Researchers have identified student teaching as an important component of preservice music teacher education (Draves, 2013; Rideout & Feldman, 2002). The quality of this experience is contingent on the cooperating teacher’s (CT) ability to develop teaching knowledge, create productive learning relationships, and guide reflection (Draves, 2008). Despite their importance, the study of CTs’ qualities and their preparation for this role remains conceptually underdeveloped.

We propose a framework for addressing the qualities of CTs necessary for engaging and sustaining a student teacher’s (ST) development during student teaching. We also discuss these qualities in terms of intellectual habits of mind or “notions,” and offer them as means to situate the CT’s role as that of “model and a mentor” (Glenn, 2006) and for formulating action within the preparation program.

**Notion 1. Understanding contemporary constructs of learning**

CTs have conceptual/practical understanding of learning principles that serve as teaching benchmarks: (a) learning is an active construction process, (b) learning is an individual and social phenomenon, and (c) learner differences are strengths and resources (Wilson & Petersen, 2006). CTs model and mentor STs to use strategies that (a) move from procedural to generative and critical thinking focuses (Blythe, 1998), (b) “teach for musical understanding” through problem solving and collaboration (Wiggins, 2000), and (c) relate content to cultural contexts that encompass contributions of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

**Notion 2. Understanding the role of context and its specificity**

CTs realize that teaching contexts are one of many that STs encounter over their careers. To help student teachers understand how context and specificity function, CTs articulate their work as (a) intellectual—focused on pedagogical problem-solving and study of the interactions between students and subject matter, (b) varied—built on metaphors to capture situations and roles (e.g., “teacher as coach”), and (c) shared—creating conversations within a community of learners (Schwab, 1976).

**Notion 3. Understanding narrative constructions of self and interaction**

CTs have a sense of how one’s self—personality, cultural experiences, and beliefs—shapes the teacher one becomes (Britzman, 2003, Thompson, 2007). This manifests itself in reflecting on factors that have contributed to the CT’s development, and acknowledging that all teachers have unique subjectivities. Experimentation, open mindedness and inclusion of STs’ personal narratives empower them and cultivate a sense of agency (Campbell & Barrett, 2013).

**Notion 4. Engaging in critical reflectivity within the context of teaching as problem posing**

Mentoring STs is opportunity for CTs to reflect on their own practice, and to invite STs into that process. A stance of teaching-as-inquiry cultivates a “pedagogy of investigation” whereby STs can critically reflect on their development through question posing, documentation, and critique. CTs acknowledge that teaching knowledge is developmental and provisional. They understand that STs are learners, and like themselves, continue to be learners throughout their careers.
These four notions can help music teacher education programs:

- Establish a framework of responsibilities for mentoring STs and
- Deliberate on criteria for selecting CTs and evaluating the student teaching component of the music teacher preparation program.

Moving to a more integrated and criteria-driven cooperating teacher selection process requires commitments from university preparation programs, school districts (and in some cases unions) that will likely result in structural, financial, policy, and programmatic changes.

REFERENCES


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