariachi pedagogy lies in its emphasis on memorization, ensemble cohesiveness, and expression. Unlike classical music settings, where a conductor leads the ensemble, mariachi often relies on internal leadership from students—particularly the lead violinist—to cue sections and transitions. Directors must focus on a variety of pedagogical elements including modeling, repetition, stylistic nuance, and vocal training. They must also address differences from classical technique, such as the heavier bow stroke for violins or tongued staccato articulation and wider vibrato for trumpets.

While every mariachi program reflects the community and school culture it serves, strong relationships, cultural appreciation, and collaborative learning are foundational across the board. As you observe a mariachi rehearsal, take note of how tradition, student leadership, musical differences from classical music and musical growth come together, instrumentation and music.



## MARIACHI ENSEMBLE OBSERVATION FORM

Date	Location	Teacher	Class/Ensemble/ Age/Level	Number of Students

### REHEARSAL SETUP/REHEARSAL ENVIRONMENT

Instrumentation observed:

Violins: \_\_\_\_\_

Guitars: \_\_\_\_\_

Trumpets: \_\_\_\_\_

Harps: \_\_\_\_\_

Guitarrones: \_\_\_\_\_

Guitarras de Golpe: \_\_\_\_\_

Vihuelas: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments:

- What was the classroom set up for a rehearsal? Was it in a tradition set up (arc)? Were the students standing or sitting during the rehearsal?
- Were there stands being used?

### TEACHER-STUDENT INTERACTIONS AND CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

- Describe how feedback to the students was given.
- How did the students respond to the feedback given from the director?
- Describe the classroom dynamic between the teacher and students.
- How does the director handle sections that need work?

Comments:

### MUSICAL PROPERTIES AND ACTIVITIES

- Were there vocal techniques involved in the lesson? What were they?
- Which of the following mariachi styles was observed? Son Jalisciense, Bolero, Ranchera, Polka? Which style did you enjoy the most?

Comments:

### **PEDAGOGICAL PRINCIPALS**

- Was there modeling involved from the director? How did the director accomplish this?
- Were there students that also took ownership in leading the group? If yes, how did they do this?
- Which one of the following mariachi characteristics did you observe?
  - Violins: Full bow and heavy playing on uptempo songs
  - Trumpets: Staccato and wide vibrato.
  - Vocals: Expressiveness.

### **ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING**

- How does/did the director accomplish assessment of student learning?
  - Did he/she ask for a lot of individual playing? Section playing, group playing?
- Comments:

### **ROLE OF THE MARIACHI DIRECTOR**

- How did the director show his content knowledge to all the mariachi sections?
  - The director coached students on expressiveness and stage presence?  
Yes/No
- Comments:

### **SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR THE STUDENTS**

- What do you enjoy most about being part of the mariachi ensemble?
- How has being in mariachi helped you grow as a musician?
- What styles or songs do you most enjoy performing, and why?
- How often do you rehearse, and what is a typical rehearsal like?
- Have you had opportunities to perform outside of school? If so, what was that experience like?

### **SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR THE TEACHER**

- Does the ensemble participate in festivals or competitions?
- How many and how frequent are concerts/performance?
- How do you grade the mariachi students?
- How has the community responded to having a mariachi program?
- How have the students responded to mariachi?
- Does the school have Trajes de Charro? (Mariachi uniforms)
- How have the teachers and administrators responded to mariachi?
- Does the director have playing tests and how do they grade this?

# Michael Acevedo – The University of Texas at San Antonio

[Michael.Acevedo@utsa.edu](mailto:Michael.Acevedo@utsa.edu)



Michael A. Acevedo is a dynamic and passionate Latin music specialist with over 15 years of university-level experience in mariachi ensemble direction. Currently serving as the Mariachi Director at The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA), he has been instrumental in expanding the mariachi program, developing two fully functional ensembles, including Mariachi Los Paisanos de UTSA and Mariachi Juvenil de UTSA. His expertise extends beyond the university, with a strong background in public school band and orchestra facilitation, as well as a proven track record in recruiting and retaining music students. Michael is a versatile musician and educator, adept at composing, arranging, and performing across a variety of musical genres. He holds a Master of Music in Trumpet Performance from the University of Texas at Austin and a Bachelor of Music in Music Education from Texas A&M University-Kingsville. His certifications include Texas All-Level (K–12) Certification in Music. A recognized leader in mariachi education, Michael has built and sustained music programs in both secondary education and higher education settings. His work has fostered culturally rich environments that promote diversity and the growth of Latin-American music programs.

Under his direction, Mariachi Los Paisanos has become a prominent part of campus life, performing at university events, including Roadrunner football halftime shows. Acevedo's efforts have helped position mariachi as both an academic discipline and a professional pathway.

## Early Childhood Music in Community Settings Observation Overview

Amy Sierzega

As early childhood music (ECM) programs are frequently connected to community music efforts, observers should note differences among and within ECM approaches. While ECM programs serve families of students from birth–5 years old, early childhood is technically defined as birth through age 8, which overlaps with a child’s elementary school years. Unlike music classes in elementary school settings, ECM classes in community-based programs often offer parent-child or caregiver-child classes where the adult participates alongside the child. Some classes may be structured based on age (e.g., birth–18 mos, 18 mos–3 years, 3–5 years, etc.) while others may be structured according to experience in the program or other factors.

Within ECM programs, teachers follow curricula or other instructional guidance. Teachers may have explicit training in ECM, elementary music, and/or other approaches to ECM music and movement instruction. Although the children certainly benefit from this instruction, the goal of the class may be to teach the caregivers/grown-ups to musically engage with their child(ren). As the child’s first music teacher, caregivers/grown-ups likely engage with the child more often and more consistently than a music teacher in an ECM program. Therefore, caregivers/grown-ups/parents and ECM teachers alike are uniquely positioned to support children’s musical utterances.

Finally, although ECM classes might appear to be “just play” or “just fun,” the informal nature of ECM classes provides invaluable music learning experiences that can shape musicianship among children and adults alike. Such experiences may be explicit/overt or more implicit/covert. As you observe, notice the purposeful ways in which teachers may be interacting with children and other adults in the room in order to support foundational musical skills through active music making. ECM are whole people and whole musicians; notice what they *are* doing rather than concentrating on what they are not doing *yet*!

## EARLY CHILDHOOD MUSIC IN COMMUNITY SETTINGS OBSERVATION FORM

Date	Location	Teacher	Class/Ensemble/ Age/Level	Number of Students

### CLASSROOM SETUP/CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

1. What does this classroom look like? If the space is not a dedicated music classroom, make note of what else the space is used for before/after music class.
2. How are the students **physically organized** during class? What is the ratio of children to adults in the room? Are there parents/guardians, other caregivers, and/or classroom aids present in the classroom? If so, how are the “extra” adults participating in the class activities and/or interacting with students?

### INTERACTIONS BETWEEN TEACHER AND STUDENTS “CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT”

1. How does the teacher generally interact with students? *If there is more than one teacher, describe the interactions for the teacher facilitating most of the instruction in this class; what are the other teachers doing while this teacher is leading instruction?*
2. In this classroom, what does engagement look/sound/feel like? Can you tell if/when students are participating and/or engaged? Why or why not?
3. List the strategies or “teacher moves” you see the teacher using for **individual students**:
4. List strategies or “teacher moves” you see the teacher using for the **entire class and/or groups** of students:
5. Describe how the teacher redirects, cues, or otherwise communicates “successful engagement” in the classroom activities.
6. Do the interactions among students, teachers, and/or parents/caregivers appear to be teacher-centered or student-centered? How and why?

### MUSICAL ACTIVITIES OBSERVED

*Indicate the musical activities that you observed during this class. Make note of anything you find surprising, unexpected, or otherwise interesting.*

Teacher(s)	Students	Other Adults (if present)
<input type="checkbox"/> Singing	<input type="checkbox"/> Singing	<input type="checkbox"/> Singing
<input type="checkbox"/> Chanting	<input type="checkbox"/> Chanting	<input type="checkbox"/> Chanting
<input type="checkbox"/> Moving	<input type="checkbox"/> Moving	<input type="checkbox"/> Moving
<input type="checkbox"/> Playing Instruments	<input type="checkbox"/> Playing Instruments	<input type="checkbox"/> Playing Instruments
<input type="checkbox"/> Imitating Breath Sounds	<input type="checkbox"/> Imitating Breath Sounds	<input type="checkbox"/> Imitating Breath Sounds
<input type="checkbox"/> Listening	<input type="checkbox"/> Listening/Absorbing	<input type="checkbox"/> Listening

<input type="checkbox"/> Using Props (e.g., beanbags, scarves, parachutes)	<input type="checkbox"/> Using Props (e.g., beanbags, scarves, parachutes)	<input type="checkbox"/> Using Props (e.g., beanbags, scarves, parachutes)
<input type="checkbox"/> Exploring Notation	<input type="checkbox"/> Exploring Notation	<input type="checkbox"/> Exploring Notation
<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher Uses Songs/Chants <u>With</u> Words		
<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher Uses Songs/Chants <u>Without</u> Words		

### **PEDAGOGY PRINCIPLES OBSERVED**

1. How did the teacher react and respond to student learning? (e.g., *how did student responses & musical utterances inform the teachers' lesson sequence, including but not limited to: pacing; choice of rhythm & tonal patterns; movement; neutral syllables; use of props or instruments; breathwork*).
2. What did you notice about the content of the activities? What repertoire/songs were used by the teacher(s)? About how long was each activity? How did you know when the activity was finished?
3. What else did you notice?

### **ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING**

1. How did the teacher assess student learning?
2. What skills did the teacher assess? When and how?
  - a. Individually or as a group
  - b. Formatively (in the moment, during the process) and/or Summatively (end of class, as a product)

### **QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS/CAREGIVERS**

*Given the nature of early childhood music classrooms, children may be nonverbal for a variety of developmental and/or social reasons. If caregivers are present with the child (e.g., in a class designed for grown-ups to participate alongside the children), consider asking the adult(s) the following questions, when appropriate:*

- What is one thing you remember from class today?
- Why did you enroll in this class? OR What attracted you to a class setting like this one?
- What do you like most about music class?
- What is one thing you hope you do next time in music class?

### **QUESTIONS TO ASK THE TEACHER(S)**

- How often do you see this group of students? How do you prepare for a class like this?
- What was one of your primary goals/objectives for today's class?
- What were some decisions you made during the lesson(s) today that you believed supported students? Did you anticipate having to encounter those decisions?
- What, if anything, surprised you during the lesson today?
- After today's lesson, what is one thing you want to make sure you do the next time you see this class?

## Amy Sierzega – University of New Hampshire

[amy.sierzega@unh.edu](mailto:amy.sierzega@unh.edu)



Amy Sierzega (*Sir-zee-guh*; she/her) is assistant professor and coordinator of music education at the University of New Hampshire in Durham, NH. In addition to coordinating the music education area, she teaches general music methods and supervises student teachers. Sierzega holds a Bachelor of Music in music education and Master of Music in music education from Michigan State University.

Prior to her appointment at the University of New Hampshire, Amy served as a graduate student instructor at the University of Maryland, where she taught undergraduate courses in music education and supervised student teachers. She received her Ph.D. in music education from the University of Maryland. Previously, she taught P–5 general music and beginning band in Ann Arbor, Michigan. She is an experienced early childhood and elementary music educator who has also served as interim conductor for the Washtenaw Community Concert Band and interim executive director of the Gordon Institute for Music Learning.

Sierzega specializes in professional development, culturally sustaining practices, and trauma-informed approaches in music education. She is an active collaborator who has also contributed to articles published in the *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, *Journal of Music Teacher Education*, *Journal of Research in Music Education*, *Music Educators Journal*, and *Psychology of Music*.

## Community Choir Observation Overview

Kenneth Sieloff

Community choirs are some of the most vibrant and welcoming musical spaces around—and one of the most enduring forms of ensemble singing worldwide. These choirs are often open to singers of all ages, backgrounds, and skill levels, united by a shared love of music and a desire to contribute to the cultural life of their town or region. While some ensembles strive for artistic excellence and ambitious programming, others focus more on inclusivity, social connection, or cultural representation. No two community choirs look quite the same, which makes them fascinating spaces for music education students to observe.

Unlike school or university ensembles, most community choirs are made up of volunteers—often non-auditioned or semi-auditioned—and the musical experience of singers can vary widely. Some members may have formal training or years of experience, while others might be returning to music after decades or trying choir for the first time. Because of this, rehearsals tend to reflect a broader range of skill levels, and conductors often adapt their teaching strategies to meet the needs of everyone in the room. Observers should pay close attention to how the conductor navigates this balance—supporting newer singers while also challenging more experienced ones.

This observation protocol is meant to guide students through key elements of the rehearsal process. In addition to musical and technical components—like warm-ups, gestural clarity, diction, score preparation, balance, and blend—it is important to watch for interpersonal dynamics and environmental cues. What kind of energy does the conductor bring to the room? How do they handle mistakes? What kind of atmosphere is created—and how does it make the singers feel?

In many ways, the social side of a community choir is just as important as its musical goals. These groups often serve as community anchors—places where friendships are formed, stories are shared, and people come together across generations. Observers should notice moments of camaraderie: laughter, casual conversation, shared rituals, or the simple joy of making music together. Conductors play a central role here, not just as musicians, but as community leaders. Many wear multiple hats—organizing volunteers, coordinating with boards, handling publicity, or even fundraising—all of which contribute to the ensemble's long-term success.

Repertoire can vary just as widely as the singers themselves. Some choirs perform classical masterworks, while others focus on contemporary pieces, folk songs, popular music, or multicultural repertoire. Some even commission new works from living composers. Observers should consider how the repertoire connects to the group's mission or identity, and how it is introduced and rehearsed. What is the balance between teaching notes and rhythms versus encouraging expressivity and stylistic interpretation? Are singers invited to shape the music collaboratively?

Students are encouraged to speak with members of the ensemble—including the conductor and accompanist—either during breaks or after rehearsal. These conversations can offer valuable insight into why people join and stay in these groups, what motivates them, and what challenges they face. For many singers, the choir is about more than just music; it is about connection, purpose, and belonging.

This protocol is an invitation to step into a space where music is practiced as a lifelong pursuit—where collaboration, joy, and community are just as central as performance. For music education students, observing a community choir is not only a learning opportunity but also a chance to rethink what a choir can be.

## COMMUNITY CHOIR OBSERVATION FORM

Time & Date	Location	Conductor & Ensemble Name	Rehearsal Length & Frequency	Rehearsals Until Concert

### REHEARSAL SETUP/ ENVIRONMENT

1. Where is the rehearsal? What type of space?
2. How is the rehearsal space set up?
3. Is there a piano/pianist? If yes, where are they placed relative to the conductor and ensemble?
4. How many singers are in each section, and how are the sections arranged?
5. Has the conductor provided a rehearsal order to the ensemble? If yes, how?

### INTERACTIONS BETWEEN CONDUCTOR AND MUSICIANS

1. How does the conductor interact with singers before/after rehearsal? How do singers interact with each other at the beginning/end of rehearsal?
2. If there is a pianist, describe the interactions between the conductor and this person throughout the rehearsal process.
  - a. How are instructions delivered, how often does the conductor interact with the pianist?
  - b. How often does the pianist provide assistance, and when/why? What type of assistance is provided?
3. Describe the conductor's warm-up process. What elements are addressed?
4. How does the conductor give instructions and feedback during the rehearsal?
  - a. Are comments mostly technical, musical, or expressive?
  - b. How does the conductor handle mistakes?
5. Describe the pacing of the rehearsal. If a rehearsal schedule was provided, how strictly is it followed?
6. Describe the conductor's gestural language.
  - a. Are gestures "clinical" and precise, or more expressive?
  - b. How are facial expressions or posture used to convey musical ideas or expectations?
  - c. How do singers respond to the conductor's gesture?
7. What is the overall tone between the conductor and ensemble?
  - a. Formal or informal? Teacher-student dynamic or peer-like collaboration?
  - b. Does the conductor acknowledge and adapt to the ensemble's diverse abilities and experiences?
8. How is trust and musical risk-taking encouraged (if at all)?
  - a. How often do singers speak up during the rehearsal?
9. How does the conductor foster community and build rapport with the singers?
  - a. Are there any traditions, procedures, or rituals that take place?

### REPERTOIRE

1. List the repertoire selected for the ensemble's next concert.
  - a. Include title, composer, time period, and style
2. How does this concert reflect the ensemble and/or its mission?
3. Which pieces were worked during this rehearsal?
  - a. How much of each piece was rehearsed (just a few measures, large sections, or the whole piece)?

## TECHNIQUES AND STRATEGIES USED BY THE CONDUCTOR

*List techniques and strategies used by the conductor to address the following:*

Intonations	Tone	Expressivity
Rhythm	Dynamics	Balance
Pitch	Diction	Blend

## ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENT

1. How does the conductor assess learning and achievement throughout the rehearsal?
2. Were clear goals established for the rehearsal? Were they met?

## QUESTIONS TO ASK THE PIANIST

1. How long have you played for this ensemble?
2. What do you enjoy most about working with this particular choir?
3. Do you see yourself as more of a collaborator, a support role, or something else?
4. How soon before the first rehearsal do you receive music?

## QUESTIONS TO ASK THE SINGERS

1. What initially brought you to this ensemble? Why do you come back? What do you personally get out of singing with this ensemble?
2. What do you appreciate most about the conductor's leadership style?
3. Have you ever given feedback to the conductor? If so, what was that like?
4. What kinds of music do you most enjoy singing with this group?
5. Is there a piece you've sung here that really moved you or felt meaningful? Why?
6. Have you made friendships through this group? How do members support each other?
7. How are new members sought and welcomed into the group?

## QUESTIONS TO ASK THE CONDUCTOR

1. What are your core goals for this ensemble, musically and personally?
2. How do you select repertoire for this group? What factors do you consider (e.g., ability, interest, message, etc.)?
3. What is your rehearsal philosophy? What do you prioritize in your limited time with the ensemble?
4. What is different about conducting a community choir compared to a school or university choir?
5. How do you manage vocal health, stamina, and accessibility for adult voices—especially aging singers or those with limited training?
6. How do you foster trust and engagement among singers?
7. How do you balance efficiency and enjoyment in your rehearsals?
8. What role does your pianist or accompanist play in shaping the rehearsal?
9. What are some of the logistical or behind-the-scenes responsibilities you manage as the conductor?
10. Have you had to fundraise, recruit, or market performances? What have you learned from those experiences?
11. What has this ensemble taught you as a musician and leader?
12. How do you build a sense of community and shared purpose in the ensemble?
13. What have you learned from this ensemble, and how has it shaped you as a musician and leader?

# Kenneth Sieloff – University of Michigan

[ksieloff@umich.edu](mailto:ksieloff@umich.edu)



Kenneth Sieloff is a conductor and music educator dedicated to building community and fostering connection through the transformative power of choral music. Known for his expressive artistry and collaborative leadership, he cultivates spaces where singers grow both musically and personally.

Ken is currently pursuing a DMA in Choral Conducting at the University of Michigan. He earned his Master of Music in Choral Conducting from the University of North Texas and his Bachelor of Music Education from the University of Michigan. His mentors include Eugene Rogers, Allen Hightower, Marques L.A. Garrett, Kristina MacMullen, Jerry Blackstone, Paul Rardin, and Julie Skadsem.

From 2013 to 2022, he taught high school choir in Texas, including seven years at Permian High School in Odessa, where his ensembles earned national recognition such as the American Prize in Choral Performance and a Mark of Excellence Award. In 2017, he was named a “Young Director of Distinction” by the Texas Choral Directors Association.

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He currently directs the Chancel Choir at First United Methodist Church of Ann Arbor and treasures life with his wife, Annie, and their daughters, Charlotte and Elizabeth.

## Church Choir Observation Overview

Kenneth Sieloff

Church choirs are a rich and deeply rooted part of many communities, offering something far beyond the realm of performance. These ensembles play a vital role in the spiritual life of a congregation—leading worship, bringing scripture and theology to life through song, and helping to create a sense of connection and reverence during services. Whether they are singing on an ordinary Sunday morning or preparing for high holy days like Advent, Christmas, Lent, or Easter, church choirs serve a unique and meaningful purpose. Rehearsals, in this setting, are more than just musical work sessions; they are often spaces for spiritual growth, fellowship, and shared ministry.

This observation protocol is designed to help music education students explore what makes church choir rehearsals distinct. Students are encouraged to observe how music-making functions not only as artistic preparation but also as service, reflection, and expression of faith. Guiding questions throughout the protocol will prompt attention to the rehearsal environment, the relationships between conductor and singers, the role of accompanists, the pacing and structure of rehearsal, and how the choir prepares to support the congregation in worship.

Church choirs can look very different depending on the setting. Some are made up entirely of volunteers, while others may include paid section leaders or professional accompanists. Repertoire might span everything from Renaissance motets to contemporary worship songs—or even pieces rooted in a particular cultural tradition or denominational practice. Observers should take note of the ensemble’s makeup and mission: what kind of music are they singing, and why? How does their sound reflect the identity of the church (denomination) and the community it serves? In many rehearsals, moments of prayer, devotion, or personal sharing might be woven into the experience—not as an interruption, but as an essential part of the ensemble’s mission and purpose.

One of the hallmarks of many church choirs is their intergenerational nature. People of all ages, musical backgrounds, and experience levels often come together to sing. That can present some challenges, but it also creates an incredibly rich and inclusive environment. As an observer, watch how the director engages this diverse group—offering musical guidance while also fostering a culture of encouragement, care, and belonging. How are mistakes handled? How is progress celebrated? How does the rehearsal space invite reflection not just on the notes and rhythms, but on the meaning of the music?

It is also important to recognize that church choir directors often wear many hats. In addition to conducting, they might be organizing music for upcoming services, coordinating with clergy or staff, leading devotionals, or even offering pastoral care to choir members. Their work blends musical leadership with a deep sense of community care. Students should listen closely to how the director talks about the choir’s role in worship—and how they frame the music as part of a larger spiritual mission.

For music education students, observing a church choir offers valuable insight into a professional world where music and ministry go hand in hand. Even for those who may not see themselves working in a church setting, this kind of observation reveals how music can bring people together, support emotional and spiritual well-being, and serve as a powerful vehicle for community and connection. It is a reminder that music, in many contexts, is much more than performance—it is an act of service, a form of care, and a shared journey.

## CHURCH CHOIR OBSERVATION FORM

Time & Date	Location	Conductor & Ensemble Name	Rehearsal Length & Frequency	Rehearsals Until Concert

### REHEARSAL SETUP/ ENVIRONMENT

1. Where is the rehearsal held (e.g., sanctuary, choir room)?
2. Is there a piano, organ, or band? If so, where are the musicians placed relative to the choir and conductor?
3. How many singers are in each section, and how are they arranged? What is the age range of the ensemble?
4. Has the conductor provided a rehearsal order or service plan? If yes, how was it communicated?
5. Has the conductor provided a rehearsal order to the ensemble? If yes, how?

### INTERACTIONS BETWEEN CONDUCTOR AND MUSICIANS

1. How does the conductor interact with singers before/after rehearsal? How do singers interact with each other at the beginning/end of rehearsal?
2. If there is a pianist, describe the interactions between the conductor and this person throughout the rehearsal process.
  - a. How often does the pianist provide assistance, and when/why? What type of assistance is provided?
3. Describe the conductor's warm-up process. Do they include vocal technique, spiritual focus, or prayer?
4. What is the balance between technical instruction, musical expression, and spiritual/emotional guidance?
  - a. How does the conductor handle mistakes?
5. Describe the pacing of the rehearsal. If a rehearsal schedule was provided, how strictly is it followed?
6. Describe the conductor's gestural language.
  - a. Are gestures "clinical" and precise, or more expressive?
  - b. How are facial expressions or posture used to convey musical ideas or expectations?
  - c. How do singers respond to the conductor's gesture?
7. How does the conductor foster community and build rapport with the singers?
  - a. Are there any traditions, procedures, or rituals that take place?

### REPERTOIRE

1. List the pieces being prepared for the upcoming service or event. (Include title, composer/arranger, style, liturgical season, and purpose in the service.)
2. How is repertoire chosen to align with the church calendar, scripture, or sermon themes?
3. Which pieces were rehearsed in this session, and how thoroughly (e.g., sectional work, run-throughs)?

## TECHNIQUES AND STRATEGIES USED BY THE CONDUCTOR

*List techniques and strategies used by the conductor to address the following:*

Intonations	Tone	Expressivity
Rhythm	Dynamics	Balance
Pitch	Diction	

## ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENT

1. How does the conductor assess musical growth throughout rehearsal?
2. Were clear goals established for this rehearsal? Were they met?
3. Does the conductor reflect on the music's meaning or message as part of the learning process?

## QUESTIONS TO ASK THE PIANIST

1. How long have you served with this church or ensemble?
2. What do you enjoy most about working with this choir?
3. Do you consider yourself a musical partner, collaborator, or both?
4. How far in advance do you receive music for services?
5. Do you ever assist with leading rehearsals or music selection?
6. How does your role shift during worship compared to rehearsal?

## QUESTIONS TO ASK THE SINGERS

1. What drew you to join this church choir?
2. Are you involved in any other musical ensembles outside of church?
3. What spiritual or emotional value do you find in singing with this group?
4. What kinds of music are most meaningful for you in worship?
5. How would you describe your relationship with the choir director?
6. Do you feel spiritually nourished by your participation in this choir? Why or why not?
7. Have you formed meaningful relationships with other choir members?

## QUESTIONS TO ASK THE CONDUCTOR

1. What are your primary goals for this choir—musically, spiritually, and communally?
2. How do you choose music? Does it always align with the church year and support worship themes?
3. What does it mean to you to lead a choir in a worship context versus a concert context?
4. How do you nurture musical and spiritual growth in your singers, especially volunteers?
5. How do you build a sense of community and shared purpose in the ensemble?
6. What strategies do you use when working with aging voices or singers with limited experience?
7. Do you view your role as pastoral, musical, or both? In what ways?
8. What are some challenges and joys unique to directing a church choir?
9. What have you learned from this ensemble, and how has it shaped you as a musician and leader?

# Kenneth Sieloff – University of Michigan

[ksieloff@umich.edu](mailto:ksieloff@umich.edu)



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He currently directs the Chancel Choir at First United Methodist Church of Ann Arbor and treasures life with his wife, Annie, and their daughters, Charlotte and Elizabeth.

## Community Band Observation Overview

Daniel Johnson

In a 1940s edition of the *Field of Music Series*, famed American conductor and community band leader Richard Franko Goldman wrote of community bands' capacity to "exert an influence of good" from both a cultural and educational viewpoint. The purpose of this observation guide is to gather a snapshot of a community band's cultural and educational influence. The observer will be encouraged to consider these ideas by collecting information related to rehearsal environment, social interactions, teaching strategies, conducting, repertoire, assessments of learning, and operational structures.

As information is gathered, it is important to consider community band observations in context of other observations. This guide will encourage preservice music educators to consider what is unique about a community band rehearsal (e.g. how this rehearsal is different from what was observed in a recent high school band rehearsal), and help them place pedagogical and administrative concepts into a framework of music-making that is recreational instead of occupational. Helping preservice music educators, who are perhaps in the most rigorous time of their music studies, create this distinction is vital for understanding and learning from community band observations.

Like every ensemble, it is important to recognize that each community band is different. A community band is a reflection of its surrounding community, members, history, traditions, leadership, and operational parameters. Observers are encouraged to consider these characteristics to better understand all aspects of a community band rehearsal.

<b>COMMUNITY BAND OBSERVATION FORM</b>
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Time & Date	Location	Conductor & Ensemble Name	Rehearsal Length & Frequency	Rehearsals Until Concert

<b>REHEARSAL SETUP/ ENVIRONMENT</b>
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1. Where does rehearsal take place, and how is the rehearsal space setup?
2. How is seating determined? Is seating assigned? Do members sit beside friends?
3. How is the instrumentation of the ensemble (i.e. any unbalance between sections)?
4. Has the conductor communicated information with the musicians prior to rehearsal? If so, what was communicated and how?

<b>INTERACTIONS BETWEEN CONDUCTOR AND MUSICIANS</b>
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1. How does the conductor interact with musicians before/after rehearsal? How do ensemble members interact with one another?
2. Describe the warm-up and tuning processes and how the conductor interacted with musicians during this time.
3. How does the conductor react to errors?
4. How inclusive is the conductor's language (e.g. does the conductor use first-person plural pronouns when requesting changes like "let's try..." or "can we try..." etc.)?
5. Do you generally hear a change in the sound following the conductor's requests?
6. If applicable, why did the conductor depart from the rehearsal schedule?
7. Describe the ratio of the conductor talking vs. the ensemble playing.
8. How does the conductor's feedback and gesture affect rehearsal pacing?
9. How did the points above contribute to the overall atmosphere in the room? Did the rehearsal feel recreational or occupational and why?
10. How do the observations above compare to observations in different settings?

<b>TECHNIQUES AND STRATEGIES USED BY THE CONDUCTOR</b>
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*List any unique techniques and strategies used by the conductor to address the following concepts and consider the following questions:*

**Objective**

- Notes
- Rhythms
- Tempo

**Subjective**

- Balance
- Blend
- Articulation

- Dynamics
- Tone

1. Was the conductor able to make multiple changes by addressing a single concept (e.g. By addressing balance and blend, the ensemble's intonation improved)? If so, describe.
2. Was the conductor able to make any changes through physical gesture alone?
3. Was there a change in physical gesture that reinforced verbal requests for change?
4. Were there consistent issues not addressed? If so, why do you think that was?
5. Did the conductor provide more objective or subjective feedback?

## **REPERTOIRE**

1. How varied is the repertoire performed (e.g. styles, composers, time periods, etc.)?
2. How do members feel about the pieces? Is the music developmentally appropriate?

## **ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENT**

1. How does the conductor assess learning and achievement throughout the rehearsal?
2. Were clear goals established for the rehearsal? Were they met?

## **QUESTIONS TO ASK ENSEMBLE MEMBERS**

1. When did you start playing your instrument? Is it your primary instrument?
2. What do you do outside of participating in this ensemble (jobs, hobbies, etc.)?
3. How long have you been a member of the ensemble? Why do you come back?
4. Can you describe the conductor of the ensemble?
5. How does the ensemble accept new members?
6. What kinds of music do you most like to play?
7. What is your favorite memory with the group?

## **QUESTIONS TO ASK THE CONDUCTOR**

1. Can you describe your background in music education?
2. What is your rehearsal philosophy, and does it change in a community band?
3. How has the ensemble changed over time?
4. What is this ensemble's mission, and how does the ensemble engage with its surrounding community?
5. How is repertoire selected, and is there a programming philosophy?
6. How is that programming philosophy different from other groups you have led?
7. Can you describe the group's leadership structure and operational responsibilities?
8. How do you work with varied levels of ability or experience simultaneously?
9. How do you build a sense of community in the ensemble?
10. What is most rewarding about conducting this ensemble?

## Daniel Johnson – Wingate University

[d.johnson@wingate.edu](mailto:d.johnson@wingate.edu)



Dr. Daniel Johnson serves as Director of Bands and Assistant Professor of Music at Wingate University, where he leads the Wind Ensemble and courses in conducting and music education. He previously taught in the public schools of Virginia and Kentucky and earned degrees in conducting and music education from the University of Michigan, Indiana University, and the University of Kentucky. Johnson studied conducting with Michael Haithcock, Rodney Dorsey, Jason Fettig, Courtney Snyder, and Steve Peterson and tuba with Skip Gray and Dan Perantoni.

Johnson maintains an active schedule as a conductor and clinician. Premieres include works by Ryan Lindveit, Griffin Candey, Alex Blanpied, Karl Ronneburg, and Grey Grant, and he has had recent collaborations with Omar Thomas, Reena Esmail, Andrew Koeppe, Andrew Hosler, Ben Wulfman, and the Cerus and Converge Quartets. He has been invited to present at the CBDNA National Conference and at conferences in the south and midwest regions of the United States.

Johnson's community music experience spans twenty years and includes serving as a conductor in the University of Michigan Alumni, Lexington New Horizons, and Crossroads Brass Bands, on faculty of the Central Music Academy, and membership in the Charlottesville Municipal and Lexington Brass Bands.

## Community Orchestra Observation Overview

Luca Antonucci

As the name suggests, community orchestras are first and foremost the site of communities. Adults and youth choosing to come together to rehearse and perform orchestral music on top of their daily occupation and family responsibilities looks different in every community and in every orchestra. While some orchestras pride themselves on a high level of performance, others may be more oriented towards having fun or specific types of concert programming. As a result, the community ties within each orchestra will vary considerably. Even within the same orchestra, the relationships between members of a section—especially between veteran ensemble members and newcomers, between principal, assistant principal, and section player, and when applicable, between paid ‘ringers’ and unpaid amateur musicians, may look very different from section to section.

It is common in normal rehearsals (i.e. not dress rehearsals) for the conductor and concertmaster to be the only paid positions in the orchestra. The conductor is typically employed by a board of directors formed from members of the orchestra and the orchestra draws most of its financial support from contributions of its members, who vary widely in age, occupation, and musical training. Often community orchestra conductors need to function as teachers and coaches as well as entertainers and sources of musical knowledge, and the personality of an orchestra’s conductor will have an outsize impact on the general tone of the rehearsal. Note how the conductor approaches the rehearsal, balancing positive and negative feedback, and what keeps the orchestra engaged—seriousness of approach, humor, storytelling, efficiency, figurative language, etc.

Orchestras adhere to a variety of traditional seating plans. Strings always sit in the front of the room in a semi-circle, but the first and second violins may be placed next to each other on the left or facing each other with the cellos and violas in between. Behind the strings the woodwinds are the section that follows a universally standard layout, with flutes and oboes in the front row left to right and clarinets and bassoons in a second row left to right. Brass and percussion, as well as harp or piano if they are being used, can be placed in any number of variations; typically the horns will be placed to the conductor’s left in the back and trumpets, trombones, and tuba to the right; however, each section (horns and trumpets/low brass) may be arranged in a straight line or ‘stacked’ in two rows. Percussion—usually divided between a timpanist and percussionists—sits furthest from the conductor and may be placed in the middle of the back of the room or on the sides.

Finally, community orchestras often have a designated personnel manager and a system by which the conductor announces the rehearsal schedule in advance so that players who are not needed for a particular piece will know that they may arrive late or leave early. The extent to which the conductor follows the rehearsal schedule, the length and mood of the rehearsal break, the passing-on of musical or behavioral expectations from veterans to newcomers, the conductor’s rehearsal style and tone, and the acoustics of the room are all important parts of the working of a community orchestra.

## COMMUNITY ORCHESTRA OBSERVATION FORM

Time & Date	Location	Conductor & Ensemble Name	Rehearsal Length & Frequency	Rehearsals Until Concert

### REHEARSAL SETUP/ ENVIRONMENT

1. How is the orchestra set up?
2. up?
3. How many musicians are in the room? How many in each section?
4. How is each section laid out? Are there any spacing or sightline issues?
5. What are the acoustics and lighting like in the room?
6. What about the environment feels conducive or non-conductive to making art?

### INTERACTIONS BETWEEN CONDUCTOR AND MUSICIANS

1. How does the conductor interact with the concertmaster? With section leaders? With the other musicians?
2. What, if any, interaction does the conductor encourage between musicians? Within a section? Between sections?
3. Describe the beginning of rehearsal. What rituals are followed? What types of interactions do you observe between players before the rehearsal?
4. Describe the pacing of the rehearsal. Is there a published rehearsal schedule? How strictly is it followed? How does the conductor balance playing-through with detailed stop-start rehearsing?
5. Describe the atmosphere and interactions between the musicians during the rehearsal. Is there a sense of community? How do they interact within each section and during breaks?
6. Are there consistent redirects or cues given by the conductor to indicate successful or unsuccessful engagement? (These might be phrases or nonverbal signals)
7. How does the conductor maintain the ensemble's engagement over the course of the rehearsal? What is the general tone of the rehearsal? (e.g. serious, fun, focused, intense)

### REPERTOIRE SELECTION

1. List the piece(s), composer(s), and style/time period(s)
2. How are different pieces allotted time in the rehearsal and what factors are taken into account? (instrumentation, style of playing, technical demands, length, etc)

TECHNIQUES AND STRATEGIES USED BY THE CONDUCTOR	
<i>List techniques and strategies used by the conductor to address the following:</i>	
Stylistic	Sound Quality and Color
Technical	Historical/Context of the piece
Ensemble	Community-Building

INSTRUMENT SPECIFIC TECHNIQUES AND STRATEGIES	
<i>What techniques does the conductor use to address issues in the sections:</i>	
Strings	Woodwind
Brass	Percussion

ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENT
1. How did the conductor assess progress? a. What skills or competencies were assessed? i. Individually or groups ii. Formative (in the moment) or Summative (end of rehearsal)

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE MUSICIANS
1. How long have you been a part of the orchestra? 2. Describe the conductor. What do you like or dislike about their style? How, if at all, does the conductor promote your understanding of the music beyond just 'the notes'? 3. What keeps you in this orchestra?

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE CONDUCTOR
1. Can you describe your approach to rehearsing? Do you follow a particular philosophy? 2. What objectives did you have for this rehearsal? Were they achieved? If not, why not? 3. How do you plan what to work on over the course of a concert cycle? 4. What, if any, are long-term areas of growth for the orchestra and what strategies have you found effective in addressing them?

## Luca Antonucci – University of Michigan

[lucaantonuccimusic@gmail.com](mailto:lucaantonuccimusic@gmail.com)



Luca Antonucci is a conductor and educator and a graduate of the University of Michigan, where he earned a DMA in Conducting. He served as Music Director for a variety of collegiate, community, and professional ensembles, with a repertoire ranging from new music for brass to Verdi opera to Renaissance choral music from Latin America. Currently the founding Music Director of Boston Summer Opera, Luca is a native of Watertown, MA. He holds degrees from Amherst College and The Hartt School, and is the recipient of a number of academic awards including a Fulbright Fellowship in Vienna, where he conducted research and published work on Arnold Schönberg in the Journal of the Arnold Schönberg Center.