

What You Should Know BEFORE You Go

The student teaching experience is one of the most transformational times in the music education curriculum. It is a time to begin teaching while surrounded by a safety net. This safety net consists of the university music education professor and the mentor teacher; both of which have expectations of the student teacher during this time.

The university professor expects to see evidence of knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

Knowledge is the sum of experiences gained throughout the degree program:

- Subject knowledge
- Lesson planning knowledge
- Differentiated learning knowledge
- Pedagogy knowledge
- Curriculum knowledge

Skills are the ability to use one's knowledge effectively:

- Personal Skills
- Teaching Skills
- Musical Skills
- People Skills

Dispositions are character traits, including the tendency or inclination of one's actions:

- Ethical
- Responsible
- Maintain high standards of personal and professional conduct
- Inclusive of diversity
- Collaborative
- Reflective
- Receptive to feedback
- Engaged and committed to the teaching profession

Developing professional music educators requires the synthesis of knowledge, skills, and dispositions. All are essential components of today's successful music teachers. The university music education professor can provide feedback, guidance, and pathways for additional information and help.

The mentor teacher/student teacher relationship is very important and has the potential to last a lifetime. Search for a mentor teacher with similar philosophies and teaching styles. The mentor teacher expects patience, collaboration, and questions from the student teacher.

Patience:

- Begin by observing classes, and learning routines
- Teaching most often begins in small segments such as teaching warm ups, teaching sectionals, or teaching one selection for a performance
- It takes time to develop both classroom management and teaching skills
- Keep an open mind
- Listen
- Understand that there are many right ways to do things

Collaboration:

- Work together with the mentor teacher and discuss lesson planning before teaching the lesson
- Work together with school faculty and administration
- Work together with parents and the community
- Work to become involved in the school by volunteering to help with events

Ask for help:

- Always ask why they did what they did (at appropriate times)
- Be curious
- Keep a journal (electronic or paper) for each day - take notes and reflect
- Accept feedback and advice gracefully
- Be humble

The student teacher/mentor teacher relationship is very special. The mentor teacher will serve as a model both professionally and personally for the student teacher. The student teacher must always remember that they are a guest in the

mentor teacher's program. The primary responsibility for the mentor teacher is to provide a quality music education for their students.

The mentor teacher will be a reference throughout the teaching career of Find ways to strengthen this connection and maximize your mentor teacher's respect:

- Be on time
- Dress professionally
- Take initiative to be helpful WITHOUT being told to do so
- Know the school's discipline plan
- Attend professional meetings and conferences
- Invest in all parts of the job – even the grunt work (with a smile)
- Strive to always have a positive attitude
- Say thank you

Think of the student teaching phase as the starting point in your career. After years of intensive academic work, it is exciting to enter into one of the most enjoyable and rewarding professions. As a student teacher, you will bring new energy and innovative ideas to music education. It is time to join the ranks of thousands of music teachers and change the world through music.

Dr. Mary Land
Western Michigan University
mary.land@wmich.edu