

What works? An exploration of the collaborative teaching strategies of secondary music educators

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Introduction

Collaborative teaching has the potential to provide crucial support to secondary music educators. Nevertheless, the use of collaborative teaching is seldom implemented in secondary music education classrooms throughout the United States. Rather, the majority of secondary music educators teach unaided in the classroom. Further, in a thriving secondary music education program, the teaching responsibilities of secondary music educators often encompass multiple performance ensembles, involving a large number of students. These music educators also frequently teach early morning and extracurricular ensemble classes. Music teachers' are expected to have the specialty knowledge to guide each of these diverse groups of students. Such substantial expectations can lead to burnout and attrition among music educators, and a growing number of music educators and researchers are exploring alternative approaches in structuring secondary music programs.

Method

In this paper, I explore the practices of a group of secondary music educators striving to create a more supportive music program for students and teachers through collaborative teaching. Stemming from data collected during an ethnographic study based on ethical care in the relationships of a team of four secondary music educators, I highlight in this paper the specific collaborative teaching strategies this team of four music educators most often employed. I selected these educators for this study because of their innovative approach to teaching, which blends autonomy, vertical alignment, and collaborative teaching. I used multiple methods to gather data, including individual and group interviews, questionnaires, artifacts, and observations to understand the development, context, and teaching approach of this team of music educators. I analyzed teachers' approach through the framework of reciprocity in Noddings's educational care theory.

Results

In my findings, I discuss which collaborative teaching strategies these music educators used during their collaboration in music ensemble rehearsals, and how and where teachers provided one another with practical support using these strategies. I draw connections from these teachers' practices to established co-teaching methods for the inclusion of a diverse student population in a single classroom. I also discuss the potential effectiveness of the strategies these teachers utilized. As teachers collaborated during ensemble rehearsals, their approach became increasingly innovative and adaptable. The use of a number of collaborative teaching strategies also seemed to have a beneficial effect on teachers' professional knowledge development.

Conclusion

The findings in this paper may enrich the limited understanding of collaborative teaching in secondary music education as I provide a clear, practical guide for the practice of collaborative teaching in secondary music education. I also explore additional collaborative teaching approaches that may be valuable to all secondary educators, but particularly music educators. I further outline how to foster a collaborative teaching environment in secondary music education. These contributions also provide valuable insights into and encouragement for the formation of collaborative teaching teams in this field.