

Mentoring Young Composers
Music-COMP
(formerly Vermont MIDI Project)
Elementary Music Methods
Fall 2014



1. Login to Online Mentoring using your firstinitiallastname (eg. slight) and PW – fall2014. (Login button for mentoring is located in the upper right hand corner.) Edit Profile. Fill in the Description (XXXX) with information about you and your musical interests. Add your hometown in that box.
2. In class and continue outside of class –
 - a. Overview of the mentoring process within Music-COMP.
 - b. Navigate around the mentoring site. Full Description, Discussion, Files.
 - c. Review mentoring guidelines.
 - d. As a class, review the following completed mentoring thread – *Flying* by Owen Harris, grade 5 for woodwind quartet.
 - e. On Public Site read:
 - f. Read on Public Site
 - i. About>Composers & Mentors
 - ii. Student Work>all

Other Music-COMP resources-

Live performance recordings are available at musiccomp.wordpress.com
Opus 24 and 26 are for strings and woodwinds. Opus 23 and 25 include available instruments among brass, percussion, piano, or voice.

Student Composer Showcase features one Music-COMP student each month on Vermont Public Radio Classical. In addition to air time, each SCS can be heard in entirety at:

<http://digital.vpr.net/term/student-composer-showcase>

Mentoring guidelines below and more published in *Composing our Future: Preparing Music Educators to Teach Composition* edited by Michele Kaschub and Janice P. Smith, Oxford University Press, 2013. Chapter 12: The Vermont MIDI Project: Fostering Mentoring in Multiple Environments by Sandi MacLeod.

MENTORING IS

A. Thinking like a Detective: What can I tell about the skill level of the student composer? What is their intention or goal for this composition? Ask questions.



B. Thinking like a Teacher: How can I help the student achieve their goal? How can I make them feel successful? How much information can I give them at one time? How specific should I be with my comments?



C. Prepare Comments like a Short Order Cook:

- Respond to students with a scrumptious sandwich. Begin with a comment or two supporting the student's efforts. Point out something that worked well. This gets student attention and makes them feel supported.
- Provide a rich filling to the sandwich with substantive and clear comments. Be specific. Don't overstuff or the sandwich will be hard to swallow.
- Add the top layer of bread for the sandwich with a word of encouragement to the student and their work.



D. Think like a Composer: Use your own skills and knowledge about music to think like a composer. What direction (s) might this music take? What changes might make it stronger? Always point out possibilities, not directives. What did the student ask or suggest they might like help with? (Back to being a detective)

Additional Protocols from Music-COMP Mentoring

1. Always use respectful language. Humor is acceptable, sarcasm is not. Words like "might" or "could" and phrases such as "Have you considered ..." provide students with the opportunity to explore possibilities.
2. Use language for suggestions and an occasional score demonstration when text is too cumbersome. Do not take a student score and "fix" it. YouTube listening links are great as well.
3. Provide timely responses.
4. "Let go" of the piece when students indicate they are finished.
5. Be sincere. Students see through exaggerated praise.

