CHOOSING A CURRICULUM SERIES FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL GENERAL MUSIC

By
BRENDA ZELT

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:
DR. TIMOTHY S. BROPHY, CHAIR
PROFESSOR RONALD BURRICHTER, MEMBER

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To my mother
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An understanding heart is everything in a teacher, and cannot be esteemed highly enough. One looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers, but with gratitude to those who touched our human feeling. The curriculum is so much necessary raw material, but warmth is the vital element for the growing plant and for the soul of the child. –Carl Jung (1875-1961)

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CHOOSING A CURRICULUM SERIES FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL GENERAL MUSIC

By

Brenda Zelt

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Chair: Timothy S. Brophy
Major: Music Education

Given the enigmatic nature of the middle school general music course, it is common for teachers to adopt a curriculum series. These curriculum series typically contain materials and lessons designed to provide a comprehensive music education both during and between grade levels. It is important for a teacher to select the series best suited to their needs and the needs of their students. A review of the literature based on categories determined by an analysis of terms common to music education books, the MENC: The National Association for Music Education website, and the 2011 Florida Music Educators Association conference guided the development of a set of criteria that teachers can use to evaluate a curriculum series. The final list includes categories from both the literature review and an examination of the marketing materials of two curriculum series. The criteria are philosophical and theoretical foundations, scope, sequence, student engagement, assessment, multiculturalism, curriculum integration, flexibility, ease of use, lesson enhancements, and budget. By evaluating a curriculum series with respect to these criteria, a teacher will be able to select the ideal series for their situation.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

For students who have no desire to be in a performance ensemble in secondary school or when high school music electives are not available, the last time they may receive formal music education is in the middle school general music or music appreciation class (Regelski, 2004; Davis, 2011). This places a great responsibility on the teacher to expose these students to as much as possible within a limited span of time. The teacher is responsible for deciding what to teach and how to teach it unless the administration has created or adopted a music curriculum. The responsibility of selecting which curriculum series to adopt may fall upon the teacher. Even if a teacher prefers to create their own curriculum, many classrooms contain general music textbooks as an additional resource. With so many choices available, how does the teacher decide what materials to use?

Significance of the Problem

It is vital that the teacher recommend the curriculum which will best suit the needs of the students and which will help the teacher instill students with a comprehensive understanding of music and leave them with an appreciation of music beyond consumerism. Students who had a meaningful experience in their music classes may grow up to be parents and voters who can have a lifetime of adult musical enjoyment (Davis, 2011). Instruction at this point “needs to promote the musical independence students need to make meaningful musical choices that enable them to be more effectively involved with music throughout life than just as listeners of the latest ‘pop’ music” (Regelski, 2004, p. x).
Purpose of the Study

To that end, the purpose of this project was to develop a guide based upon a review of the literature and an analysis of existing curriculum series that music educators can use when selecting a general music curriculum series. The following research questions guided this study:

- What aspects of general music education appear consistently in the literature?
- What aspects of music education do the developers of music curriculum series deem the most important?
- What are the criteria teachers should evaluate when selecting a curriculum series?

Definition of Terms

*Curriculum series*: a program with a clear scope and sequence designed to help educators deliver a comprehensive education in a certain area, typically drawing the skills and concepts from a set of standards, and usually including student textbooks, a teacher edition with lesson plans, and supplementary materials. A curriculum series is also known as a music textbook series or a basal series.

Delimitations

Curriculum series analysis was limited by availability of and access to current editions and focused only on those designed for general music or music appreciation, grades 6-8. Likewise, the literature review of issues and trends in general music education dealt mainly with grades 6-8.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The review of related literature begins with an examination of philosophical views of music education as pertaining to curriculum development and emphasis. A summary of theoretical backgrounds guiding content selection in the general music class follows. This section concludes with an outline of issues and trends affecting decision-making and curriculum content in the music class.

Philosophical Perspectives

Four major philosophies have influenced education systems in the United States throughout the years: idealism, realism, pragmatism, and existentialism (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009). Idealism promotes an approach to education focusing on knowledge and concepts. Realism, or empiricism, depends on observation with a strong emphasis on reason. A curriculum based on realism would provide the opportunity for the “acquisition of specific information and skills” (Abeles, Hoffer, & Klotman, 1995, p. 54) necessary in both society and the specific content area. Pragmatists consider the acquisition of knowledge a constantly shifting process and believe a curriculum should include many opportunities for critical thinking. The existentialist view places emphasis on the student’s freedom to choose the material studied.

Scheib (2006) takes a slightly different approach to philosophies of education and curriculum. He posits that the four major philosophical movements of curricular thought are humanism, developmentalism, social efficiency, and social meliorism. Humanists believe that the curriculum should center on traditional subject matter from Western culture. Developmentalists place emphasis on the developmental stages of
children and argue for a child-centered curriculum reflecting the student’s interests and abilities. The social efficiency movement advocates a streamlined curriculum preparing the student to become a functioning member of society. This ‘factory model’ includes “standardized curriculum, greater accountability measures, tracking for vocational careers, and judgments of curricular success based on efficiency criteria” (Scheib, 2006, p. 6). Social meliorists believe that society can improve through education and seek a curriculum focused on current societal issues.

McCarthy and Goble (2002) argue that the philosophical basis for music education has shifted through several schools of thought: functional, aesthetic, sociological, cognitive, and praxial. Lowell Mason (1792-1872), “the father of music education”, became the first public school music teacher of the United States in 1838. Mason upheld a functional philosophy of music education and advocated the inclusion of music based on its potential intellectual, moral, and physical benefits to participants.

The music education as aesthetic education movement (MEAE), prepares “students to perceive and respond appropriately to music works as forms of art (especially great works or “masterpieces”) in order to ‘educate their feelings’ and to evoke in them ‘aesthetic experience’” (McCarthy & Goble, 2002, p. 21). A curriculum adhering to an aesthetic philosophy emphasizes the listening experience. Proponents have drawn a connection between aesthetic sensitivity and scholastic achievement. Critics of aesthetic philosophy argue a lack of cultural accommodation while positive effects of the MEAE movement include the validation of music as a curricular subject and the development of a united conceptual basis (McCarthy & Goble, 2002).
The prevailing preference for an aesthetic philosophy of music education gave way near the end of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century to the emergence of a praxial philosophy. Regelski (2004) explains the difference between the aesthetic and praxial philosophies. He states, “In comparison to the contemplation of hypothesized aesthetic absolutes said to be ‘in’ musical ‘works’ that are timeless, praxial theory values music as a praxis, a ‘doing’ that serves an infinite variety of personal and social uses” (p. 289). The praxial philosophy leaves room for the appreciation of multicultural music and music activity. A curriculum based on the praxial philosophy places importance on musicianship as “the key to achieving the values, aims, and goals of music education” (Elliott, 1995, p. 259) while seeking to “engage learners in musical actions, transactions, and interactions that closely parallel real music cultures” (Elliott, 1995, p. 266).

Koopman (1998) addresses the debate between MEAE and the praxial approach and concludes, “While praxial views can increase our understanding of the many dimensions relevant to musical activities, aesthetic views can enhance our insight into the special kind of experience that underlies all musical activities” (p. 16). Perhaps these differing philosophies both have their place in music education and are not mutually exclusive.

**Theoretical Background**

Middle school students are in a stage of development known as transescence: the transition between late-childhood and early-adolescence. At this stage, students are more likely to question adult authority and misbehave due to increasing social awareness. Students are slowly progressing from the concrete operational stage to the formal operational stage meaning that most will find abstract thinking difficult.
Additionally, this age group is generally concerned with developing a sense of identity and a feeling of belonging. Student cognitive development requires concrete musical actions, reflective abstraction, and acting adaptively to construct functional concepts to use later. Furthermore, since the ability to think abstractly is still developing, students will perform better when the teacher presents skills and concepts in a real-life context. (Regelski, 2004)

In *Teaching Music in Secondary Schools* (2001), Charles Hoffer outlines elements he believes necessary to successful and effective teaching. Considering these elements when selecting a curriculum will alleviate some of the issues plaguing middle school general music teachers. Early teenagers will respond more positively to *concrete content* such as vocal or instrumental works about real people, with easy to follow text, or with a clearly defined meaning. Likewise, the ability to *achieve results quickly* will keep an impatient age group motivated.

Choosing material that *relates to students* will also keep motivation levels high. An instructor can take steps to help students see the relevance of music to their lives while still providing a traditional music education. It is not necessary, nor useful, to base an entire curriculum around popular music; however, popular music is a means to engage students. Another element outlined in the chapter is *active learning* through performing, creating, games, contests, etc. *Appealing to student maturity* is another means to success—treating the students like adults may result in the students acting like adults. Lastly, Hoffer (2001) advocates a curriculum that *contains variety*. An instructor will have a chance to find success with a greater number of students when they maintain a high-level of interest.
This still leaves the question of subject matter. Davis (2011) succinctly describes the general music class as an “odd duck”. She calls it a hybrid of a traditional ensemble and a music history course. She asks, “Is it an accelerated version of the elementary music program? Or is it a decelerated version of the college music appreciation course? What exactly should take place in the middle school general music class, and for whom is the class intended?” (Davis, 2011, p. 17). Davis advocates ‘teaching for transfer’—relating school music activities directly to adult music making—by including active, hands-on learning experiences; in-depth exploration of active listening; and opportunities for social connection. Most music educators advocate including elements of creating, performing, and listening along with the theoretical elements of notation, history, and style (Boardman, 2001; Hoffer, 2001).

Different curriculum models place greater emphasis on certain skills or concepts. Conway (2002) outlines several curriculum models in her article from the *Music Educators Journal*. A teacher can determine the model, or combinations of models, best suited to their needs and select a curriculum accordingly. The four models are objectives-based, literature-based, skills-based, and knowledge-based. An *objectives-based* curriculum is a "four-phase process that involves (1) developing objectives, (2) sequencing those objectives (often referred to as scope and sequence), (3) designing activities to meet the objectives (lesson plans), and (4) designing evaluation tools to assure that learning takes place" (Conway, 2002, p. 56). A curriculum following this approach will have a clearly outlined scope and sequence with assessment opportunities after the majority of lessons and/or units.
The next model is a literature-based curriculum. In this model, the curriculum and instruction revolve around particular musical literature. The author notes, "...this type of curriculum works very well for performance-based courses" (Conway, 2002, p. 56) meaning that it is poorly suited to a general music class. A skills-based curriculum stresses musical behaviors and concepts such as singing, playing, moving, tonality, and meter. These objectives do not include affective elements such as student attitudes or preferences. A knowledge-based curriculum contrasts with a skills-based curriculum by emphasizing cognitive elements such as vocabulary, music theory, and music history.

Although the question of content has yet to be resolved, there have been attempts to find an answer. In 1994, the Music Educators National Conference published a set of nine voluntary National Standards for preK-12 music instruction (Lehman, 2008). Development on the standards began in 1992 (The National Standards for Arts Education). The standards consist of nine general abilities along with a listing of more specific achievements divided by grade level. Appendix A lists the National Standards for Music.

The standards roughly divide into three artistic processes: creating, performing, and describing (Wells, 1997; Boardman, 2001). However, since the National Standards are broad, most states have developed their own, more specific, standards. For example, Florida has the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS) in Music. Appendix B contains an alignment of the National Standards and the NGSSS for grades 6-8. These standards, both state and national, play a strong role in determining the overall scope of a music curriculum.
Issues and Trends in Music Education

Price and Orman (1999) conducted a content analysis of national conferences held by MENC: The National Association for Music Education from 1984 through 1998. The content of national conferences can serve as an “indicator of the interests, focus, direction, and concerns of a professional organization” (p. 26). This type of analysis also directs attention toward current trends. The researchers found that sessions fall into the categories of business meetings, concerts, educational sessions, general sessions, key focus sessions, and receptions. Orman and Price then broke down the sessions within each category by subject area. The subject areas included general music, performance, administration, teacher education, collegiate, MENC, research, technology, industry, exceptionalities, multicultural, and advocacy. The researchers specifically noted a rise in sessions on multicultural issues and a decrease in sessions on exceptionalities. Technology, exceptionalities, and multiculturalism must be addressed in a general music curriculum.

Price and Orman (2001) expanded upon their original research by analyzing the content of the MENC 2000 National Biennial In-Service Conference and relating the results to previously identified trends. The researchers noted a “continuing low representation and decline of sessions related to inclusion” (p. 231), an increase in technology-oriented sessions, and sessions on multiculturalism stayed about the same. Price and Orman (2007) expanded yet again upon their 1999 and 2001 research with an analysis of the content of four national music organizations’ conferences: American Choral Directors Association (ACDA), MENC: The National Association for Music Education, Midwest Clinic, and American Orff-Schulwerk Association. The researchers
found that the ACDA conference and Midwest clinic did not offer any sessions on teaching exceptional students, while less than one percent of the sessions at the MENC and Orff-Schulwerk conferences were on teaching exceptional students. Sessions on technology were represented mostly by MENC at 5.8 percent, and sessions on multiculturalism were represented at all conferences but Midwest with the Orff-Schulwerk conference offering the most at 17%.

**Multiculturalism**

American music education has historically emphasized Western art music over music with different tonal structures. However, beginning in the 1960s, multicultural music began to find a place in classrooms. The *Music Educators Journal* ran its first special issue on multicultural music in 1971 and then again in 1972, 1983, and 1992. (Volk, 1993)

Campbell (1992) examined research studies on multicultural music education to determine the most prevalent issues. She found the issues encompassed the “development of curricular lessons, units, and teachers’ sourcebooks for teaching the music of a specific ethnic group” (p. 26) as well as studies seeking to define the movement, analyze pedagogical content, and challenge “the authenticity of music available in music textbook series” (p. 27).

A teacher choosing a textbook would most likely be concerned with the integrity of the world music content. Abril (2006) presents a framework for determining the validity and appropriateness of multicultural materials within three domains: cultural validity, bias, and practicality. Teachers can find increased confidence in the cultural validity of their materials by looking for publishers with a good reputation, selecting a
performer/composer who understands the represented culture, incorporating activities related to the music, and checking for available performance details (if applicable) to create an authentic rendition. According to Abril (2006), the lyrics of a song can reflect bias along with portraying musical stereotypes. Practical issues of teaching multicultural music include instrumentation and voicing, community sensibilities, and the alignment of materials with curricular goals. Most current curriculum series include multicultural materials. It is then up to the teacher to determine if they are appropriate.

**Inclusion- teaching exceptional students**

Recent legislation calls for greater inclusion of students with special needs into general classrooms. The most recent legislative act is the amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1997. These amendments mandate that “eligible children with disabilities have special education and related services designed to address their unique educational needs made available to them” (Colwell, 2002, p. 9).

There are six guiding principles providing structure for special education under the IDEA law. Three principles—students are entitled to free appropriate public education, the development of an individual education plan (IEP), and students should learn in the least restrictive environment possible—have the most impact on music educators (Colwell, 2002). MENC published a position statement on their website for inclusivity in music education. It reads:

> By law and by custom, those involved in the delivery of education in our nation strive to bring education to the entire populace. Excluding some Americans from music education denies them access to one of the core academic subjects, music, as an essential path toward meeting their educational needs, breaking social and economic barriers, and accommodating diverse learning and teaching. Music education must
involve and serve individuals from all demographic strata in our society.
(Inclusivity in Music Education Position Statement, 2003)

In her article from the *Music Educators Journal*, Mary Adamer (2001) lists areas
for adaptations that will allow students with special needs a greater chance for success
in the music class.

- **Participation**: adapt the extent of student involvement to suit their abilities, being
sure that the experience is meaningful and the student is not singled out

- **Difficulty level**: adapt the required skill level through multi-layered activities

- **Level of support**: provide the student with adequate assistance to be successful
while still allowing for independence

- **Input**: adapt instruction to suit different learning styles such as increasing visual aids
or incorporating more hands-on lessons

- **Output**: vary the types of responses required

- **Alternative goals**: adapt outcome expectations while still doing the same musical
tasks

- **Alternative materials**: adapt instruments or classroom setup to fit potential physical
limitations

Likewise, VanWeelden (2011) identifies specific educational supports that may allow all
students an increased chance for success: written words, icons; pictures representing
written words, color coding; using color to group like objects, other visual aids, echoing;
the student repeats words after the teacher, peer mentoring, and assistive and
supportive technology; adaptive devices to help students be successful.

**Technology**

The use of technology in the classroom has grown tremendously in the past few
years. The most recent Florida Music Educators Conference in January 2011 had 24
sessions pertaining to technology—approximately 12 percent of the total sessions.
Many of these sessions centered on composition in the classroom. Many classrooms now have computer programs such as GarageBand that allow students to take advantage of technology in the learning environment. Other sessions examined the place of digital media such as podcasts or apps—applications for electronic devices. (Florida Music Education, 2011) The Next Generation Sunshine State Standards reflect this trend and include a category titled “innovation, technology, and the future” (Florida Department of Education).

Hal Peterson (2006) discusses technology tips and tricks for music educators in an article from *General Music Today*. The tips are: (1) be involved, (2) use music software, (3) use administrative software, (4) use graphics software, (5) use the hardware, (6) use the peripherals, and (7) make music instruction part of your school’s drop-in labs. The tricks are: (1) purchase multiplatform software, (2) perform maintenance on the equipment, (3) work out potential problems in advance, (4) utilize the school’s networking system, and (5) if the opportunity arises, plan appropriately for the technology lab set-up. Peterson also recommends having students use the internet for research, use PowerPoint to create presentations, use notation software, and use digital audio software.

Many published curriculum series offer periodically updated online resources to help teachers stay current. Thompson (1999) identifies several uses for the internet including as an electronic reference library, a tool for individual practice and drill, and as a learning center in the classroom.
Curriculum integration

Another topic well represented in the literature is the growing trend towards curriculum integration. Most literature on this topic focuses on integrating music into outside subjects through an interdisciplinary curriculum. While a music textbook can enable a classroom teacher to incorporate music into their lessons, the music teacher selecting a curriculum series may value suggestions on how to incorporate outside subjects into the music class. This also helps students achieve standard eight of the National Standards—understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.

The increased emphasis on outside subjects in the music class can be attributed in part to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 which uses high-stakes standardized testing to determine school funding and status. This has caused principals to cut time for arts instruction to allot more time to the instruction of tested subjects (Gerber & Gerrity, 2007). Gerber and Gerrity (2007) write, “The pressure to raise test scores is reflected by the number of principles who require their music teachers to ‘integrate’ reading and mathematics into music lesson plans” (p. 19). Similarly, Branscome (2005) identifies a few of the responsibilities of music educators as preparing students for future roles as musicians and enhancing “learning in core curricular subjects for those in nonmusical careers” (p. 18).

Claudia Cornett, in her book *Creating Meaning through Literature and the Arts* (2007), summarized research on arts integration into the general classroom. She found that arts integration can improve academic achievement, have beneficial cognitive effects, improve student performance in literacy and math, increase student motivation,
improve students’ social experience in school, create a positive learning environment, and better engage diverse learners (Cornett, 2007).

**Engaging students**

Ideally, participation in school music will lead students to view music education as important to their lives. Campbell, Connell, & Beegle (2007) conducted a study “to determine the significance of music and music education to middle and high school adolescents” (p. 220). They analyzed responses to a national essay contest on preventing the elimination of music education in schools. The responses indicated that the majority of adolescents view music as highly important to their lives whether or not they were currently involved in school music classes. The researchers also found that respondents longed “for more provisions for the study of music that is relevant to their needs, their interests, and their hopes and desires” (Campbell, Connell, & Beegle, 2007, p. 230).

Thompson (1991) believes that “enjoyable experiences will lead to the development of positive attitudes toward music…students will acquire cognitive knowledge and psychomotor skills when they participate in enjoyable learning activities” (p. 11). He conducted a study of junior high students’ activity preference in general music and examined trends from 1970, 1980, and 1990. Thompson found that the students consistently preferred activities providing “a high level of involvement with music” (p. 15) such as playing, singing, and creating. The percentage of students who preferred creating activities increased over time. He also found that students in the 1990 sample preferred the classical music examples over the pop hits from the 1970s suggesting that “classical music can have lasting appeal, even among junior high
students” and if “we want to catch the attention of our students by using popular music, it must be current music”. He clarifies, however, that “this study’s focus on preferences is not to imply that teachers should use only those activities which students enjoy” (Thompson, 1991, p. 16).

In a survey of the music experiences and practices of adults, the researchers found that out of the 60 adult participants less than 10% currently engage in singing or playing an instrument (VanWeelden & Walters, 2004). However, the majority of participants had participated in music classes in elementary and middle school. The researchers also found that half of the participants could not read music but did not specify in the report how many participants were once able to read music. This is contradictory to a typical formal music education, which focuses in some part on the specifics of musical notation.

The researchers also asked the participants about habits of music listening and consumerism. The results indicated that the participants were more likely to purchase and listen to popular music or the music that was popular during their teenage years (VanWeelden & Walters, 2004). Although these results cannot be generalized to the entire adult population, they provide a means to insights of potential issues with current general music curriculums. The researchers believe that the disparity between experiences in the music classroom and real-life music experiences is a contributing factor in the lack of musical participation later in life. Tailoring the general music class to fit the future musical needs of students can close this gap (VanWeelden & Walters, 2004).
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

To complete this project, I conducted a review of literature on the middle school general music curriculum. I utilized an internet database of peer-reviewed journals to look for articles published no later than 1990 that presented a broad focus on music curriculum development. This provided the basis for the sections on philosophical perspectives and theoretical background. To develop the section on issues and trends in music education, I looked for articles on specific concepts and skills important to the curriculum as well as best practices for engaging students.

I began my search by examining chapter headings in books on music education, popular topics on the MENC website, and the schedule for the 2011 Florida Music Educators Association conference. I determined that elements appearing in all three sources should become categories within the section on issues and trends in music education. I then used these categories as keywords in a database search to complete my literature review. For example, many of the articles I found contained a description of a specific concept or activity designed to engage students effectively. I determined the underlying strategy as it would relate to the category of “engaging students” within “issues and trends in music education”.

In addition, I examined the marketing materials for the Music Expressions and Making Music series using the publisher’s websites and teacher’s guides. In both cases the online brochures and teacher’s guides featured particular aspects of the general music curriculum. It is logical to then assume that the elements included at least once on both the website and teacher’s guides are the elements which the publishers and authors of each series found most important. This is useful because the creators of
these series are respected music educators who know through experience what is important to a successful general music curriculum. For example, the marketing materials for both series drew attention to the use of the National Standards as a basis for the curriculum indicating that the teacher selecting a curriculum series would also be concerned about the inclusion of the National Standards.

The topics in the final list of criteria include the categories identified in the literature review and highlighted at least once in the marketing materials for both series. For instance, the use of authentic multicultural materials appeared in several of the articles returned by my database search and at least once in the marketing materials for both *Music Expressions* and *Making Music*. Therefore, one of the criteria pertains to the use of authentic multicultural materials. I completed the list of criteria with points relevant to the selection process and mentioned one or more times in the marketing materials for both series but not covered in the literature review of scholarly articles.
CHAPTER 4
ANALYSIS

Introduction

This section contains a list of the criteria a teacher may wish to evaluate when selecting a general music curriculum. This is followed by an analysis of two existing curricula: Warner Brother’s *Music Expressions* (2004) and Silver-Burdett’s *Making Music* (2005).

Criteria for Selecting a Curriculum Series

The points of comparison taken from the literature review, marketing materials, and appearing in the curriculum series and teacher’s guides include: (1) philosophical and theoretical foundations, (2) scope, (3) sequence, (4) student engagement, (5) assessment, (6) multiculturalism, and (7) curriculum integration. Points of comparison taken only from the curriculum series include: (8) flexibility, (9) ease of use, (10) lesson enhancements. The final point is (11) budget, which did not appear in any of the literature or materials, but must be considered. These points of comparison are the criteria that teachers should consider when selecting a curriculum series. Below is a list of questions adapted from the criteria to facilitate the evaluation process. These questions are reprinted in Appendix C for quick reference.

Do I agree with the philosophical and theoretical foundations of the curriculum?

Some series will outline a philosophy and/or mission statement. If not, it may be possible to determine the philosophy or guiding instructional theories by looking at the marketing materials. For example, both *Music Expressions* and *Making Music* advocate an active approach to music learning through ‘doing’, which is more in line with the praxial philosophy.
Does the scope of the curriculum series align with my goals for the class?

Most music teachers utilize a framework set by the state, district, and/or school. Teachers may rely upon the National Standards and, in Florida, the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS). Typically, a curriculum series will have a clearly outlined scope and sequence which the teacher can match against his or her own requirements. For example, *Music Expressions* and *Making Music* both follow the National Standards but they also meet most of the NGSSS benchmarks.

Is the sequence of the curriculum developmentally appropriate?

Is the level of prerequisite knowledge reasonable? Do the lessons and units progress in a logical manner? Is the pacing acceptable? Does the order in which new skills are introduced align with accepted instructional theories? For example, some music educators believe that students should experience musical concepts before learning about them. It is usual for a curriculum to begin with singing or playing, and then progress to a more detailed discussion of musical elements, which are then required for a unit on harmony or music history.

Is the curriculum flexible?

Can the curriculum be adapted to the length of the class? Some general music classes may only meet for nine weeks while others may meet every day for an entire school year. The instructor might prefer to teach a few select units in-depth, or they might prefer to do only a few lessons from each unit to provide a broader focus, or they may only be looking for lessons and activities to supplement their existing curriculum plan. It is important to select the series that can be tailored to fit specific situations.
**Will my students be engaged in the material and activities?**

The literature indicates that students will engage more in material to which they can relate. This can include popular music and artists. The literature also indicates that students will prefer music and activities that apply to their everyday lives. These activities may involve the use of technology to manipulate a song chosen by the students or a discussion about careers in music. Another point instructors may wish to consider is that, even if they are at the same skill level, older students in a mixed-grade classroom may not be interested in the same activities and materials as the younger students.

**Is the program easy to use?**

The teacher’s edition will most likely contain an outline of the content of each unit or module along with a summary of each lesson. Other features may include a listing of songs by title, genre, and/or composer. A potential factor to consider is readability. Are the lesson plans laid out in a way that is easy to follow? If the lessons are scripted, is the writing style appropriate? In addition, the physical size and weight of the book may be important to some teachers. The person evaluating the curriculum will be able to determine usability based upon personal preferences.

**What lesson enhancements did the authors provide?**

The curriculum series may include several lesson enhancements in the form of critical thinking exercises, cross-curricular connections (see below), suggestions for further research, background information, adaptations for students with special needs, assessments (see below), suggestions for using technology, and additional activities or practice.
Are other subjects integrated into the lesson plans?

Curriculum integration is a growing trend in music education. Language arts and social studies are among the easiest subjects to integrate. Also found are mathematics, science, and visual arts. A curriculum outlining clear connections between the music lesson and outside subjects can be a valuable tool to the instructor.

What types of assessments are included?

The lesson plans may include suggestions for assessments at the end of each lesson and/or unit. These assessments can consist of many types of activities, including, but not limited to, essay prompts, observations, and worksheets. The assessments can be used for progress monitoring and grading. Occasionally, the authors of the curriculum will provide specific directions for administration and scoring.

Are authentic multicultural music examples included?

The publishers of a curriculum series may include statements about the authenticity of the world music examples. Teachers can assess these claims by researching the artists on accompanying recordings, reading through the lyrics, and looking at the arrangements and performance suggestions.

Does the series fall within my budget?

Perhaps this question should come first, since a negative response will render the other criteria irrelevant. The instructor will need to determine what is included with the main curriculum package and which supplementary materials are necessary. Typically, purchases will include the teacher’s pack, student textbooks, audio and/or visual recordings, and desired supplements.
Music Expressions

Overview

*Music Expressions* (2004), from Warner Bros. Publications, is a comprehensive music education curriculum for kindergarten through eighth grade. The mission statement in the teacher resource guide reads, “To create and provide a comprehensive and coordinated K-12 music education curriculum connecting the study of music for all”. The middle school portion is divided into two levels: grade six and grades seven/eight. The listing of features and benefits include: (1) national-standards based curriculum, (2) literacy driven and focused, (3) embedded assessments, (4) original recordings, (5) easy-to-use lessons, and (6) updated web resources.

Philosophy

The philosophical foundations guiding this curriculum developed from the 1999 *Housewright Symposium on the Future of Music Education* that led to the creation of the following belief statements:

- Musical understanding involves multiple ways of knowing and doing.
- Music study must connect authentically with daily life to be meaningful.
- A worldwide, broad view of music enhances our understanding of the global community.
- Lifelong involvement in music is achieved through the acquisition of the knowledge and skills outlined in the National Standards.
- Building lifelong involvement in music is an essential part of music study at all levels.

Scope

The scope and sequence, printed in each teacher’s edition and the teacher resource guide, is divided into strand, standard, fundamental knowledge/skill, and grade
level developmental knowledge/skill. The strands and accompanying standards are as follows: perform: play, sing, read; respond: listen/evaluate; notate: compose, arrange, create, improvise; and connect: relate, apply. The fundamental knowledge/skills remain constant between grade levels. Examples of the fundamental skills include:

- sing and play alone and with others;
- read musical symbols and terms;
- demonstrate specific expressive and stylistic characteristics associated with musical exemplars within a variety of music;
- compose music within specified guidelines using varied traditional and non-traditional sound sources including electronic media;
- notate melodic and rhythmic notation and expressive markings;
- recognize that music reflects time, place, and culture; and
- recognize the connection between the arts and disciplines outside the arts.

The developmental skills, more specific iterations of the fundamental skills, are grade-level specific. Examples of the developmental skills include:

- perform and read simple rhythm patterns in contrasting meters while maintaining a steady pulse (level two);
- perform simple diatonic melodic patterns (level one);
- identify a variety of musical styles, cultures, genres, and historical periods from aural examples (level one);
- use personal and established criteria to make independent judgments about varied music performed and heard (level two);
• compose and arrange short pieces that incorporate unity and variety and form (level one);
• improvise melodies, rhythms, and variations in a given style and context (level two);
• identify corrections between current societal trends and the arts (level one); and
• apply knowledge of characteristics of music of specific cultures (level two).

All nine of the National Standards are covered in the *Music Expressions* curriculum for grades six and seven/eight as well as the majority of the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS). A few of the benchmarks on technological skills are not met; however, the other benchmarks not falling within the National Standards—such as music in real-life—are included in the curriculum.

**Sequence**

The curriculum is organized by a spiral scope and sequence designed to provide a comprehensive and continuous education in music through kindergarten to eighth grade. An examination of the provided curriculum maps indicates that level two begins, to some extent, where level one ended instead of progressing with the same sequence as the prior level. Teachers can use a modular approach to accommodate six-week, nine-week, or year-long courses.

The conceptual sequence for both levels is sing, play, listen, create, read and notate, improvise, relate, compose, analyze. The components making up the conceptual sequence are groups/categories, patterns, context, personal connections to music, and/or world connections through music. Subgroups within the components vary between levels. The components are revisited throughout the series enabling students to develop greater understanding.
Usability

An overview of units and lessons for the complete level (one or two) is located at the beginning of each volume of the teacher’s edition. This is followed by the scope and sequence for grades six and seven/eight. A curriculum map for either level one or level two shows the skills and concepts demonstrated by the student for each lesson. A lesson snapshot before each lesson indicates the focus, objectives, content, purpose, and activities as well as the student book page number and CD track numbers. The instruction framework, following the lesson snapshot, indicates the national standards covered in the lesson, types of core thinking skills, vocabulary, assessment, curriculum connections, critical thinking skills, and life skills are included in the lesson.

The scripted lessons are structured into three main parts: focus the lesson, develop the lesson, and finish the lesson. There are embedded assessments with directions for administration and scoring, and a log is provided in the appendix for recording student grades. Some of the assessments correspond with worksheets provided in the teacher support pack and others are based in real-time. Included teacher notes offer tips for instruction and classroom management. Many lessons also include suggestions for further study in Music @ Home sections.

Curriculum integration

The teacher resource guide for grades six and seven/eight contains an explanation of the curriculum connections present in Music Expressions. According to the authors, students experience visual art through description, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of select pieces from a variety of cultures and artists. Students practice reading and language arts through written responses, worksheets, and comprehension
questions following a piece of writing. *Physical education* is included through individual and group movement activities. By studying the context of music, students are able to draw connections with *social studies* or *geography*. *Science* and *math* are also included through both content and cognitive skills. For example, lessons comparing and contrasting sound sources relate to science and musical experiences involving patterns or sets pertain to math.

**Multiculturalism**

An examination of the curriculum map indicates that multicultural music education has a place in the *Music Expression* curriculum. In level one, students focus on music as a means of communication and connection and discover the elements of a world music exemplar. In level two, however, students receive in-depth instruction about world music and unity and diversity in music. Units seven, eight, and nine are devoted to music of other cultures and the role of history and geography in music. In addition, a few opportunities are provided for students to experience songs in other languages.

**Inclusion**

The authors only briefly touched upon teaching all learners in the teacher resource guide, providing definitions of common terms applicable to current literature on inclusion. Specific suggestions are not provided for modifying lessons to meet the needs of all students.

**Technology**

There is not a great deal mentioned about technology in *Music Expressions*. Some of the *Music @ Home* ideas provided in the teacher’s edition suggest that students conduct research online about the lesson content. For most lessons though, it falls upon the teacher to expand the lesson activities to utilize currently available
technological resources. For example, since unit one of level two focuses on arranging music, students could use music notation software or experiment with an electronic composition program.

**Engaging students**

The activities in this series involve a fair amount of student engagement through ‘doing’ music. However, students are likely to have a hard time relating to the music examples accompanying lessons on popular music.

**Supplementary Materials**

- Worksheets (included)
- Overhead transparencies (included)
- Lesson CDs
- DVD and VHS video
- Musical: It’s All About Music
- Musical: The Hero in Us All
- Orff Ensemble: Mallet Instruments and Recorders
- Orff Musical: The Grateful Statues
- Afro-Cuban Percussion
- World Percussion
- Music Technology
- Songwriting
- Music in the Media

**Making Music**

**Overview**

Silver-Burdett’s *Making Music* (2005) “provides developmentally appropriate music learning activities for students in grades pre-kindergarten through eight. This sequential curriculum builds students’ knowledge and skills within and across grade levels and engages all students in the music making process” (Pearson Education, Inc., 2011). The curriculum is divided into pre-kindergarten through grade six and grade seven to eight. Features of the secondary program include: (1) active music making, (2)
exceptional song literature and recordings, (4) flexible, modular organization, and (4)
proven content reflecting the National Standards.

Philosophy

A specific philosophy is not presented either in the teacher’s edition or on the
publisher’s website. However, the following statement is included: “Making Music takes
into account that every student is inherently musical and has the potential for musical
philosophical statement about the curriculum, the authors provide a brief research base
on skills acquisition, assessment practices, contemporary/popular music, culturally
diverse music, teaching style concepts, and music literacy.

Scope

The content of the Making Music curriculum falls under either music knowledge
or performance skills. The modules relating to music knowledge are careers in the
music industry, America’s popular styles and performers (grade seven)/world popular
styles and performers (grade eight), historical contexts and styles, and music theory and
fundamentals. The modules related to performance skills are playing in percussion
ensembles, playing keyboard, playing guitar, singing in unison and parts, and a
performance anthology. The scope encompasses both the National Standards and
corresponding achievement standards. In addition, most of the NGSSS benchmarks are
met. The musical elements outlined in the scope are

- expression (dynamics, tempo, articulation, mood);
- rhythm (beat, duration, meter, pattern);
- form;
- melody (pitch and direction, tonality, pattern);
- timbre (environmental, vocal, instrumental, electronic); and
- texture and harmony.
The musical skills outlined in the scope are

- singing (vocal development, intonation, expression, part singing, diction);
- playing (percussion, guitar, keyboard/MIDI, recorder);
- creating (improvising, composing);
- reading/notating (rhythm, melody);
- listening/analyzing/describing; and
- movement (nonlocomotor, locomotor, time, space, energy).

These elements and skills are constant throughout the entire series; however, they increase in complexity between grade levels.

**Sequence**

Given the modular organization of the grade seven and eight curriculum, the sequence is dependent upon the teacher. The musical elements do not differ greatly between grades six, seven, and eight. The most notable differences are found in instruction on form and harmony. The progression of musical skills is more varied especially within singing, playing, and creating when compared to reading/notating and listening/analyzing/descibing. It is important to note that both grades seven and eight assume prior knowledge of musical concepts.

**Usability**

Each module opens with *module at a glance* that outlines the elements, skills, contexts, musical and other literature, assessments, and technology/media links for each lesson. The context includes a related outside field—such as language arts or social studies—and an activity connecting it with music. Also within the context is a list of the *footnotes* corresponding to the lesson that are comprised of a wide range of topics including background information, curriculum integration, movement, cultural
connections, meeting individual needs, skills reinforcement, and building skills through music.

The lesson plans are structured into an introduction, development, and conclusion. The lesson at a glance provided in the beginning of each plan shows the elements, skills, contexts, materials/recordings, vocabulary, national standards, and more music choices. The lessons are not heavily scripted but the authors did provide some suggestions. The student textbook pages are also shown in the teacher’s edition.

Each lesson has at least one assessment suggestion. The assessment activities consist of observations, performances, self-assessments, interviews, journals, portfolios, cognitive assessments, reaction letters, peer critiques, written assessments, and attitude inventory.

**Curriculum integration**

Nearly every lesson within each module includes a suggestion for curriculum integration. The outside subjects consist of visual arts, dance, social studies, language arts, science, and related arts. Topics are varied and involve a wide range of activities such as essay writing, class discussions on lyrics, studying the historical context of a piece, and individual research.

**Multiculturalism**

According to the teacher’s edition, “Making Music recognizes that music literature representing a diversity of cultures and countries is an important contributor to multicultural education... Research shows that students learn more and have a greater appreciation for diversity in music when they are actively involved” (Grade 8 Making Music Teacher’s Edition, 2005, p. J-31). The authors included a wide variety of music
from other cultures and places such as the Caribbean, South Africa, Latin America, and France.

**Inclusion**

The authors discuss the importance of collaboration and communication to provide the best possible music education for students with special needs. The authors also recommend that adaptations should be minimal and, if possible, applicable to all students, thereby reducing the potential for embarrassment. In addition, the authors listed nearly twenty strategies and principles for consideration while planning and implementing lessons. Many of the strategies focus on peer interaction through small group or partner activities with emphasis on choosing partners carefully. The authors also suggest that assessments be individually modified as needed by providing more time or a change in context and/or modality. Specific suggestions for adaptations are not included within the lesson plans.

**Technology**

Each lesson includes a technology and/or media link. These suggestions typically require the use of the internet, MIDI, sequencing software, music notation software, and composition software. The activities include creating string orchestrations of a MIDI file, creating a digital audio montage, notating improvised rhythms, and arranging rhythm patterns into a dance track. Most of the activities correlate with lessons in *Making Music with Technology*. This supplement is available for grades six, seven, and eight and contains similarly structured lesson plans progressing through an introduction, development, and conclusion.
Engaging Students

The authors reference studies showing “that students prefer music styles that are popular and regarded as their own”. The selection of music literature ranges from medieval to contemporary. Popular music selections are not included at the expense of traditional, multicultural, and classical works. The modular structure and emphasis on music in real-life allows educators many opportunities to utilize current music.

Supplementary Materials

- Audio CDs
- DVDs
- Keyboard Accompaniments
- Overhead transparencies
- Resource book (worksheets)
- Making Music with Movement and Dance
- Making Music with Technology
- The Power of Performance
- New Activities for the Substitute Teacher
- Bridges to Asia
- ¡A Cantar!
- Master Index and Correlations
A well-chosen curriculum series can help determine the scope, sequence, music literature, and activities making up the middle school general music class. In this study, I sought to find out what aspects of general music education appear consistently in the literature as well as what aspects the developers of general music curriculum series deem most important. My goal was to use this information to determine the criteria teachers should consider and to create questions they may wish to ask when selecting a curriculum series. Appendix C contains the list of questions for reference.

What aspects of general music education appear consistently in the literature?

Certain aspects of music education appear consistently in the literature pertaining to current issues and trends in music education. These elements include engaging students, incorporating multicultural music, integrating outside subjects into the music class, and accommodating exceptional students. The increase in literature on curriculum integration and teaching exceptional students can be partially attributed to current legislation—particularly the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997. This reflects the research of Price and Orman (1999, 2001, 2007). Price and Orman also found an increased emphasis on using technology in the music class.

Discussions on best practices for engaging students also appear consistently in the literature. Most authors advocated engaging students through active music learning and showing them how ‘school music’ can relate to their everyday lives. This aligns with the praxial philosophy of music education as opposed to the music education as
aesthetic education movement and is consistent with the views put forth by David Elliott in *Music Matters: A New Philosophy of Music Education* (1995). Another trend is the inclusion of popular music and artists in the classroom. As Hoffer (2001) states and Campbell, Connell, and Beegle (2007) found, students prefer activities to which they can relate.

**What aspects of music education do the developers of music curriculum series deem the most important?**

The developers of music curriculum series highlight aspects of music education that they deem most important. Among these elements—and consistent with the literature—are engaging students through active music learning, relating the activities to their everyday lives, and including popular music. In addition to engaging students, the developers of music curriculum series emphasize the scope and sequence of the curriculum. Typically, the scope follows the National Standards and the sequence is designed go across and between grade levels. Other features include multicultural music, assessments, using technology, adaptations for students with special needs, suggestions for further learning, and supplementary materials.

**What are the criteria teachers should evaluate when selecting a curriculum series?**

By answering the first two research questions, I was able to answer the third and determine a set of criteria teachers should consider when selecting a curriculum series. The criteria are philosophical/theoretical foundations, scope, sequence, flexibility, student engagement, usability, lesson enhancements- including technology and inclusion, curriculum integration, assessment, multicultural music, and budget. I chose
not to include supplementary materials as a criterion because they are separate from the basic series. I chose to include budget even though it is not explicitly mentioned in the marketing materials for both series because I feel that it is an important consideration. By evaluating how well a series and/or textbook meets their needs in relation to these aspects of the general music curriculum, teachers can make a decision that will help them provide their students the best possible education.

**Suggestions for Further Study**

The availability of current and complete curriculum series limited this study. Further lines of inquiry should include a broader selection of curriculum series as well as an analysis of teachers’, administrators’, and students’ perspectives to continue developing the criteria. Furthermore, determining the effectiveness of each series by evaluating student achievement could also strengthen this study.
APPENDIX A
NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR MUSIC EDUCATION

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
3. Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments
4. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines
5. Reading and notating music
6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music
7. Evaluating music and music performances
8. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts
9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture

## APPENDIX B
### ALIGNMENT OF NATIONAL STANDARDS AND NEXT GENERATION SUNSHINE STATE STANDARDS
#### MUSIC, GRADES 6-8

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**Big Idea: Historical and Global Connections**

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**Big Idea: Innovation, Technology, and the Future**

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*Enduring understanding: complete listing on next page
LIST OF ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS FOR NGSSS IN MUSIC, GRADES 6-8

Big Idea: Critical Thinking and Reflection
EU 1  Cognition and reflection are required to appreciate, interpret, and create with artistic intent.
EU 2  Assessing our own and others’ artistic work, using critical-thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills, is central to artistic growth.
EU 3  The processes of critiquing works of art lead to development of critical-thinking skills transferable to other contexts.

Big Idea: Skills, Techniques, and Processes
EU 1  The arts are inherently experiential and actively engage learners in the processes of creating, interpreting, and responding to art.
EU 2  Development of skills, techniques, and processes in the arts strengthens our ability to remember, focus on, process, and sequence information.
EU 3  Through purposeful practice, artists learn to manage, master, and refine simple, then complex, skills and techniques.

Big Idea: Organizational Structure
EU 1  Understanding the organizational structure of an art form provides a foundation for appreciation of artistic works and respect for the creative process.
EU 2  The structural rules and conventions of an art form serve as both a foundation and departure point for creativity.
EU 3  Every art form uses its own unique language, verbal and non-verbal, to document and communicate with the world.

Big Idea: Historical and Global Connections
EU 1  Through study in the arts, we learn about and honor others and the worlds in which they live(d).
EU 2  The arts reflect and document cultural trends and historical events, and help explain how new directions in the arts have emerged.
EU 3  Connections among the arts and other disciplines strengthen learning and the ability to transfer knowledge and skills to and from other fields.

Big Idea: Innovation, Technology, and the Future
EU 1  Creating, interpreting, and responding in the arts stimulate the imagination and encourage innovation and creative risk-taking.
EU 2  Careers in and related to the arts significantly and positively impact local and global economies.
EU 3  The 21st-century skills necessary for success as citizens, workers, and leaders in a global economy are embedded in the study of the arts.
APPENDIX C
QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN SELECTING A CURRICULUM SERIES

1. Do I agree with the philosophical and theoretical foundations of the curriculum?
2. Does the scope of the curriculum series align with my goals for the class?
3. Is the sequence of the curriculum developmentally appropriate?
4. Is the curriculum flexible?
5. Will my students be engaged in the material and activities?
6. Is the program easy to use?
7. What lesson enhancements did the authors provide?
8. Are other subjects integrated into the lesson plans?
9. What types of assessments are included?
10. Are authentic multicultural music examples included?
11. Does the series fall within my budget?
REFERENCES


https://flmusiced.org/FLmusicApps/Conference/Schedule/


http://www.menc.org/about/view/inclusivity-in-music-education


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Brenda Zelt earned a Bachelors of Music in Music Education degree from the University of Florida in May of 2009, graduating with honors, summa cum laude. During her time as an undergraduate at the University of Florida, Ms. Zelt was an active member of the University Choir, served as secretary for the UF chapter of the Collegiate Music Educators National Conference, and received the David Wilmot Award for Excellence in Music Education. Ms. Zelt began pursuing her Masters in Music Education immediately after graduation with emphasis on music appreciation and general music in secondary schools. She served as research assistant to Dr. Timothy S. Brophy as well as his editorial assistant for *The International Journal of Music Education: Practice*. Her hobbies include crocheting, baking, and playing with her cat, Vera.