

Abstract

The Clarinet Learning Collaborative (CLC) is an *action research* project employing various cooperative strategies, such as small group practice circles, personalized syllabi, and peer tutoring, to engage students of varying race, socioeconomic status, religious affiliation and instrumental ability in a truly integrated learning experience.

Review of Literature

Simply put, action research is the study of a social situation with a view of improving the quality of action within it. The term was coined in 1944 by Kurt Lewin, then a professor at MIT. Current literature suggests that collaborative teaching in small groups significantly improves student learning. In approaching this project as action research (action research, or practice-based research, as it is sometimes called), is a form of applied research that helps change practices in teaching and learning where the teacher is actually the researcher. We wish to test and implement findings in our literature review in a diverse, collaborative teaching environment. This is particularly significant as the private, "one-on-one" music lesson has historically been the model of delivery for instrumental music learning.

"...the experimental group scored significantly higher on the listening section of the final examination than did the control group, indicating that the use of cooperative (collaborative) learning increased the experimental group's listening skills." (The Journal of Research in Music Education, Vol. 54, No. 1, pp. 57-71, "The Effect of Cooperative Listening Exercises on the Critical Listening Skills of College Music Appreciation Students.")

Rarely, if ever, does the literature address group music enterprise in practice circles with individually developed syllabi for working on individual pieces. In this format, the class is organized similarly to an art studio or "round robin" chess match. It is analogous to the chess master or teacher playing simultaneous matches at once with students. The students benefit from exposure to a multiplicity of problems and potential solutions and occasionally be assigned the "chess master" role (immediate use of learning).

Christina Goode gives us a big clue for devising ways of providing music study which includes collaborative and individual lessons in a single event. "In striving to reach a class of students with varied or preferred learning styles and where each student possesses multiple intelligences the idea is not to teach each student exclusively according to his or her preference but rather to strive for a balance (private, small group, chamber group) of instructional methods." (Engaged Learning: Pathways to Success, Study Group on Conditions of Excellence in Higher Education, National Institute of Education, Washington, D.C., 1984.)

Chungwon Kim states, "We must not neglect the importance of helping students develop the positive attitudes and skills needed for collaboration, leadership, and peer acceptance. It all can help reduce prejudices and promote each student's sense of personal value." (The American Music Teacher, August-September, 2004: Nurturing Students Through Group Lessons.)

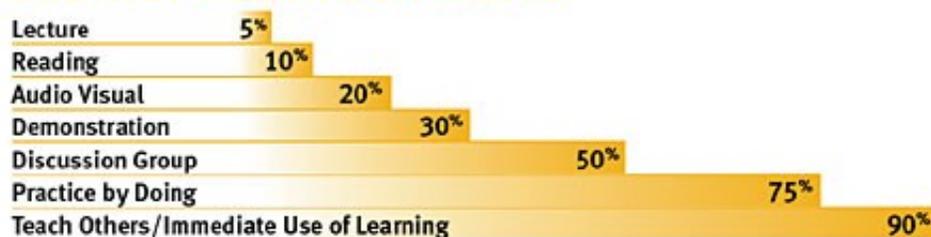
Policy Practice Issue

The clarinet studio at the University of Memphis values both intellectual and emotional intelligence. As a learning center for young clarinetists in music, we promote student growth: both qualitative and quantitative, discrete and concrete, intellectual and emotional, within the discipline of music. Our definition of diversity is as follows: diversity means inclusion. Both majority and minority individuals, in a democratic society, are hobbled by the historical enslavement and/or the segregation of a racial or cultural minority. Given that definition, our intent is to sharpen the delivery of clarinet instruction at the University of Memphis and refine this commitment to technical mastery, critical inquiry, dialogue journaling, and social enterprise. Additionally, we will help students better manage stress and conflict. We will also support increased musical artistry in recitals, ensemble performance, research methodology, and audition effectiveness. The key for us, as we move forward, is captured in the following statement: "Successful collaboration in the arts occurs when collaborators provide different ingredients in the creative mix, but share goals when to lead and when to follow. Perhaps musicians and other artists can demonstrate to the rest of the world how collaboration, rather than isolation, egotistical isolation, and confrontation might lead to solutions to social problems." (Charles Ruggierro, Professor of Composition, Michigan State University.)

Methodology

James Gholson, DMA, teaches twelve applied students in clarinet each semester. They include black and white Americans, and potentially, Christians, Jews, and Muslims from South Africa. Our premise is that a fluid compromise between group collaboration and individual preparation will make for a more well-balanced student. In order to develop this program and generate increased enthusiasm for it, we plan to increase our collaborative work in small groups, increase inclusion of Internet-based teaching strategies, and further encourage students to collaborate with faculty and peers. We are especially anxious to create a study environment which promotes increased social interaction among students in a supervised environment. For example, this chart cites the following average retention of learning rates for a variety of pedagogical strategies:

Learner Retention Rates



(The American Music Teacher, August-September, 2004: Nurturing Students Through Group Lessons.)

Apart from the musical benefits of the group environment, the CLC provides a platform to exercise independence of preparation, to promote social interaction, develop positive attitudes, polish problem-solving abilities, and enhance abilities to handle stress, mediate conflict, compete with confidence, and evaluate growth through critical inquiry.

This proposal revolves around small-group, collaborative methodology. We desire to build a more vibrant intellectual climate and an enriched emotional culture within the clarinet community. As

a commuter university in an area with large doses of illiteracy, we are firmly committed to demonstrating to students the valuable relationships between their individual ethnic cultures and the classical arts; indeed, one which values individuals, regardless of educational or religious background; one which values diversity through collaborative enterprise; one which explores listening using solfege and reading software; one which excites students about learning, whether or not they work, and one which is inclusive, whether or not they live on or off campus.

Therefore, the CLC seeks to revise the balances between the private lesson, the large ensemble, the small ensemble and the music master class. It aims to function with the small group collaborative at its center, stress collaboration in syllabus development, emphasize measurements in solfege software support, and stress collaborative styles in teaching. Student performances will be posted on Internet II.

We will accomplish this through the individuated and personalized syllabus (a learning contract for each student) and small groups (four to five students). Student performances, selected collaborations, and master classes will be shared internationally via support from Internet II. We are committed to testing our theses in similar locales and plan to share these processes with student clarinetists in South Africa during the summer of 2008. The week long class in South Africa will be designed to capture additional action research data, to support the development of instrumental music education in Capetown, South Africa, and to develop recruitment avenues to support clarinet studio growth at UMemphis.

Support from TBR will facilitate change in the curriculum of clarinet students, both at the University of Memphis and selected students in Capetown, South Africa. (We have already established contacts in Capetown due to travel to that country in the summer of 2006 with the University of Memphis Woodwind Quintet.) The proposed visit will include the following activities;

1. Students will learn from one another based on individually developed assignments.
2. Students will shift from competition to collaboration, depending upon strengths and weaknesses.
3. Students will sing and play chorales, post performances on the Internet, study and perform excerpts, etudes, and solos.
4. Students will learn stress management techniques and work in extended small group lessons in addition to collaboration on syllabi and research projects. Students will also lead master classes.
5. Students will learn in parallel, which eliminates faculty repetitions, and receive comments from student colleagues to facilitate lateral learning (learning from students as well as the teacher).
6. Students will practice individual assignments and employ key transposition in groups to enhance concentration.
7. Students will continue to design individual learning contracts structured as individual syllabi.

Through the course of enabling student engagement in this action research project, majority and minority students, in addition to internationals, will gain empowerment and personal enrichment in their enterprise as young musicians.

Evaluation

The CLC meets the proposal guidelines of TBR in the following ways:

1. It stimulates research on issues related to diversity using collaboration as an important teaching

methodology in small groups.

2. It provides anecdotal and selected quantitative data on collaborative methodology in culturally diverse teaching at the University of Memphis. Developmental data will be maintained through term-end juries, mid-term CDs, and 360 degree evaluations by small group members. The project will be considered successful if it produces noticeable hikes in semester-end student evaluations of teaching.

3. It addresses concerns of racial inequities (regarding student exposure and performance) within the arts environment of higher education. The clarinet studio is supported by two websites, <http://www.unitus.org> and <http://music.memphis.edu>. The free software allied with this project is OpenOffice and GNU Solfege, <http://www.solfege.org>; (music ear training software).

Summary

It is our intent to help students better manage stress, conflict, and support increased musical artistry in recitals, ensemble performance, research methodology, and audition effectiveness. This project promotes student learning from one another (lateral enterprise) especially for those students who are intimidated by masterful performance of a teacher. It is particularly mindful of urban, commuter students who feel distanced from the academic environment and enjoy working collaboratively, whether in urban or academic gangs.

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

Group Session Questionnaire

Directions: Answer the following questions about what your group session and what you contributed to the group project. The more information you honestly provide the more points you will receive.

1. List names of people who were in your group session? Evaluate each member on effort, cooperativeness, teaching acumen, and participation. Explain reasons for lower grade (other) on back.

_____	10	9	8	7	6	(other)
_____	10	9	8	7	6	(other)
_____	10	9	8	7	6	(other)
_____	10	9	8	7	6	(other)
_____	10	9	8	7	6	(other)

2. Describe what you worked on (individually or as a group). What was the main target? Speed?, Dynamics?, Rhythm? Tone? What did you learn?
3. Describe what you did to prepare for today. Did you practice in a practice circle? Individually? How long each day? ____Hrs. (or what ever was required)? Did you outline downbeats and upbeats? ? Did you tune up? Did you work on your reed? Did you work on ear-training? What were your scores? ____
4. Describe what you contributed to class today? Did you write out questions *before class*? Work on your etude? Scales? Excerpts? Solo? Are you ready for a performance at tempo? Did you record the piece? What is your responsibility for recording the work? Are you at pace with your syllabus?
5. What is your judgment of the finished project you finished in this session? Individually? As a Group? ? Was your session effective? What are the good points about it? What would you improve or change if you had time? Complete answers on back.

Evaluation (for your self and/or for the person you are assisting)

6....QUALITY of SOUND (quality, intonation , blend, balance)

[30]

7....TECHNIQUE (rhythm, precisions, articulation, facility)

[30]

8....MUSICALITY (interpretation, style, tempo, hand position)

[30]

9....OTHER FACTORS (drama, focus, overall presentation)

[10]

State a concise **STRATEGY** for **IMPROVEMENT** for: _____

**" GREED FOR THE FRUIT MISSES THE
FLOWER " TAGORE**

Clarinet syllabus

Equipment evaluation. Review and study of diaphragmatic breathing, finger and hand position.

VIDEO SUPPORT

- * **PROJECT SOLO, part 1.....**Klose 68 mechanism studies
- * **HOW TO MAKE ALL REGION A BREEZE.....**The chromatic scale
- * **TIME FOR SCALES.....**12 major scales and fingerings

* **UNITUS.....**<http://www.unitus.org>

SYLLABUS ROADMAP (80%)

Details of the roadmap should be drawn from the menu of literature on the lower portion of the syllabus.

95% accuracy @ suggested tempo marking	How Am I doing? Discuss strengths & weaknesses (one paragraph) Discuss Strategic plan for improvement (one paragraph) Discuss hours practiced and detail improvement tactics PDF for instructor evaluation during CURRENT semester (week 5)
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Grade =1 unit of	Drills, scales, arpeggios	Band/orchestra excerpts	Performance Major (one unit =2pages) Etudes	Solos
A+ = 10 units				

of				
A = 9 units of				
A- = 8 units of				
B+ = 7 units of				
B = 6 units of				
B- = 5 units of				
C+ = 4 units of				
C = 3 units of				
C- = 2 units of				
D = 1 unit of				