



THE VAULT

The official newsletter of CSU'S Middle School Outreach Ensembles (MSOE) 2023



In this edition:

Taking the Leap - 1-2

Ignite, Chunk, Chew - 2

From Student to Teacher - 3

Meet Our Master Teachers! - 4

Letter From the Editor -5

Taking the Leap

Ben Landfair, Feedback Coordinator and Conductor



This year of MSOE, I have the pleasure of being the conductor of the Aggie Band, the Feedback System Coordinator, and a Teaching Artist. Each of these titles brings a unique set of responsibilities and challenges that I have not taken before.

I am leading a large ensemble every week, creating objectives for teaching artists, detailing seating charts, creating viable forms of receiving feedback, and teaching my exceptional group of clarinetists in a sectional. It has become apparent as we begin our third week that this year of MSOE will be a time of great growth for me, both as a teacher and as an individual. However, in order to achieve that growth, I must be willing to take a leap into the unknown. I must be willing to learn from our fantastic master teachers, our illustrious senior administration team, our wonderful feedback team, and my peers. I must be willing to experiment and take risks to learn new styles and techniques and how to utilize them in an authentic and beneficial way. While this is not unique to myself, I believe I speak for the entirety of the MSOE teaching team when I say that these are key elements for us as we wrap up the first trimester and begin planning for the rest of this semester.

I began taking my leap into growth by taking up the mantle of conductor. As a conductor for the Aggie Band, I have been learning many new techniques and ways to teach large ensembles. Conducting has had a dramatic learning curve as I acclimate to a completely different side of the music world than what I'm used to. I am no longer solely responsible for understanding one part and how it fits into the whole, but am now responsible for the whole of the piece and how to intertwine each part to create music. I began this journey by learning what it means to do a score study and learn a piece in its entirety. Then I learned that I stand incorrectly when I conduct- this may sound trivial, but it was a true eye opener which relieved a lot of tension and pain in my body while greatly improving my presence on the podium.

Continued on page 2

Taking the Leap (continued)

With my score study completed and an idea of how to conduct, I began planning for the first week of this year's MSOE. From that point on, I needed to learn how to incorporate teaching cycles with larger groups. I could stand up in front of them and have the students play through our music all day to no avail, or I could focus our activities to invoke a conducive learning environment. It took the first week of trying to reinvent the wheel and a gentle reminder to come to the realization that the strategies that I've used in small group settings are still effective with a large ensemble. With my new found knowledge, I was able to approach week two with confidence. The second week showed me where my weaknesses lie and has allowed me to set personal development goals to work towards this semester. Being a conductor brings me so much joy. Interacting with so many students is truly remarkable and adds drive to be the best I can.



ToT Artist Adler Street assists with Ram Band percussion



IGNITE, CHUNK, CHEW

Madison Kubala, Conductor and Teaching Artist

This week, I've been reading Zaretta Hammond's book *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*. Ms. Hammond created the "Ignite, Chunk, Chew, Review" teaching cycle as a method for building intellectual capacity through information processing. Hammond draws on learning modalities and habits of mind that are prominent in oral cultures to help students become independent learners.

The brain processes information in three stages: input, elaboration, and application. During the input phase, the brain simply decides what information to pay attention to. The brain can store about seven pieces of information in the short term memory for 5-20 seconds. The elaboration phase involves making the new information memorable and meaningful.

Students need to create relationships between new and old information, organize information into systems, and recognize patterns. During elaboration, information moves to the working memory and can be stored for 15-20 minutes. Finally, students need a chance to apply their new knowledge through real-life situations and deliberate practice. Application must occur 24-48 hours after learning in order for information to be stored in the long-term memory.

The "Ignite, Chunk, Chew, Review" teaching cycle guides students through these three stages of information processing: "Ignite" involves getting the brain's attention. Students cannot learn what they aren't paying attention to. Ignition activities are short, active calls to learning. Some examples include call and response, hand clapping, drumming, short talk activities, or powerful images or quotes.

Next comes "chunk", where the teacher makes new information digestible. The teacher inputs new information in chunks that can be feasibly remembered and processed. Hammond refers to this phase as "feeding the brain right-sized pieces of information." For example, you may rehearse a new piece in four measure chunks, instead of running the entire A section at once.

Active processing of new information occurs during the "chew" phase. The teacher helps the students build cognitive routines that help them to create relationships between old and new material, understand how information fits into a system, and the perspectives involved. These routines can involve writing or drawing prompts, creating rhymes and melodies, talking to others, creating graphic organizers, noting similarities and differences, or creating stories.

Finally, "review" or "create" is where students apply their knowledge. The purpose of this phase is to review and practice new skills in order to strengthen newly formed neural pathways. Review can include games, long-term projects, or solving problems.

So how do we incorporate this research into MSOE? This teaching cycle could be used as a recursive process in rehearsal. First, get the students' attention. Then, choose four measures of music and break it into chunks. The first chunk would be notes and rhythms, the next chunk is articulation, next is dynamics, and so on. You could also think of the chunks as layers of musical skills that need to be executed simultaneously in performance. After each chunk (or layer), chew it! Create activities where students process the new information. After learning the notes and rhythms you could have students practice hearing the music in their mind first, then play it for a partner. Continue in the chunk-chew loop until you've covered all the layers they need. Finally, you can move on to review/create. Perform the four measures as a whole ensemble, and have the students self-assess. All of this information comes from Chapter 8 of Zaretta Hammond's book, *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*.



Members of the Orchestra experiment with Ghanaian Ewe drumming as a part of this year's Social Justice curriculum

From Student to Teacher: Trying-on-Teaching

Riley Leivonen, Trying-on-Teaching Artist

In the 2018-2019 school year, I was a 7th grader who was genuinely in love with music. I was always either playing or thinking about playing and would jump at literally any chance to play that there was. My band director at the time, Ellen Ditmer, saw the fire in my eyes and told me about MSOE. I immediately said yes, not only for the chance to play more music, but also to get to play in a bigger ensemble outside of my tiny school. I showed up to MSOE to find a second family and a truly special place like I had never experienced; so special that the following year when my passion had disappeared because of burnout and being bullied by my first chair I still went back one more time. During that time, I didn't know why I was still playing, but getting to MSOE on night one of 2020 made everything make sense. It's MSOE that led me to not give up on music after the pandemic- I committed to whatever highschool band we were allowed to have and committed to going all out, all the time, a decision I never regretted. While my memories of MSOE faded during my freshman year, one day during sophomore year as I was walking into the band room, I saw a poster for MSOE's Trying on Teaching program and was flooded with memories. I went home that day and started my application, I then doubted myself for a while staring at my computer screen debating if it was worth hitting submit because I truly didn't know if I was good enough.



After lots of work convincing myself plus some encouragement and excitement from my current band director, Kyle Freesen, I submitted the application. While I didn't expect anything, about a month later I got my acceptance to be a ToT for the 2022 MSOE season and I was ecstatic. I had a shaky start that year with lots of anxiety and imposter syndrome, but with the help of my mentor and all of the amazing staff that work to create that true family magic of MSOE I was able to finish the year strong and had a lot of fun. On the last night of MSOE 2022, I was already thinking about if I would come back and although concert day was a ton of fun the answer sitting in my mind was an "I don't know, but probably not". I don't fully remember exactly why I felt that way but with hopes of starting at Front Range Community College and lots of other new commitments I didn't know if I would still be able to make it work. That completely changed when I was leaving and saying my goodbyes Dr. Johnson asked me "Will you be back next year?" and in that moment I immediately knew coming back for 2023 was meant to be. I submitted my application and got another acceptance. I was even more excited than I had been the first time. MSOE definitely calls for late nights and some exhaustion, but I would say it also calls for the best time you've ever had and a truly amazing family, a family that I am honored to be a part of.



Meet Our Master Teachers!



Amy Martinson has taught urban music education for 21 years in the Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Boulder, and Denver Public School Systems. She has taught both general music and middle school, band and orchestra. For the past 8 years she has been in administration as the Music Instructional Curriculum Specialist for Denver Public Schools where she is responsible for setting the music education vision for teachers and students, writing curriculum and assessments, coaching teachers instructionally, and designing all music education professional development.

Before her career as a music educator, she was a music therapist in the Milwaukee school system where part of her job was to adapt music, instruction, and instruments for middle school and high school band/orchestra students with special needs. Her training as a therapist ingrained in her a philosophy of music for ALL students, and inclusion for everyone in music classes.

"I can't think of a better job than teaching and making music with people all day either students or adults and I am here to support you in your journey of music education."



Hollie Ryckman is currently a music teacher and the arts senior team lead at Denver West High School in Denver Public Schools. In this hybrid position, she teaches music classes and supports the arts teachers at her school. Mrs. Ryckman is a strong advocate for equity, accessibility, and inclusion for all students by striving for a safe and student-centered classroom. Students in her classroom frequently engage in music experiences that reflect their interests, identities, and experiences including composing, arranging, exploring, and performing their own music and music of their peers and critiquing current and past music practices and traditions. In addition to teaching choir and guitar, she serves in several leadership roles within her school, district, and state in community, education, and music-specific organizations. She is a certified Transitional Native Language Instructor (Spanish) and a Concurrent Enrollment Instructor with Community College of Denver. She received her master's degree from Colorado State University and her bachelor's degree from CU-Boulder. (Go Buffarams!) In her free time, Mrs. Ryckman enjoys being outdoors, traveling, and spending time with her husband, dog, and 6-month old daughter.



Matt Banks teaches middle school and high school Concert Band and Modern Band at Pinnacle Charter School in Federal Heights, CO. He graduated from CSU in 2015 with a Bachelor's in Music Education, and received a Master's of Music Education from Boston University in 2021. He previously taught in Rifle, CO and in East Palo Alto, CA. When not teaching he enjoys reading, baking, and walking his bulldog Figgy.



Teaching Artist Lucy McCrossan leads a sectional for the Aggie Band flute section



Teaching Artist Olivia Calzaretta answers questions during an Aggie Band saxophone sectional

THE SEED BANK

From TED Talks, presentations, teaching techniques and educational books, new seeds are being added every week!

Check out what's growing by visiting [https://tinyurl.com/2p8jp37c!](https://tinyurl.com/2p8jp37c)

Letter from the Editor

I was really impressed with our Social Justice activities this week- from Spanish Flamenco dancing in Aggie Band to Ghanaian Ewe drumming in the Orchestra to the Japanese Sōran Bushi song and dance in Ram Band, we are exploring and celebrating communities from cultures all around the world.

Music is truly a universal language, and each culture's music is distinctly valuable in its own way- it's crucial for us to look beyond the familiar in order to grow as musicians and as people. It's so exciting to be exploring the world of music in MSOE!

