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Music Teacher Education at a Liberal Arts College

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ABSTRACT

In 2012, a committee at a small Midwestern liberal arts college, Lake Forest College, embarked on a journey to create a music education teacher licensure major. Drawing from narrative inquiry, the Dean of Faculty, Education Department Chair, Music Department Chair, and Assistant Professor of Music/Music Education Coordinator collaborated on a curricular creation. Findings from this process included: (a) the created music education major; (b) each participant's rationale for wanting the new music education major; (c) valued components of the music education major; and (d) unique elements of a music education major at a liberal arts college. Implications from this experience could be valuable for music education programs at small liberal arts colleges, those involved in university/school partnerships such as professional development schools, and those looking to advocate for their music education programs across campus.

Music Teacher Education at a Liberal Arts College: Perspectives Across Campus

Music teacher education and licensure programs exist in many different types of institutions: research-based universities, smaller teaching-focused institutions, schools offering graduate degrees and those focused on undergraduate education. A typical path for a music teacher involves pursuing an undergraduate degree in music education. This undergraduate music education model largely includes technique courses (vocal, winds, percussion, strings), methods (general music, band, choir, orchestra), and conducting courses, as well as private applied lessons and ensemble participation. In addition to these music education-focused courses, the students complete courses in education (curriculum and instructional design and delivery, assessment, teaching diverse learners) and music (theory, history, world music) separately. This undergraduate music teacher education curriculum has largely remained the same despite the musical culture, the needs of music teachers and music students, and school climates changing (Kratus, 1990).

In the fall of 2012 a committee at Lake Forest College, a small Midwestern liberal arts institution of 1,500 students and 111 full time faculty, started the process of creating a K-12 music education teacher licensure program. This collaborative venture included the author, Assistant Professor of Music/Music Education Coordinator, and three others: the Chair of the Music Department, the Chair of the Education Department, and the Dean of Faculty. This diversity of perspective helped create a major meeting the needs of students, faculty, and the college. The challenges included creating a curriculum that fit into the established culture of the college, and meeting state requirements. The different stakeholders, while all supportive of the new initiative, each had unique perspectives of what should and should not be included in a music education licensure major.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to explore the perceptions and values of different stakeholders (Scott Edgar- Assistant Professor of Music, Music Education Coordinator; Don Meyer- Chair of the Music Department; Rachel Ragland- Chair of the Education Department; Michael Orr- Dean of Faculty) in their role in the creation of a music teacher education major at a liberal arts college. The following questions guided this inquiry: (a) What were our thoughts on the process of creating a music education major? and (b) What were critical components of the music education major product?

Context

Music education curriculum, while largely remaining consistent throughout the past decades, remains steeped in one primary goal: To prepare preservice teachers to teach music. “Music is a highly complex activity requiring a variety of skills and an in-depth knowledge of subject matter and pedagogy” (Temmerman, 1997, p. 27). There are multiple paths and types of accrediting institutions one can attend to become a music educator including conservatories and educational, arts, or music colleges (Matiero, 2011). Each of these different types of institutions stresses a different emphasis. A liberal arts college, such as the site of this research report, stresses broad educational goals not necessarily related to a focused music teacher education major such as writing and critical thinking. These skills, while not directly related to knowledge and skills in music and music pedagogy, are necessary and valuable for a teacher in any subject.

Regardless of type of institution, there is a similar set of skills and knowledge being taught. “There is some consistency concerning the music education curriculum. Topics such as lesson planning, evaluation, music education philosophy, and classroom management form the core of most music education curricula” (Schmidt, 1989, p. 53). The course load, stressing

musical skill and musical teaching, is often be skewed in one direction or the other. Connection between the two primary content areas is most beneficial for the preservice music teachers.

“There is a direct correlation between the reduction in the number of music education courses and experiences and the dropout rate of entry-level music teachers” (Kimpton, 2005, p. 14).

Influences on Curricular Design

Collaboration. While there is a great deal of consistency in preservice music educator preparation, several innovative initiatives are emerging, including varied collaborations and approaches to practicum experiences. A model often touted, but not utilized due to the vast amount of resources required, is the professional development school (PDS), where “the methods class relocated to a school and is taught by both university and school-based teachers” (Robbins & Stein, 2005, p. 23). The difference between this model and other partnerships models involves the K-12 teacher and college instructor sharing instruction of both student populations. Some programs go as far as considering the K-12 instructor an adjunct faculty member at the college.

Another collaboration, in addition to those between the higher education institution and P-12 schools, is that between the schools of education and schools of music (Myers, 2003). The melding of musical and pedagogical expertise is necessary for relevance and consistency between music, music education, and education curricula. This has been referred to as pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987).

Within the context of music education curriculum and collaborations service-learning is a viable option to further students’ practical experience. “In teacher education, preservice teachers involved in educational partnerships that are service-learning based respond to the needs of a community partner, apply pedagogical knowledge and skills they have acquired in

their coursework to real-world problems, and engage in critical reflection” (Burton & Reynolds, 2009, p. 18).

Given the consistency of programs, possible variations could be beneficial, as student learner needs change.

The growing emphasis on student learning—and teachers’ responsibility for it—has stimulated the development of a curriculum for teachers that includes knowledge about influences on learning including child development, social contexts of the education, language acquisition, educational purposes, and aspects of pedagogy, along with specific building blocks for teaching, including content knowledge and how to teach it to diverse students at different stages, and the design of curriculum, classroom environments, and assessments. (Hammerness & Darling-Hammond, 2005, p. 396)

Standards. Music teacher education programs must follow certain guidelines outlined by different organizations, including state standards and varied accrediting organizations such as the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) (Ester, 2004). The state standards for a music teacher education program in Illinois specifically required the following skills and knowledge to be imparted. The state did not specify how the skills and knowledge should be manifested in the curriculum.

- Standard 1: The competent music teacher possesses knowledge and skills in the use of the basic vocabulary of music.
- Standard 2: The competent music teacher understands the processes and is able to apply the knowledge and skills necessary to create and perform music.
- Standard 3: The competent music teacher understands and analyzes the role of music within a variety of cultures and historical periods and its impact on society.

- Standard 4: The competent music teacher is able to relate various types of music knowledge skills within and across the arts.
- Standard 5: The competent music teacher understands and is able to apply pedagogical knowledge and skills appropriate to the teaching of music, including issues of diversity, gender equity, and the needs of gifted students. (ISBE, 2002)

Methodology

This study drew from narrative inquiry (Barrett & Stauffer, 2012; Merriam, 2009), described as “the use of stories as data, and more specifically, first-person accounts of experience told in story form” (Merriam, 2009, p. 32). The data was analyzed from a psychological approach, which “concentrates more on the personal, including thoughts and motivations (Merriam, 2009, p. 33). In music education research, Stauffer (2014) states, “narrative inquiry is simply a matter of getting someone’s story, writing it up, and putting some explanatory text around it” (p. 3). It is with these approaches that I attempted to retell the story of how the music major at Lake Forest College came to fruition.

Setting and Participants

Lake Forest College is a small, four-year liberal arts college located in a highly affluent area just North of Chicago. The student population of 1,500 students (86% are residential) represents 47 states, 78 countries, and has a faculty to student ratio of 13:1. Tuition and room and board annually is \$49,000 with extensive financial aid available. The music department consists of four full-time tenure/tenure-track faculty members (including Scott and Don). The music curriculum includes robust offerings of music theory, history and culture, and performance opportunities, as well as offerings for non-music majors. The education department consists of three full-time tenure-track faculty members (including Rachel). The curricular

offerings include instructional techniques at all levels, philosophy, and teaching learners with exceptionalities. The fieldwork embedded in an education major includes 200 hours in K-12 schools prior to the student teaching capstone experience.

Graduates from Lake Forest College are required to take a wide variety of courses encompassing a General Education Curriculum (GEC). The GEC requirements, as well as a limitation of students only receiving no more than half of their credits from one department, posed challenges to require the music education majors enough music/music education courses while staying within these constraints. The music education major is housed within the music department.

Scott (Assistant Professor of Music; Music Education Coordinator). I was in my first year at Lake Forest College when the music education major was created. I finished my Doctorate of Philosophy in Music Education the May prior to accepting this position. My previous teaching experience in higher education included adjunct work at a large research university and liberal arts colleges. Prior to my work in higher education I was the band director at a parochial school in the Midwest for seven years. It was my primary charge to create the music education major curriculum.

Don (Music Department Chair). Don, primarily a composer and musicologist who teaches music theory and history courses, was in his 17th year at Lake Forest College and is now Full Professor and Chair of the Music Department. Don helped to fit the music education major within the music departments' auspices.

Michael (Dean of Faculty). Michael was in his third year as Dean of Faculty at Lake Forest College when the music education major was created. He was born and raised in England and received his master's and Ph.D. degrees in art history. Michael specializes in medieval

English art. His responsibility was to ensure the music education major fit within the college's overall framework.

Rachel. She was in her 16th year of teaching at Lake Forest College where she taught in the education department. She earned degrees in social psychology and secondary education. Rachel ensured the music education major fit within the education department's requirements and was designed in a similar manner as the other nine teacher licensure programs. It was also the education department's responsibility to handle the accreditation and licensure requirements for the state.

Data Collection Devices and Procedures

Data included: (a) participant reflections collected throughout the Fall 2012 semester while creating the major; (b) notes taken from regular formal and informal meetings occurring between the participants to discuss the progress of the music teacher education major; (c) final responses collected by Scott with each participant at the end of the process in January 2013; and (d) a principal researcher journal kept over the course of the fall 2012 semester.

The reflections and meeting notes chronicled the journey of creating the music education major while the final responses served as a perspective on the finished product. The reflections took the form of e-mail communication, comments on drafts of the major, and a journal kept by the author (Scott). The formal and informal meetings occurred approximately every other week between Scott and Rachel, and more often between Scott and Don as they worked in the same building and department. There was only one meeting between all participants and this was the only meeting Michael was able to attend (September 24, 2012). There were other formal committee meetings (Education Advisory Committee-September 19, 2012), Curricular Policies Committee-October 4, 2012, and Full Faculty Meeting-November 7, 2012) where all

participants were present. The interactions and field notes taken by Scott throughout the process were collected to retell the story with a thick, rich description of the encounters and time spent developing this new major.

Analysis and Trustworthiness

The transcripts, notes, and final reflections were reviewed by Scott and coded. Don and Rachel, to ensure accuracy, reviewed the final codes. After codes and themes were agreed upon, findings emerged in relation to the initial guiding questions. The findings emerged through a semester's worth of thought and rethinking. What emerged were a final product (the music teacher education major) and the participants' thoughts on the process and the product. Barrett and Stauffer (2012) define how quality narrative inquiry should be executed: "'rigorous' is less concerned with notions of precision and establishing 'truth tests,' and more concerned with issues of attention to detail, comprehensive-ness, and transparency" (p. 10). It was my goal to represent the story of major creation from varied perspectives to be as comprehensive as possible.

Findings

Findings from this process included: (a) the music education major; (b) a rationale for creating the major; (c) valued components of a music education major; and (d) unique elements regarding music education at a small liberal arts college.

As the process began, I (Scott) prioritized creating a program considering, (a) the needs of the state, college, education department, and music department; (b) the design of peer institutions; and (c) the creation of a unique program with diverse opportunities. This process necessarily involved compromise, cooperation, and creating many drafts prior to the final major receiving campus and state approval. Investigating the programs at peer institutions and

necessary components, as justified by college, state, and national standards, provided a framework to begin to build the curriculum. I looked at music education programs at liberal arts colleges in our geographic area; specifically looking at number of courses offered, balance of music, education, and GEC courses, and where music education was housed. I discovered that coursework varied from 5 to 10 required music education courses, balance varied and was largely skewed towards breadth versus depth in a particular discipline, and music education was housed in a variety of places including the music department, education department, or comprised its own department. Through the leadership provided by Rachel and the education department, and Don and the music department, the final major included the necessary elements while remaining feasible at Lake Forest College.

The Music Education Major

Students completing the music education major will graduate with a Bachelors of Arts (Music Education major)—the result of a double major in K-12 education and music education. The music education portion is divided into two components: the music major and seven music education courses. The music/music education portion of the major is outlined in Figure 1 below:

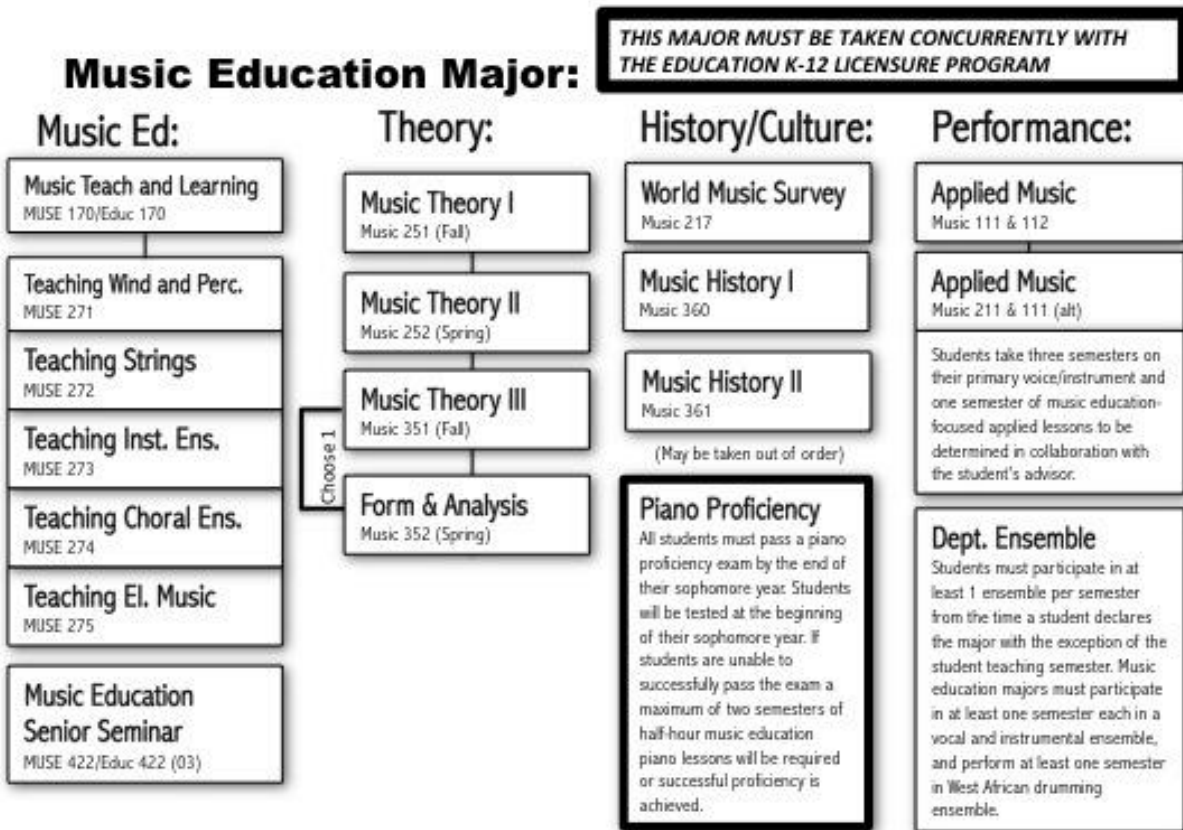


Figure 1: Music Education Curriculum

The music theory, history/culture, and performance expectations were in place prior to the new major's creation. The complete music major remained intact for music education majors. Every student takes the seven music education courses, regardless of specialty (voice, instrumental) or intended career (elementary general, band, choir, orchestra). This non-tracked approach provided students with a generalist perspective of a career in music education, which is inline with the college's liberal arts philosophy. The licensure in Illinois is a K-12 music teacher license. With the breadth of these requirements, the major needed to be broad as well.

MUSE 170, the foundations of music teaching and learning course, focuses specifically on teaching musical concepts. As opposed to a survey-of-the-profession approach, the students engage in skill-building activities designed to introduce the concepts of teaching rhythm,

melody, harmonization, accompaniment, and movement. The common music making modality was the ukulele. The methods class sequence (MUSE 271-275) represents detailed instruction in individual areas. These courses are all taught with a professional development school model with area elementary/middle/high schools. The music education professor (Scott) or a hired adjunct professor and the K-12 teachers team-teach the K-12 and preservice music teachers. This environment where everyone is a learner gives experience in the field as well as practical opportunities to serve as both student and teacher. The college does not employ the K-12 teachers but they benefit from the instruction the K-12 students receive from the music education students and myself. My presence in the classroom as an educator is what differentiates this experience from a traditional partnership. The final course in the music education sequence (MUSE 422) is the senior seminar. This course was designed to address content not covered in a traditional major program including: technology, music psychology, popular music, rock bands, vernacular musicianship, music and community, entrepreneurship, research, and philosophy. I made the decision to involve as much team-teaching as possible to provide the preservice teachers the most breadth in teaching philosophies and instructional techniques possible. My personal background was in instrumental music; therefore, varied perspectives would be good as I was the only fulltime music education professor.

The students also complete the education department's K-12 licensure program. This program includes the campus-wide GEC (two natural science, two humanities, three social science, and two cultural diversity courses) and education major courses. The courses include: observing the schooling process, history, anthropology, or philosophy of education, instructional communication, reading in the content area, middle school fieldwork, curriculum and instructional design, and inclusive learning environments. Every education student completes

the student teaching capstone experience, but prior to that every student completes a middle school internship experience in a low-resourced school district near Lake Forest College. The students travel every morning to their school to work in a content-specific classroom. This accounts for over 150 hours of field hours. The service-learning component of this experience is invaluable. The students also complete fieldwork experiences at the elementary and high school level. The double major is possible to be completed in a standard four-year tenure, given the student decides to pursue music education by the first semester in their second year.

Rationale for Major Creation

“Music is an important element of the liberal arts and this is in line with our college and teacher education mission” (Rachel, journal, January). Don, Rachel, and Michael articulated the rationale for the need of a music education major at Lake Forest College, as I (Scott) was largely unaware of the situation prior to my arrival on campus. These rationales provide insight into both values present at Lake Forest College and a tool for advocating for a music education program to different stakeholders. All three participants largely mentioned similar reasons for wanting to create a music education major. The fact that all three of these participants served on the search committee that hired me (Scott) could have contributed to this unified ideal.

Discussion for a music education major dated back over a decade. These discussions surfaced primarily due to students requesting the major. “We were turning away students who might have matriculated here had we had a music education major” (Don, journal, January). Michael, with an administrator’s perspective, saw the music education major as an opportunity to fill a void in the college:

We have consistently had prospective students inquiring about the possibility of becoming certified¹ in music, indicating that there was a potential market for a program... The college's overall enrollment growth strategy required the college to identify new programs that might help support enrollment growth—music education was seen as such a program. (Michael, journal, January)

Don spoke to the importance of having a strong education program to base the new major in. “The education program was strong and was sort of untouchable, as far as the administration went—they had the backing of the state, which meant they didn't have to inflate their numbers [student enrollment] to meet internal goals... They were eager to collaborate with us” (Don, journal, reflection). This collaboration represented the importance of communication between the music and education departments. Rachel spoke to qualifications she sought in the candidate:

I was supportive of adding such a major, but I knew that we could not do it without hiring a person who was an expert on the required curriculum of such a program. This new faculty member would have to be able to teach the discipline-specific methods courses necessary for such a program... I think it was critical to include the perspective of a teacher educator in the search process because the successful candidate was going to be in charge of creating the curriculum for the licensure program, and I felt he/she needed to have a primary focus on, knowledge of, and interest in teacher education. (Rachel, journal, January)

Don had been positioning this move strategically:

¹ In the middle of the music education major creation the state transitioned from a certification model to a licensure model. Thus, in this paper, the terms are used interchangeably.

My principal role was in advocating for the position... This meant when it came time for the Department's cyclical review, I arranged to have one of our external reviewers be someone from a liberal arts school with a strong music education program, whom I had already met and who had already told me she thought we should start such a program. I didn't have to prime her to make the suggestion once she got here she looked at our school and said, 'This place needs music education.' (Don, reflection)

Don also saw benefits for the music department, as it could aid in recruitment and increasing the caliber of musicians at the college: "We can 'seed' the ensembles with more music majors, and as the ensembles improve, more students are attracted to come here and stay because of music" (Don, reflection). To do this, Don also had specific opinions about the hire, asking this question: "Were we looking for a great band director with high school teaching experience, and perhaps a DMA (Doctor of Musical Arts) in conducting, able to lead the band to new heights? Or do we place music education first, looking primarily for a Ph.D. who can also conduct? We found both in Scott, but this ambiguity troubled us almost to the end." (Don, journal, January).

Valued Components of the Music Education Major

Each participant-stakeholder had different elements they felt needed to be prioritized in the new major. Rachel's vision for the major was malleable and changed through the process.

A change in my thoughts about the process was my understanding that we could actually create an original approach to the degree that would match our Lake Forest College culture and the liberal arts approach to teacher education. Previously, I guess I had thought that to put together a program, you would just look at the state standards and that would determine the curriculum. Scott added creative ideas and adaptations that fit our

program and its conceptual framework, while still meeting state and national standards.

(Rachel, reflection)

Don and Michael agreed with this approach. Michael felt the following were necessary components:

A robust curriculum that will effectively prepare our students to be exemplary teachers in music in our state; Strong collaboration with our Education Department; Effective communication with the Admissions Department to ensure we can recruit students who will be successful in the new program; and a Music Department willing to find the right balance in teaching load for the music education faculty member between supporting band instruction and teaching music education. (Michael, journal, January)

Don echoed the need for broad curriculum: “A universal degree—that is, K-12, and band-orchestra-choir, kitchen sink...I want this to be rigorous, so that only the very best students get through and I want to feel confident that they will all get jobs and show Lake Forest in the best possible light” (Don, journal, January). This ideal, that only the best musicians and students should be music teachers was refreshing for me as I did not have to fight the “those that can’t do it, teach” attitude. To facilitate this, all interested students are encouraged to take the introduction course (MUSE 170). At the end of this course, all students interested in pursuing the music education major must pass a rigorous checkpoint completing an audition on their primary instrument, and submitting artifacts from their music theory and music history courses. Only students passing this checkpoint are permitted to continue. The entire music department sits on this committee. In the first cohort, only five of twelve completed the checkpoint successfully.

I trusted Michael and Don that resources would be allocated, and I trusted Rachel that the necessary teacher licensure elements would be accounted for. This left me with the still daunting task of focusing on music pedagogy courses. In line with Lake Forest College ideals, each course, instead of being referred to as a “Methods Class,” would be referred to as “The Art of Teaching Sequence.” I had already decided there would not be separate tracks for instrumentalists, vocalists, and elementary generalists, so I next had to determine the number of necessary courses. Job postings are increasingly including an eclectic set of teaching requirements—not just band, choir, orchestra, or general, but a hybrid of all of these. Based upon research on peer institutions and other licensure majors at the college, the number seven was arrived at.

Based upon this number, classes needed to be organized to account for all knowledge and skills I expected students to be exposed to. This meant a necessarily creative and sacrificial approach. All band instruments would need to be taught in one semester; however, I was able to negotiate meeting everyday for an hour and a half. This provided an ideal opportunity to implement the professional development school model for additional experiences and instruction. There was no room for a designated conducting course, so this material is embedded in the Art of Teaching Ensembles courses, again, meeting everyday. The way we were able to scaffold the courses provides the instructors and students an opportunity to combine skills often separated into different courses—for example conducting and administration of an ensemble.

Unique Elements at a Small Liberal Arts College

The participants spoke to what makes music education at a liberal arts college unique. “We have no pressure on us to become a degree mill. We can be selective about our students, in short, we have the potential to surprise the music education world in a few years!” (Don,

journal, January). For Rachel, her beliefs were centered on the conceptual framework developed by the education department: “It comes from a focus on social justice, individual mentoring, and the importance of reflective practice, and takes advantage of our small program size... We do not aim to grow the program to as large a size as possible, but instead to enroll only the strongest candidates possible” (Rachel, journal, January).

For me (Scott), the lack of expectation for large cohort size was a relief. This gave me the opportunity to explore different options for curriculum development including professional development schools. The level of communication and collaboration between the education department, the music department, and myself was immensely helpful. This level of communication would have been much more difficult on a larger campus. Many decisions could be made immediately with very little “red tape.” I was the only music education person able to look critically at the Art of Teaching courses and to design the courses. Don and Rachel provided insight throughout which was immensely helpful, but often lacked music education specific material. Being the only music education professor on campus resulted in great autonomy, but often a sense of isolation. Curricularly, creative initiatives such as using the ukulele, incorporating conducting into other classes, and implementing the professional development school model were easy to incorporate, which could be difficult in larger programs and departments.

There was great concern amongst the faculty-at-large about creating a professional major, such as music education, at a liberal arts college. I had to navigate this carefully. A majority vote of the faculty was necessary to approve the major. For me, it was about presenting the artistry of music and teaching music. While the credits appeared skewed towards a singular focus, the vast breadth of knowledge and skills did not veer from the ideals of liberal arts

college values. The music education major passed unanimously (November, 2012) and was similarly approved by the State Educator Preparation and Licensure Board (January, 2013).

Discussion and Conclusion

Myers (2003) stressed the importance of collaboration between music and education schools (in this case departments). The interactions between Rachel, Don, and myself were essential. The criteria both Rachel and Don articulated for the successful candidate to be hired stressed the importance for music teacher educators to be well versed in education and curriculum in addition to music education pedagogy.

The content of the major emerged from collaboration and was largely based upon my personal philosophy and what was feasible. I attempted to embed the maximum number of music education courses (Kimpton, 2005), professional development school experiences (Robbins & Stein, 2005), and service-learning components (Burton & Reynolds, 2009). These unique elements were possible due to already established programs (service learning in the fieldwork experience) and the acceptance of small cohort size. The participants acknowledged the necessary number of music education courses and wished there could have been more; however, it was not possible within the framework of Lake Forest College.

The isolation felt by being the only music education professor at a liberal arts college is similar to the isolation often felt by a music teacher in a K-12 school (Conway & Zerman, 2004). While three other music faculty members surrounded me it was surprising the difference between music and music education in higher education. My music colleagues were focused on performance/theory and did not realize the magnitude of a music teacher education program. This led to many department meetings where I had to share a pedagogical perspective with my colleagues. I was able to get mentorship separately in music and education areas, but for

answers to questions regarding music education, I had to contact people outside the college in the field. I was left to make the connections between Don and Rachel's worlds for myself. Induction and mentoring, touted as a benefit for K-12 music teachers (Conway, 2003), also seems necessary for college and university music teacher educators.

Future research would be beneficial to track this major to see how effective it is and what changes are necessary. The first cohort of students will enter the program Fall 2013. Further, investigation into cross-campus collaboration and communication between music and education departments would be valuable. One critique of general education courses by music education majors is that they lack relevance. With increased communication and collaboration, the relevance could be highlighted. Implications from this experience could be valuable for music education professors at small liberal arts colleges, those involved in university/school partnerships especially professional development schools, and those looking to advocate for their music education programs on campus. A description of one liberal arts college where curriculum design is actively occurring could help others in similar institutions design and edit their curriculum. Generalizability to all liberal arts colleges is not reasonable and should be cautioned based on this one profile; however, this narrative could resonate with music teachers resulting in the transferability of findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). One further limitation of this study is that I was the sole author of this study only allowing for discussion based upon my perspectives.

This process would not have been possible without flexibility and an ability to communicate across campus and with the administration. The fact that Don, Michael, and Rachel were willing to participate in this study speaks to the value they place in collaboration. In the words of Rachel, echoing the challenge of Hammerness and Darling-Hammond (2005):

“The culture of our program infuses the beliefs that all students can succeed, and teachers should help students make connections between their community, national, and global identities” (Rachel, journal, January).

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