



Paying it Forward: Mentoring a Student Teacher

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Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic
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My very first
student teacher, in
the Fall of 1993:
Laura Fitzgerald!



She was the first of 51.....



Three of my former student
teachers:

Tyler Pfalzer (Fall 2016)

Garrett Tanner (Fall 2013)

Ken Starr (Spring 2017)



Am I ready to take on
a student teacher?



You should have:

- A solid philosophy of music education.
- A firm idea of what music education is in your particular school and community.
- A good relationship with your students, one that will allow you to guide them through having a student teacher.

- Excellent organizational skills.
- A certain comfort in your school and with your own teaching.





Westfield student
Kailyn Gatto
(now graduated) and
student teacher Riley
McDonough (Fall of 2017)



Are my students ready to
have a student teacher?



Do your students:

- Trust you?
- Have the ability to be flexible?
- Have the ability to be kind and compassionate?
- Have the ability to adapt to other people?
- Talk to you honestly?



- What can you do to prepare your students for having a student teacher?
- You have to sell, sell, sell!!



What will my student teacher need from me?

- An open mind!
- A desk and a small space of their own, if possible.
- Access to the internet at school.
- A locker and padlock for their personal instruments
- Know where to park and where to enter the building.
- Scores to conduct with the ensembles.

- Instructions on how to run the copy machine and what the copier “etiquette” is.
- A tour of your room and the other places they need to know about in your school.
- Introductions to the principal and secretary.
- Introductions to the rest of the music staff.
- Instructions on how to run the technology in your room.
- Reminder to bring a lunch

What does the student teacher need to bring?

- An open mind!
- Any secondary instruments that they have or can borrow. And/or their own mouthpieces that they can use on school instruments.
- Laptop
- Binder or Google folder to save documents
- Conducting baton

- ID required by host school
- Some of my student teachers would contact me in advance, which I appreciated.
- Some of them would take a drive out to the school before their first day.



The Positives!



- This is an opportunity to “pay it forward”!
- You will be able to provide guidance to a future member of our profession.
- This also allows for some variety for your students.



David Stedje,
Spring of 2016



- You'll have an extra hand to help where needed.
- Having a student teacher always kept me a little more up to date in the world of music education.
- They made me think about EVERYTHING I did!



And.....when you take a
student teacher, you get
paid a LOT of money, so
you can buy that \$50k gold
Haynes flute you've always
dreamed of!!

....pretty much not....



.....and no, I don't own it!



**You can also show them
how much fun we have!!**

These two yahoos are NOT student teachers!!)

Annual Christmas Outfit.

My motto:
Always be classy!



The Negatives!





- It absolutely takes away time with your students.
- Having a student teacher takes up some of your free/planning time during the school day.
- It is another responsibility on your plate.
- What if the student teacher is not very good?
- Perhaps you're not really sure what to do with a student teacher.
- IT WILL MAKE YOU THINK ABOUT EVERYTHING YOU DO! (Really, this is good for you!!)



Establishing Expectations



One of the most important things you can do is to lay out the ground rules within the first few days. Find a quiet time to talk, free from distractions.

The “Talk”

- Yes, you **NEED** to talk to your student teacher about the following items! Even if it’s a little uncomfortable.
- Don’t assume that the student teacher will know what you want, or that they can read your mind.
- Really, don’t assume **ANYTHING**.

Everything I talk to the student teacher about
is because I’ve encountered it before.



Expectations



- What exactly is “appropriate dress” at your school?
- The importance of being on time, which is essentially arriving 15 minutes early.
- Impress on the student teacher that they must demonstrate responsibility and dependability.

- The importance of WORK ETHIC!
- The importance of maintaining appropriate demeanor and rapport with students.
- Maintaining appropriate demeanor and rapport with faculty/staff.



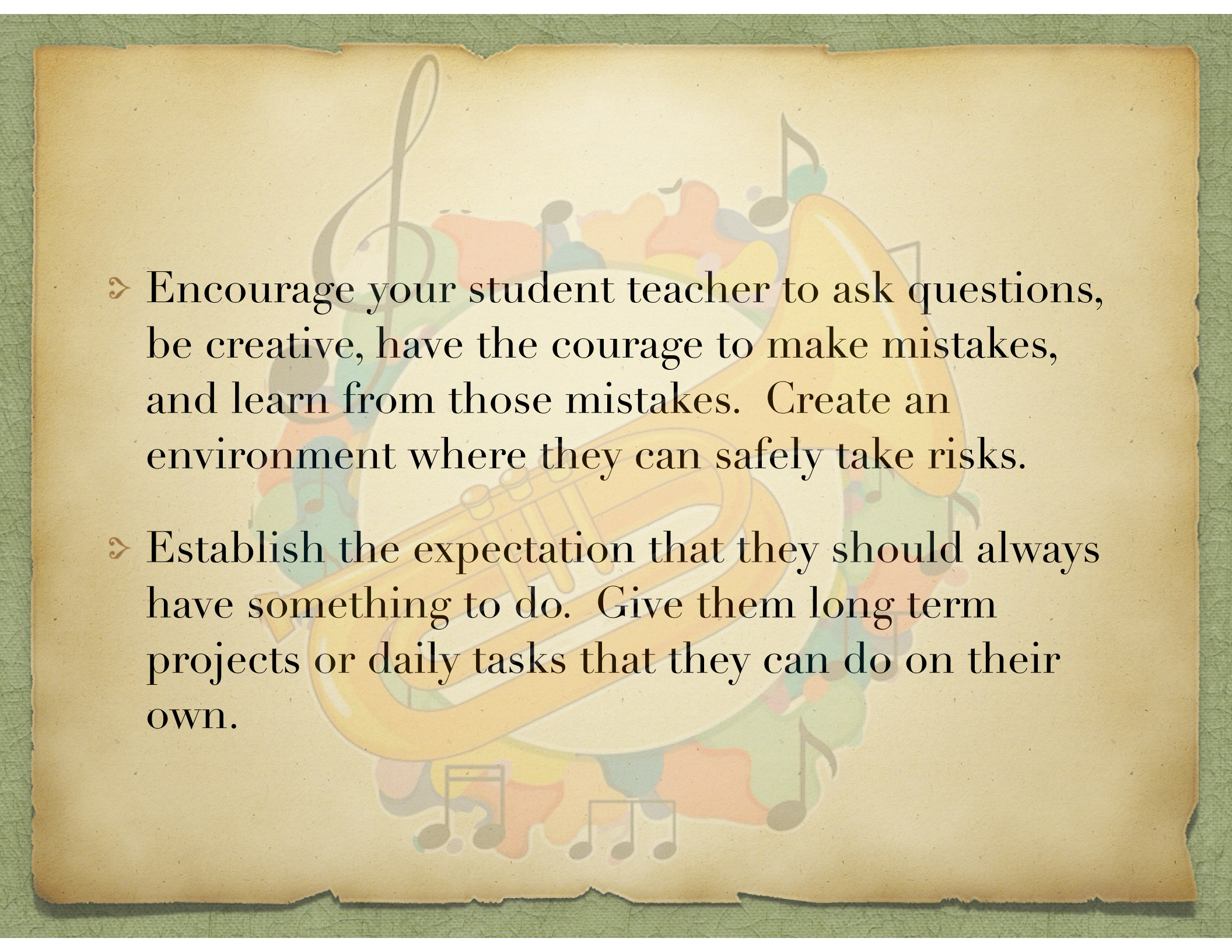


- Begin work on their state requirements (edTPA, etc.) immediately!
- Everything they do should be in preparation for their future teaching career: establish good habits NOW.
- Establish protocol for snow days. (Or whatever acts of God you experience where you live!)

- Plan for winter driving, heavy traffic, buffalo herds, lemming stampedes, or whatever. Learn to allow extra time.
- Exchange phone numbers for emergencies.
- Go over the school calendar and indicate what events you expect them to attend.
- Limit cell phone and personal computer use at school. No shopping online.



Emily Maguire, Spring, 2019
Marilia Andrade, Fall, 2018
(Performance of
our musical, "Newsies")

- 
- Encourage your student teacher to ask questions, be creative, have the courage to make mistakes, and learn from those mistakes. Create an environment where they can safely take risks.
 - Establish the expectation that they should always have something to do. Give them long term projects or daily tasks that they can do on their own.

- Talk about self - care: eating, sleeping, staying healthy. Most student teachers get sick after about 2 weeks.
- Discuss time management. Their life now is very different than it was previously.



Making the most of their time (and yours)

- I usually had them observe for one week. Because I taught 5-12, I had the luxury of having them for a full semester.
- Then get them in front of the students as soon as you can, especially if you only have them for a quarter.
- Find out what their strongest secondaries are and start from there.
- Give them a specific structure to work within for lessons, classes, and rehearsals.
- Allow them to teach as much as you can. Require them to participate in every lesson, class, and rehearsal.

- Don't send them to the copy room or to run errands while teaching is going on. They are not your personal slave.
- I gave them about 10 minutes of rehearsal time during every rehearsal. I had only 37 minutes of rehearsal every other day. I required a lesson plan in advance.
- I did not require a lesson plan in the format of edTPA. I had not the time nor the desire to read it.
- I did not require lesson plans for group band lessons, but I instructed them to follow my general structure for all lessons. If necessary, you can certainly ask them to write a lesson plan now and then.



Shannon-Kate Kelley
Fall, 2019



Becky Botsford, early 2000's



Guiding Growth

- Encourage your student teacher to PRACTICE secondary instruments and conducting.
- Practice conducting in a mirror.
- Practice transitions, beginnings and endings, dynamics, and style changes in their assigned scores.



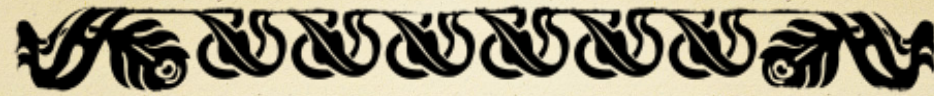
- In their unassigned time, they should look through your music library or your state music lists.
- In their practice time, they should play through some of the contest solos on secondary instruments.
- They can also look at and/or play through some of the lesson books on secondary instruments.

- Give them a long term organizational project that needs to be done. (ex. get your music library into a database of some kind!)
- Show them the shortcuts (and frustrations) of fixing broken instruments. Give them a broken instrument and see if they can figure out what's wrong with it.

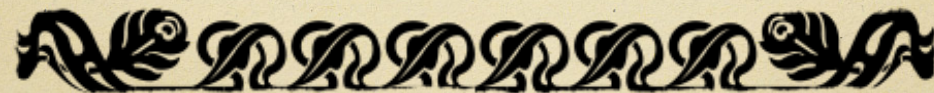


- Have open, non-threatening discussions about how they are doing. Assess every class and rehearsal. Provide written and consistent feedback.
- Show your student teacher your scores and how you mark and study them. Find things in their assigned pieces that students will struggle with. Teach the student teacher how to trouble shoot and devise solutions to problems ahead of time.





- No matter what the student teacher's level or skills happen to be when they arrive, you should expect to see learning and growth.
- This is also an opportunity to emphasize the importance of being a lifelong learner.



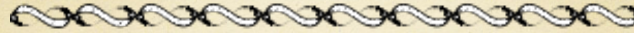


The joys of State Requirements



- If you are still under the spectre of edTPA, I am truly sorry.
- I do feel that it's really the student's responsibility to know what they need to do, and where to go if they should have questions. It's part of their journey of learning and growing.





- If your student teacher has to choose a focus group:
- edTPA does not work well in large ensemble rehearsals.
- Finding the right lesson group is a challenge. You have to cover all the parameters required.
- Whatever group or class you choose, you must “sell” it to the students. Make them think they’ve won the lottery!



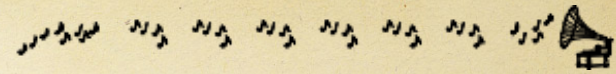


- Whatever student group is chosen as the focus group, it will interrupt what you might normally do. Try to help your student teacher choose topics that will be valuable for your students and that fit your curriculum.

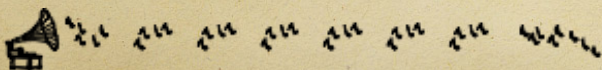


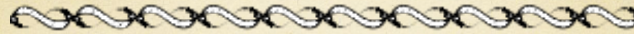


What to do
if things aren't going well.....



- You should have established an open working relationship with the college professors. Be sure to have a dialogue as soon as you feel there's a problem. DO NOT wait!
- Don't be afraid to have a heart to heart with the student teacher if the situation calls for it. This MUST take place IN PERSON.
- Be honest, but not unkind. Tell them what you think isn't going well, and ask how you can help them remedy these things.
- Keep notes and accurate records to show the college professor should the need arise.





- Do not let too much time pass. An intervention should happen sooner rather than later to help the student be more successful, or to have the student removed from student teaching.
- Remember that YOU are the cooperating teacher, and this is YOUR program. You should not have to compromise your students or your program.





- In addition, remember that YOU are your students' advocate. They should not have to put up with anything less than the student teacher's best effort.
- You should not have to put up with poor behavior and/or poor attitude. Address it immediately. Review your expectations, if necessary.



➤ And yes, there are some situations that would require immediate removal of the student teacher. You will have to involve your administration if such a case arises.



Christina Schoonover, Fall 1999



Brittany Valente, Spring 2018

Additional random thoughts

- Depending on your state's certification requirements, it is unfortunate that much of the student teacher's time can be taken up at the computer trying to fulfill the requirements, instead of working on practical things.
- You will learn to walk that fine line between giving them enough time to teach and not compromising your own time with your students.
- You should never leave your student teacher alone. You can give them responsibility without leaving them alone.



- If you want your student teacher to substitute for you during their student teaching time, check with your district to see if it's allowed.
- If your student teacher is going to be available in the following semester, and might be willing to substitute after they have completed student teaching, have them fill out the substitute application as soon as they arrive.





➤ Remember, most student teachers, if they're not completely terrified, are at least pretty nervous about student teaching.



2019
Band Trip,
Washington, DC



In closing.....

- It is YOUR responsibility to provide the finest possible example of a music educator.
- If you want them to know their scores, YOU must know yours.
- If you want them to be on time, YOU must be on time.
- If you want them to be enthusiastic, YOU must be enthusiastic.
- If you don't want them to be on their cell phone, YOU shouldn't be on yours either.
- etc., etc.....

➤ In reality, it's a lot like being a parent:

➤ Be consistent

➤ Be fair

➤ Be compassionate

➤ Be firm when you need to be

➤ Be honest

➤ Be kind



- Don't hesitate to tell them when they are out of line or not fulfilling the parameters that you laid out for them at the beginning of the semester or quarter.
- Model everything you wish them to be.



➤ I always felt like my student teacher had been successful if, at the end of their time with me, the students wanted to keep them and get rid of me!



- And above all, enjoy the experience!
- You will make a new friend, who admires you.
- Hopefully, you will have fun together!
- It will make your heart feel good!



Lily Ianaconi

Spring, 2010

Yamaha
Music Education
Excellence
“40 under 40”
(2024)





On the left, John Rafoth,
MY cooperating teacher.

He will say he started teaching
when he was 10....

He played organ at our
wedding and he has
remained a lifelong friend!

Thank you so much for being here!

Get out there and take on a student teacher!!



Questions??

