

# Teacher Research

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# Context

- Northwest Community Schools – Northwest Elementary School
- General Music, 800+ 3rd-5th Graders
- The community and school district are committed to music education



# Situation & Question

- Seven students consistently do not participate for part or all of any music class. Mrs. Ebener discusses expectations with the nonparticipating student in front of the class so all students hear the expectations. Most of the time, the student escalates their behavior (e.g., arguing about staying in musician position) and is removed from the team (i.e., class) to sit at the Pook bear table (i.e., regulation station) or go to the ABC Room (i.e., in school detention). Sometimes they become emotional (e.g., crying; visibly tense) but participate.
- I began to ask myself, how can I help students remain regulated and participating on the team for all of class?

# Cycle 1: Initial Enactment

- Observing status quo and student reactions
- Noticing when in the lesson students are inconsistently regulating themselves or not participating
- Discussions with students while taking a walk in the hallway (Why are you doing \_\_\_\_\_? What else could you do to continue participating?)

# Cycle 1: Analysis of Data

- Disruptive noises (e.g., repeating words, repetition of vowel sounds, hitting the floor or instruments) when new content is introduced
- Disruptive noises when video content is playing
- No response or participation with new content
- 2-4 students per class need to watch other students before participating (rather than being expected to participate right away)
- Disruption and complaints when students have been expected to sit in musician position for extended periods of time (e.g., direct instruction, practice, transition to next activity, etc.)

# Cycle 2: Revised Enactment

- Presenting new information with intentional positive energy (e.g., telling a story about the song, singing with enthusiasm, dancing and encouraging dancing while singing)
- Giving breaks (e.g., "okay everyone sit down for a minute", "you can sit down all the way and point to the bars for this round", etc.) from sitting in musician position - when students are not actively playing instruments - when I noticed students looked tired
- Providing time for non-responsive individuals to watch peers and then begin participating

# Cycle 2: Analysis of Data

- 6 out of 7 students are continuously participating for about two-thirds of class
- Only a couple of complaints from students about knee pain from sitting in musician position
- 7 out of 7 students excited around content (e.g., increased eye contact, smiling, dancing while singing/playing instruments)

# Cycle 3: Final Enactment

- ◉ Reframe new content learning by presenting a clear model, outlining explicit chunks, a succinct summary of what they need to do, and lastly an encouraging phrase like, "WE can do this."
- ◉ Clarifying written materials (e.g., making the letters bigger, getting rid of the staff and using boxes instead, color coding notes) so they are more easily understood by students
- ◉ Helping students come up with regulating strategies that can easily be used in class (e.g. taking a deep breath, using our "musical horse blinders", focusing on the visual rather than the auditory)

# Cycle 3: Analysis of Data

- No disruptive noises
- More than three quarters of the class participates and responds when new content is being presented
- Students making positive comments about their class work/ participation (e.g. "I did so good!", "I got this!", "That was so cool!")
- Excitement and positive comments around class content (e.g. "This song is so fun!", singing the songs in the hallway)
- Students watching other students before participating is now a regular self selected practice

# Findings

- Students are announcing in class their pride in themselves for learning and participating according to expectations.
- Students' steps to self-regulate have reduced their dysregulation to the point it is rarely necessary to step away from the team

# Findings 2

- I have improved my communication to include affirming words, an outline of meaningful segments in a process, and precise connections between purpose and practice.
- I have improved my relationships with students by meeting them where they are; that is, kindly helping them figure out what they need to change and how to take next steps to meet that change.
- Students who feel safe in class and are introduced to new content with the assumption that WE will all figure it out together are more likely to remain regulated and engaged for all of class.

# Sources

- American Orff Schulwerk Association - "Helping the Hurting" Presentation by Ray Mullins 11/16/2024
- American Orff Schulwerk Association - "Mixed Meter and Mixolydian Mashups!" - Presentation by Erika Knapp 11/15/2024
- "Teaching General Music" by Carlos Abril

# Acknowledgements

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Questions?