

Preservice and Experienced Teachers' Opinions of Skills and Behaviors Important to Successful Music Teaching

By: [David J. Teachout](#)

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to compare the responses of preservice teachers and experienced teachers when asked, "What skills and behaviors are important to successful music teaching in the first three years of experience?" The sample consisted of randomly selected groups of preservice teachers (n = 35) and experienced teachers (n = 35). Subjects were given a list of teacher skills/behaviors and asked to rate the level of importance of each item using a 4-point Likert-type scale. For each item, the mean score for both groups was calculated and used to determine rank order. Of the 10 top-ranked items for each group, 7 were common to both groups. On 6 of the 40 items, there existed a difference of 10 or more rankings between the groups. Nine of the 40 items were ranked equally or within one ranking of each other. As an ex post facto measure, each of the items was placed into one of three broad skill categories (personal, musical, or teaching). A two-way ANOVA with repeated measures was used to determine that both groups rated personal skills and teaching skills as significantly more important than musical skills.

Keywords: music education | skills and behaviors

Article:

Before freshmen enter music education degree programs, their musical background and experiences tend to place them primarily in the role of the performer. Entering undergraduates in such programs generally think of themselves as performers rather than as teachers (Wolfgang, 1990). During their junior high and senior high school years, students' exposure to music has usually been as a member of either the band, choir, or orchestra. Quite often, little consideration has been given to the role of music teacher. Any thinking about the skills and behaviors needed to be a successful music teacher that these students engage in has probably been influenced by that student's high school ensemble instructor.

Once students enter the university and progress through a music teacher training program, they are increasingly exposed to opportunities to develop the skills and behaviors needed to be a

successful music teacher. By their junior year, most students have acquired observational and practical field experience. In these situations, students may observe or teach one class two to three times per week. This type of experience further enhances their exposure to the necessary skills for successful teaching. However, none of the situations from which students form their opinions (membership in junior high or high school performing ensemble, content from course work, or field experience) provides the experience of being solely responsible for student learning over an extended period of time (i.e., full-time teaching experience). Therefore, it is likely that most preservice teachers' opinions of those skills necessary for being a successful teacher are speculative.

The experienced teacher, on the other hand, has been responsible for student learning over an extended period of time. As a result, he or she has had the opportunity to devise, test, revise, and refine teaching skills and behaviors in an authentic teaching environment. In addition, the seasoned professional has had the opportunity to prioritize the importance of various teaching skills and behaviors based on proven effectiveness.

When planning a teacher training program, music education professors must decide which skills and behaviors need to be developed. Consideration should be given to the voice of experienced teachers as well as to available research. Consideration should also be given to the opinions and perceptions of preservice teachers. Such preservice teacher information could be used to provide a realistic starting point for individuals designing or revising a teacher training program.

Review of Literature

According to Yarbrough, Price, and Bowers (1991), "the successful teacher is one who can define a priori values about all aspects of teaching and demonstrate these values through overt behaviors in order to best direct the musical learning process in students" (p. 20). In several studies, experienced music teachers have been asked to identify competencies that they considered to be most important to successful teaching (Baker, 1982; Taebel, 1980). In addition, researchers have identified behaviors in studies in which effective music teachers were observed. Music teacher behaviors of eye contact, closeness to students, volume and modulation of voice, gestures, facial expressions, and pacing were initially defined by Yarbrough (1975). In a study in which teacher intensity was investigated, Madsen, Standley, and Cassidy (1989) used items from the Yarbrough list and augmented that list with enthusiasm, attention to student involvement, planning, knowledge, the ability to give short simple instructions, confidence, and the ability to maximize time on task. Porter and Brophy (1988) found that effective teachers demonstrated, among other skills, knowledge of content and teaching strategies, knowledge about the instructional needs of the students, the ability to set clear instructional goals, and the ability to communicate expectations to their students. Taebel (1990) identified 10 classroom competencies and a variety of classroom behaviors that he used to compare the performance of music teachers to other teachers. Grant and Drafall (1991) assembled a review of music education research in teacher effectiveness in which studies dating back to 1980 were examined. Madsen, Standley, Byo, and Cassidy (1992) conducted one of the few studies in which both preservice teachers and experienced teachers assessed effective teaching. Lists of teacher competencies have also been classified into larger categories, such as personal, musical, and teacher characteristics. DePugh (1987) sought the opinions of teachers, administrators, and students to determine the personal

and musical characteristics of successful high school choral conductors. In the previously cited Taebel (1980) study, music teachers were asked to rank musical and teaching competencies. Through the research literature, many lists of competencies, skills, and behaviors have been compiled. However, little research exists in which effective music-teaching competencies, skills, and behaviors have been assessed by both preservice and experienced teachers.

The purpose of this study was to compare the responses of preservice teachers and experienced teachers when asked, "What skills and behaviors are important to successful music teaching in the first 3 years of experience?" Specifically, the questions to be answered were the following: (1) Of the 10 top-ranked skills and behaviors by preservice music teachers and experienced music teachers, how many and which items were common to both groups? (2) Which, if any, of the listed skills and behaviors were rated differently between experienced music teachers and preservice music teachers by 10 or more rankings? and (3) Which, if any, of the listed skills and behaviors were ranked equally or within one ranking by both groups?

Method

The preservice music teachers were music education students who had either (a) been admitted into the professional teacher education program, (b) been approved to take the music education methods course of major emphasis, or (c) completed the music education methods course of major emphasis. None of the preservice music teachers had acquired full-time teaching experience in either a public or private school. The preservice music teachers were randomly selected from five universities, diverse in location and size (Ohio State University, University of Oklahoma, University of Alabama, University of the Pacific, and Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas). The total population of preservice music teachers in the study was approximately 125. The experienced music teachers were randomly selected from music teachers who had either served as cooperating teachers for music student teachers from Kent State University between the fall semester of 1989 and the fall semester of 1993 or were graduate students with teaching experience or professors of music education at each of the universities from which the preservice teachers were selected. The total population of experienced music teachers in this study was approximately 105. The questionnaire, sent to both groups, was completed and returned by 98 preservice music teachers and 78 experienced teachers. Of those who responded to the questionnaire, a randomly selected group of preservice music teachers ($n = 35$) and a randomly selected group of experienced music teachers ($n = 35$) were chosen for data analysis.

Table 1
Skills and Behaviors for Effective Music Teaching

1. Enthusiastic, energetic
 2. Maximize time on task
 3. Involve students in the learning process
 4. Possess competent conducting gestures
 5. Maintain student behavior (strong, but fair discipline)
 6. Have a pleasant affect; sense of humor
 7. Be knowledgeable of subject matter materials
 8. Possess good lesson planning skills
 9. Maintain an effective rehearsal pace
 10. Frequently make eye contact with students
 11. Move toward and among the group
 12. Be goal-oriented
 13. Maintain a high level of professionalism
 14. Employ a positive approach
 15. Possess excellent singing skills
 16. Possess musical knowledge (theory, history, etc.)
 17. Use effective physiological communication (body language)
 18. Display confidence
 19. Maintain high musical standards
 20. Possess excellent ear-training skills
 21. Be knowledgeable and proficient with secondary instruments
 22. Be patient
 23. Be organized
 24. Have excellent speaking skills (diction, tonal inflection, vocabulary)
 25. Easily develop a positive rapport with people
 26. Possess proficient piano skills
 27. Be creative, imaginative, and spontaneous
 28. Maintain excellent classroom management and procedures
 29. Be able to motivate students
 30. Display a high level of musicianship
 31. Possess excellent sight-reading (sight-singing) skills
 32. Possess strong leadership skills
 33. Be flexible and adaptable
 34. Be able to present a lesson with clarity
 35. Be able to manage finances well
 36. Possess an understanding of teaching/learning strategies
 37. Be able to work with students of different ages and abilities
 38. Employ a variety of materials/activities within a lesson
 39. Manage stress well
 40. Be mature and have self-control
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The questionnaire listed 40 teacher skills and behaviors (see Table 1). The items were generated from three sources: (a) an open-ended questionnaire administered to preservice music teachers from three universities, (b) a thorough search of the related research literature, and (c) a verification of the related literature list by five "expert" teachers (public school music teachers who have been recognized by peers as being successful and have accumulated at least 10 years of teaching experience). The top 20 (most frequently mentioned) items from the expert teacher/related literature list and the top 20 items from the preservice teacher list (being careful not to duplicate items from the expert teacher/related literature list) were combined to produce the final version of the 40-item questionnaire. The questionnaire contained a list of the skills and behaviors that both preservice and experienced teachers believed were important to successful teaching. For each of the listed items, the respondents were asked to rate the level of importance

in order for a promising young teacher to be successful in the first 3 years, using a 4-point scale [4-extremely important, 3-very important, 2-important, 1--somewhat important].

For each item, the mean score for both groups was calculated and used as a basis for determining rank order (see Table 2). As an ex post facto measure, each of the items was placed into one of three broad categories (personal skills and behaviors, musical skills and behaviors, and professional teaching skills and behaviors). A two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with repeated measures was calculated to determine whether significant differences existed between the two groups in any of the three skill categories (see Table 3).

Results

Of the 10 top-ranked items of each group, 7 skills and behaviors were common to both groups. The 7 items common to both groups' list of 10 top-ranked items included "Be mature and have self-control," "Be able to motivate students," "Possess strong leadership skills," "Involve students in the learning process," "Display confidence," "Be organized," and "Employ a positive approach."

On six of the 40 items, there existed a difference of 10 or more rankings between the preservice and experienced teachers. Experienced teachers ranked Item 1 ("Be enthusiastic, energetic") 3rd, whereas preservice teachers ranked it 15th. Experienced teachers ranked Item 2 ("Maximize time on task") 12th, whereas preservice teachers ranked it 22nd. Experienced teachers ranked Item 5 ("Maintain student behavior") 1st, while preservice teachers ranked it 14th. Experienced teachers ranked Item 22 ("Be patient") 7th, whereas preservice teachers ranked it 19th. Experienced teachers ranked Item 27 ("Be creative, imaginative, and spontaneous") 30th; preservice teachers ranked it 19th. Experienced teachers ranked Item 30 ("Display a high level of musicianship") 22nd; preservice teachers ranked it 11th.

Experienced and preservice teachers ranked 9 of the 40 items equally or within one ranking of each other. Both groups ranked Item 29 ("Be able to motivate students") 2nd. Experienced and preservice teachers ranked Item 18 ("Display confidence") 3rd and 4th, respectively. Experienced and preservice teachers ranked Item 33 ("Be flexible and adaptable") 12th and 13th, respectively. Both groups ranked Item 39 ("Manage stress well") 19th. Experienced and preservice teachers ranked Item 37 ("Able to work with students of different ages and abilities") 24th and 25th, respectively. Experienced and preservice teachers ranked Item 25 ("Easily develops a positive rapport with people") 26th and 27th, respectively. Experienced and preservice teachers ranked Item 11 ("Move toward and among the group") 33rd and 34th, respectively. Both groups ranked Item 26 ("Possess proficient piano skills") and Item 15 ("Possess excellent singing skills") 39th and 40th, respectively.

A two-way ANOVA with repeated measures was calculated to determine whether significant differences existed between the two groups in any of the three skill categories (personal skills and behaviors, musical skills and behaviors, and professional teaching skills and behaviors). Although no interaction effect was found, there existed main effect differences in both teacher type and skill type (see Table 3). Preservice teachers ranked musical skills ($M = 3.140$) significantly ($p < .05$) lower than personal skills ($M = 3.479$) and teaching skills ($M = 3.455$).

Experienced teachers also ranked musical skills (M = 2.802) significantly ($p < .05$) lower than personal skills (M = 3.306) and teaching skills (M= 3.322).

Table 2
Preservice Teachers' (PST) and Experienced Teachers' (ET) Item Means, Rankings, and Type—
Personal Skill, Musical Skill, and Teaching Skill

Item	Type ^a	Mean PST	Rank PST	Mean ET	Rank ET
1. Be enthusiastic; energetic	P	3.542	15 ^b	3.600	3 ^b
2. Maximize time on task	T	3.371	22 ^b	3.485	12 ^b
3. Involve students...	T	3.742	4	3.514	9
4. Conducting gestures	M	3.142	34	2.514	38
5. Maintain student behavior	T	3.571	14 ^b	3.714	1 ^b
6. Sense of humor	P	3.257	30	3.114	24
7. Knowledge of materials	M	3.685	7	3.485	12
8. Lesson-planning skills	T	3.371	22	3.028	27
9. Effective rehearsal pace	T	3.314	25	3.314	20
10. Frequent eye contact	T	3.514	17	3.285	21
11. Move among the group	T	3.142	34 ^c	2.657	33 ^c
12. Goal-oriented	P	3.542	15	3.400	17
13. Professionalism	P	3.514	17	3.428	15
14. Employ positive approach	T	3.657	9	3.571	6
15. Singing skills	M	2.371	40 ^c	2.114	40 ^c
16. Music theory/history	M	3.028	37	2.857	32
17. Body language	T	3.228	31	2.628	34
18. Display confidence	P	3.742	4 ^c	3.600	3 ^c
19. High musical standards	M	3.600	13	3.514	9
20. Ear-training skills	M	3.171	32	2.942	28
21. Secondary instruments	M	3.171	32	2.542	37
22. Patience	P	3.428	19 ^b	3.542	7 ^b
23. Be organized	P	3.714	6	3.600	3
24. Speaking skills	P	3.285	27	3.142	23
25. Positive rapport	P	3.285	27 ^c	3.057	26 ^c
26. Piano skills	M	2.600	39 ^c	2.200	39 ^c
27. Creativity, imagination	P	3.428	19 ^b	2.914	30 ^b
28. Classroom management	T	3.685	7	3.428	15
29. Motivate students	T	3.771	2 ^c	3.685	2 ^c
30. High musicianship	M	3.628	11 ^b	3.257	22 ^b
31. Sight-reading skills	M	3.114	36	2.600	35
32. Leadership skills	P	3.771	2	3.514	9
33. Flexible, adaptable	P	3.628	11 ^c	3.485	12 ^c
34. Presents clear lessons	T	3.657	9	3.400	17
35. Manage finances	P	2.942	38	2.600	35
36. Teaching strategies	T	3.371	22	2.942	28
37. Work w/many ages	T	3.314	25 ^c	3.114	24 ^c
38. Many materials/activities	T	3.285	27	2.914	30
39. Manage stress well	P	3.428	19 ^c	3.342	19 ^c
40. Mature (Self-control)	P	3.800	1	3.542	7

^a = Under "Type," P = personal skill, M = musical skill, and T = teaching skill.

^b = Preservice and experienced teachers ranked these items differently by 10 or more rankings.

^c = Both groups ranked these items equally or within one ranking of each other.

Table 3
Summary of Two-Way ANOVA with Repeated Measures Analysis

Effect	df effect	MS effect	df error	MS error	F	p level
(1) Teacher	1	3.167801	68	.4151162	7.63112	.00737
(2) Skills (1 × 2)	2	3.707400	136	.0689274	53.78704	.00000
	2	.122436	136	.0689274	1.7763	.17316

Discussion and conclusion

In an effort to help undergraduate music education students develop the skills and behaviors that would best insure success during the first several years of teaching, university music educators may want to know (1) the skills and behaviors that experienced teachers perceive to be most important to successful teaching, and (2) those skills and behaviors that preservice teachers perceive to be most important to successful teaching. By comparing the responses of the two groups, university music educators may be better able to determine the most effective starting point from which to train future teachers.

The first research question was "Of the 10 top-ranked skills and behaviors by preservice music teachers and experienced music teachers, how many and which items were common to both groups?" Seven items were common to both groups' list of 10 top-ranked skills and behaviors. Most of the items that experienced teachers indicated were most important to successful teaching were also indicated to be the most important by preservice teachers. With consideration given to such an agreement, it may be concluded that undergraduate learning experiences are generally effective in emphasizing the skills and behaviors that are most important to initial teaching success.

The second research question was "Which, if any, of the listed skills and behaviors were rated differently between experienced music teachers and preservice music teachers by 10 or more rankings?" On six of the 40 items, there existed a difference of 10 or more rankings. There were four skills and behaviors that experienced teachers ranked 10 or more places higher than did preservice teachers. Those items were "Be enthusiastic, energetic," "Maximize time on task," "To maintain student behavior (strong, but fair discipline)," and "Be patient." Experienced teachers believed that these skills or behaviors were more crucial for initial success than did preservice teachers. Perhaps music education professors could better accomplish their mission by emphasizing the importance of enthusiasm in the classroom, patience, maximizing time on task, and maintaining fair classroom discipline. There were two skills and behaviors that experienced teachers ranked 10 or more places lower than did preservice teachers. Those items were "Be creative, imaginative, and spontaneous" and "Display a high level of musicianship." It could be concluded that experienced teachers believe that these particular skills are less crucial for initial success than do preservice teachers.

The third research question was "Which, if any, of the listed skills and behaviors were ranked equally or within one ranking by both groups?" Nine of the 40 items were ranked equally or within one ranking of each other by both experienced and preservice teachers. Those items were "Be able to motivate students," "Display confidence," "Be flexible and adaptable," "Manage stress well," "Be able to work with students of different ages and abilities," "Easily develop a positive rapport with people," "Move toward and among the group," "Possess proficient piano skills" and "Possess excellent singing skills." These 9 items were somewhat evenly spaced over the 40 ranked items from high to low. Both groups placed two of the items, "Be able to motivate students" and "Display confidence," within the top four rankings. With consideration given to an agreement of opinion by teachers with such varying degrees of experience, one may conclude that these items are thought to be particularly important to successful teaching. At the low end of the rankings, both groups ranked "Possess proficient piano skills" and "Possess excellent singing

skills" 39th and 40th, respectively. Although these skills were considered somewhat important by both groups, they were not considered to be crucial for success within the first 3 years of experience. Currently, in most undergraduate music education curricula, it is not uncommon to find a one- or two-credit course requirement devoted to improving piano skills or singing skills. Meanwhile, techniques of motivating students and building personal confidence are rarely, if at all, mentioned within the context of a broad-based methods course. Based on the results of this study, it could be suggested that university music educators place a stronger emphasis on assisting preservice music teachers to develop techniques for motivating students and for building self-confidence. Additionally, it could be suggested that university music educators reconsider the amount of time and emphasis devoted to the improvement of piano skills and singing skills. It should be mentioned, however, that the importance of piano skills and singing skills for choral and general music teachers may be higher than for instrumental music teachers.

As an ex post facto measure, each of the items were classified into one of three categories (personal skills, musical skills, and teaching skills). A two-way ANOVA with repeated measures was calculated to determine whether significant differences existed between the two groups in any of the three skill categories. It was found that personal skills and teaching skills were considered by both groups to be more important to initial teaching success than musical skills. Due to a possible ceiling effect in the mean scores, however, any implications based on these particular results need to be developed with caution. At the very least, further study investigating the importance of personal, musical, and teaching skills to initial teaching success is needed.

Based on the results of this study, it can be hypothesized that preservice teachers and experienced teachers generally agree on which skills and behaviors are considered to be most important to initial teaching success. The rankings of six of the 40 items, however, were considerably different between the two groups. Further research, investigating these six items ("Be enthusiastic, energetic," "Maximize time on task," "Maintain student behavior," "Be patient," "Be creative, imaginative, and spontaneous," and "Display a high level of musicianship") and reasons for the difference in rankings, is warranted. Some items that both groups agreed upon as being extremely important to initial teaching success (motivation and confidence) are not normally included as part of the undergraduate music education program, whereas other items that were believed to be not as important to initial teaching success (piano skills and singing skills) are traditionally included in the undergraduate curriculum. Perhaps further investigation into the importance of these particular aspects of the undergraduate music education program is needed.

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