

Improving Standards Implementation in Instrumental Music Education

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Teaching Everybody Everything

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By NAFME Member Alden H. Snell II

One of the challenges instrumental music educators face is helping students understand their individual part in context of the entire ensemble. While you, the teacher, have access to all parts via the full score, our students have access to only one line of music notation. To help students overcome this challenge in my own teaching, I developed a system for teaching everybody everything. In this blog post, I offer suggestions for teaching your entire ensemble important musical content in the repertoire you are teaching.

Curricular and Musical Context

The activities I suggest are grounded in the artistic processes of Creating, Performing, Responding, and Connecting. While my focus in this post is primarily on performing repertoire, engaging students in these activities can serve as readiness for improvising and composing music.

Fundamental to music teaching and learning is inviting students to regularly listen, sing or play instruments, read, and write music. While engaging in these musical vocabularies, students can develop a sense of tonality, meter, and style while learning the executive skills they need to accurately perform repertoire (e.g., fingerings, posture, hand position).

Selecting Repertoire

Select several pieces you plan on teaching. When studying and analyzing the scores, pay attention to the following musical content:

- Tonality
- Meter
- Expression
- Executive skills
- Background and historical information
- Form
- Style
- Instrumentation
- Harmonic structure
- Potential problem areas

As you review your repertoire, think about how you might connect student learning across all repertoire you are teaching. Learning goals should be broader than the repertoire. Focus on musical content: focus on goals related to tonality, meter, and expression. Then, write objectives specific to the repertoire. As an example, consider the folk song “Scarborough Fair.” A learning goal could be: “Students will be able to perform in Dorian tonality.” An objective could be: “Students will accurately perform ‘Scarborough Fair’ by ear.”

Teaching Everybody Everything

Having selected repertoire and identified learning goals and objectives, you are ready to teach everybody everything. Start with the following guiding questions when preparing lesson plans:

- Who has the melody?
- Who has the bass line?
- Who has the rhythmic motor?
- Who has a harmony or accompanying part?

Regularly ask and answer these questions in your rehearsals, and help your students think like a composer (Shewan, 2009). Teach everybody the main melody or melodies. This is an opportunity to invite students to play by ear. If you would prefer to use notation, write the melody in concert pitch using notation software and then transpose

to your ensemble's instrumentation. Add the bass line both by itself and in duet with the melody. For the rhythmic motor, think about horn and snare drum parts: All students should be able to perform off beats! For harmony parts, look at second and third clarinet or trumpet parts. Teaching everybody these harmony parts will improve your students' musicianship as they learn to perform common practice voice leading and harmonies in context of repertoire.

Be intentional about connecting your warm ups to the repertoire you are rehearsing that day. Consider teaching everyone the snare drum rhythm and various similar rhythms. If the snare part includes one eighth and two-sixteenths patterns, teach everybody the various permutations of eighths and sixteenths. Remember to teach the part and all possible variants so that your students understand "eighth-sixteenth combinations" in addition to the rhythms found the repertoire. Use a SmartBoard to project the rhythms, or provide students with worksheets they can keep in their folder. This allows you to refer back to the "eighth-sixteenth" rhythm patterns when teaching future repertoire. To merge tonal and stylistic considerations, teach chorales. Ask everyone to play each of the four parts, not just one. Connect awareness of melody, bass line, and inner harmony to the repertoire you are teaching.

(Listen, Sing/Play, Read, Write)

Do not forget to develop all four vocabularies. Playing recordings of repertoire students are learning can enhance the listening vocabulary. Teach students to perform main melodies in multiple tonalities and multiple keys by ear. Create lead sheets featuring main melodies so all students are reading the main melodies. Have students improvise over the chord changes. Ask each student to write at least one warm-up over the course of the year and allow the student to teach it to the ensemble.

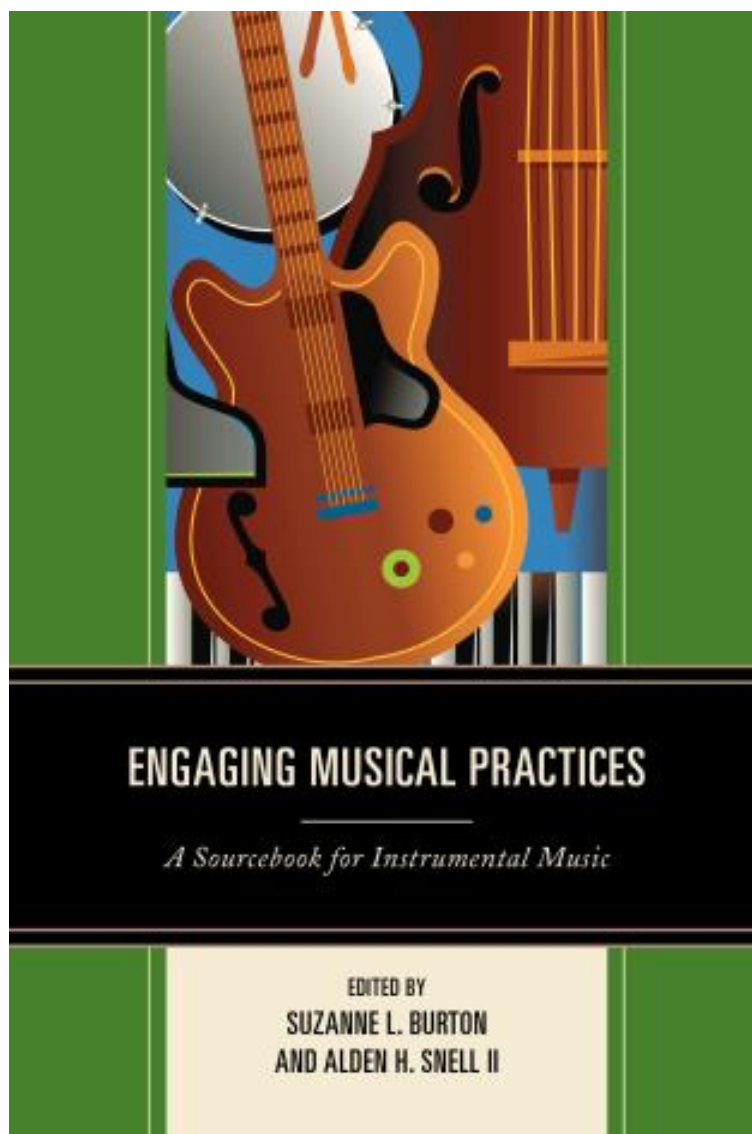
Experiment with these ideas as you study repertoire for your next concert cycle. As you prepare for several concert cycles, you will develop a collection of repertoire you can rotate through while continuing to dig deeply into new repertoire. As your students begin to think like composers, invite them to compose and arrange repertoire inspired by the music they are learning to perform. The artistic processes of creating, performing, responding, and connecting will begin to overlap, helping your students perform their individual parts with increasing musical understanding and independence.

References

Many of the ideas presented in this blog post are adapted from “Teaching Everybody Everything” in the book *Engaging Musical Practices: A Sourcebook for Instrumental Music*, edited by Suzanne L. Burton and Alden H. Snell, II, Copyright © 2015. Used with permission of Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. [Visit this page](#) for more information.

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Dr. Snell presented his session "Teaching Everybody Everything" at the 2016 NAfME National Conference.