Workshop Reflection

By: Carinna Sabetti

Word Count: 249

On Saturday November 17th, 2018, all the music education students were given the opportunity to take part in the Western Modern Band Workshop. This was an incredible experience and I am so thankful that I was able to be a part of it. If I am being honest, I was sad when it ended, I just wanted to keep learning and exploring the new ways to approach teaching music to young students. Bryan, the professor from New York who ran the workshop, was an excellent presenter for this workshop. Throughout his workshop we were able to play the guitar, learn a few modern-day pop songs, and also compose a song of our own in groups. His whole process of teaching music to elementary school kids was inspiring and there were a few points he made that really stood out to me. They were:

1. You don’t have to be the expert in the room. As educators we feel that we need to know how to do everything perfectly and today I learned that you don’t need to be perfect. You are co-learners in the classroom with your students and it creates such a powerful dynamic.
2. Focus on instant success. You should start on things that will bring your students to success. In the workshop, Bryan, the instructor, did not teach the technique of how to play the guitar or any theory. He then gradually taught us a few notes to some chords, but he just wanted to get straight into the music making of the lesson. All students want to do is apply what they have learned and start working on the instrument they are playing. Also, as they are applying theses chords when playing a song, they are learning in the process of possibly making some mistakes. I also appreciated that we all played together, and he didn’t pinpoint on a specific person to play as we all stared and listened.
3. Bring in theory when needed. Bryan mentioned that you don’t need to start with theory in order to know how to play a song. You don’t want to be teaching a certain technique or note for too long because students will lose interest. You want to keep it simple and get right into it. Of course, throughout you can then teach technique, proper terminology and theory.
4. Your future music program is not about you, it is about your students. This is very important because you want your students to be engaged throughout the year and keep their love for music strong. With this, you should see what your students are interested in and incorporate it into the activities and songs you plan out for your students.
5. Diversify more about what you do in the classroom. It is important to educate your students on the different cultural backgrounds and styles of music that originate from around the world. Picking musical experiences that are meaningful for the students will keep them engaged and motivated to work hard for their own personal goal. One thing you shouldn’t do is force them. Play the music that they like not what the teacher likes.

I really appreciated how Bryan was able to include everyone in the sing along activities with the guitars and with creating the instrumental track of a piece with our own voices and body percussion. It kept everyone engaged and when he taught us something knew he would encourage us all help each other. Overall this experience was eye opening and I am so pleased to have been a part of it. I had so much fun and learned a lot of new things about teaching student’s music.