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Collaboration May Be The Best Thing We Model For Our Students

Phillip Clements, 2017-18 TBA Vice President

When you think about the complexity of music making in an ensemble setting there are many variables that must align in order for the desired product or outcome to be successful. Each participant has to be able to perform their part correctly and concurrently while being sensitive to the ever-changing musical landscape of tempo, dynamics, balance, style and intonation. When you consider all that is taking place, it is staggering to think that ensemble playing is even possible. Whether it is a large ensemble or chamber group, it is actually the highest form of collaboration.

Collaboration is defined as *the action of working with someone to produce or create something* and is used often in varying scenarios. When we are most effective as teachers, we collaborate on a daily basis with many different groups of people: students, faculty, support staff, parents; the list goes on.

In rehearsal, we are constantly collaborating with our students and helping them to collaborate with us and with each other. Teaching techniques such as questioning and directing listening are basic forms of collaboration. As we ask our students to collaborate, it is vital that we model collaboration for them both in and out of rehearsal. Yes, we are teaching students about music and music making, but we are also teaching them to become cooperative adults, employees and human beings.

Give some thought to what you demonstrate each day for your students outside of rehearsal. Do you show cooperation with other staff members, other members of the fine arts area, and other teachers within your school? Even when you disagree? Are you showing them how to effectively and maturely solve problems? Now ask yourself this: do you ask those things of them in rehearsal? Do you ask them to be selfless and cooperative; engaged and understanding of the bigger picture; compromising and

open to suggestion? *What we work so diligently each day in rehearsal to achieve is very much a microcosm of the way we would all like the world to work.*

Often we foster good relationships with those closest to us but do not expend the same energy in collaboration with those further removed from our daily teaching. I am fortunate to have wonderful colleagues within our Department of Music, both instrumental and vocal. We often work side by side on a number of musical endeavors and projects within the department. Over the years, we have begun to notice that our students within the instrumental and vocal areas have developed strong relationships and do the same. They see this collaboration modeled for them every day and it is intentional on our parts. With more than eighty-five percent of our students majoring in music education, we are hopeful that they have learned collaboration and will carry this level of cooperation into their own careers and to their future colleagues and students.

As with any cultural change, you have to be intentional and to define what you want the outcome to be. Take the time to discuss collaboration with your students and how it functions in the rehearsal environment. Model collaboration for them in and outside of the rehearsal. Seek opportunities to collaborate within your fine arts area and make sure that you discuss with your students how important it is to work together toward a common goal. You may soon find that you seek more collaborative opportunities and I'm willing to bet you may also notice your students doing the same.

