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Collegiate Connections: Developing the Next Generation of Music Teachers: Sample Music Education Association Programs that Promote the Profession and Prepare Future Colleagues

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Developing the Next Generation of Music Teachers: Sample Music Education Association Programs that Promote the Profession and Prepare Future Colleagues

by *Kimberly H. Councill, Wesley D. Brewer, Frederick Burrack, and Jay Juchniewicz*

Susan¹ “always knew” that she wanted to become a music teacher and she was eager to learn as much about her chosen career as early as possible. She attended her first state music conference as a member of the inaugural class of the Pennsylvania Music Educators Association’s (PMEA) Future Music Educators Honors Symposium (FMEHS). She loved picking out sessions and attending stellar concerts. Specifically, she remembers the discussion on advocacy and how important it seemed even at that time. Now in her second year of teaching, Susan reflects on how the symposium solidified her decision to major in music education and she still uses the binder of materials she received during the conference as a resource in her lesson planning.

Although the influence of the school music teacher in a student’s decision to pursue an undergraduate music education degree is well documented,² little is known about the contribution that state

music education associations (MEAs) may make toward a student’s decision to major in a music-related field. Data do suggest that students like Susan are common; opinions about various careers are often formed at an early age³ and frequently remain consistent from middle school through high school.⁴ Research emphasizes identifying prospective educators earlier, encouraging students to consider music teaching as a career, and providing experiences to help students make knowledgeable decisions for career choice and responsibilities in the profession.⁵

Specifically, the Society for Music Teacher Education (SMTE) has recommended that identifying and cultivating practices that help to guide future music educators is a responsibility to be shared by both practitioners and researchers.⁶ Since 2005, the Teacher Recruitment Area for Strategic Planning and Action (ASPA) has worked on numerous projects to investigate how, when, and why people



Kimberly H. Councill (Photo courtesy of the first author)

choose to pursue collegiate studies and careers in music education. One project, reported in Anaheim, California, at the 2010 Biennial Music Educators National

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Conference with Special Focus on Research in Music Education and Music Teacher Education, included a survey of every state's MEA president, Tri-M chair, and NAFME Collegiate chair and inquired about programs to recruit future music educators to the profession. Of the thirty-two states that provided data for the survey, only six states *specifically* mentioned a recruitment-type program. Seventy-two percent of reporting states did not have a program of this type.⁷ While not comprehensive, current online searches conducted by the authors revealed MEA-sponsored programs in at least two additional states.⁸

We would like to offer a look at three programs sponsored by state music education associations in Illinois, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania that provide high school students with opportunities to learn about a career in music education prior to their undergraduate experience. Table 1 offers a summary of program features that may be useful to those considering recruiting programs in their areas.

A Seminar in Illinois

The Illinois Future Music Educators Seminar (FMES) is an annual event that welcomes high school students to participate in a specialized series of workshops and discussions as part of the larger Illinois Music Educators Association (IMEA) Conference. FMES exists as "an effort to identify and encourage potential future music educators into the profession."⁹ It has grown from thirty-five participants in 2005 to forty-five participants in 2011 in response to increased demand from local music educators.

Each fall, a call for nominations is published in the *Illinois Music Educator*. Sponsoring directors submit an online form for each nominee in grades 10 through 12, and the student submits a current résumé and essay that describes his or her career aspirations in relation to music education. IMEA district presidents review the materials and recommend students for participation. Two nominated students from each district are guaranteed participation.

Because the seminar is held during the IMEA conference, FMES participants are able to observe rehearsals, performances, clinics, and exhibits as well as network with other students and music educators from around the state. Over the course of three days, the FMES consists of approximately ten hours of planned, whole-group events.

The opening session includes lunch, an overview of the seminar, and introductions. Participants are asked to wear school or ensemble apparel on the first day (orchestra T-shirts, choir sweatshirts, etc.), to help identify their home schools. The students watch a collection of video clips (each three to six minutes long) that feature experienced Illinois music educators teaching in their classrooms. At the conclusion of each clip, participants discuss observations. Students select conference sessions and concerts of their choice for the remainder of the day.

The bulk of the FMES activities occur on the second full day of the conference. The first session of the day is a series of three discussions on (a) the diverse skill set needed for a successful career as a music educator, (b) the place of competition in music, and (c) the National Standards for Music Education. The topics of these sessions and others have evolved over the course of several years in response to student interest and changes in the field.

At the conclusion of the discussions, a guest speaker—traditionally a veteran music educator from Illinois—shares his or her views on the importance and purposes of music education. Later in the day, participants listen to a round-table discussion with current collegiate music education majors. During the session, speakers discuss a typical day in the life of a music education major, why they chose to major in music education, and other relevant topics. The remainder of the day is again filled with other conference activities from which the students may choose.

The final session of the seminar provides an opportunity for reflection on new insights gained at the symposium; sponsoring directors are invited to attend. Participants submit a brief evaluation form regarding the sessions; this information is

used to assist in planning future versions of the seminar. Though no formal data have been collected to date, anecdotal information from participants and the evaluation forms suggests that the FMES has been successful in meeting its objectives of encouraging future music educators.

A Symposium in North Carolina

The North Carolina Music Educators Association (NCMEA) Young Professionals' Symposium provides junior and senior high school music students interested in pursuing music education studies with specifically tailored sessions and experiences that occur during the NCMEA Annual Conference. Application to the program is advertised on the NCMEA website (www.ncmea.net); through the official state journal, *The North Carolina Music Educator*; and via the NCMEA High School Section Chairs. Up to twenty-five applicants are accepted, and these individuals must meet four requirements: (1) create a satisfactory résumé of their musical activities, (2) complete an essay titled "My Musical Aspirations," (3) receive outstanding recommendations from their high school music instructors, and (4) meet the application deadline. Students may attend the symposium only once, and no more than three students from the same school may apply in any particular year.

During the three-day symposium, each participant is paired with a NAFME Collegiate student mentor who accompanies the student throughout the conference in order to help him or her navigate the convention center and to answer any questions the student may have. These collegiate mentors are selected by the director of the Young Professionals' Symposium to provide each participant with a professional peer model to interact with outside the conference sessions. In addition, each high school student participates in mock college auditions and interviews where university faculty members from several North Carolina

TABLE 1**Summary of Access, Content, Effect, and Future Goals of Preservice Music Education Programs in Illinois, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania.**

	Illinois	North Carolina	Pennsylvania
Access			
Advertising	MEA publication, MEA website	MEA publication, MEA website, high school section chairs	MEA publication, MEA website, district executive boards
Application process	Application, résumé, essay	Application, résumé, essay, letters of recommendation	Application, résumé, essay, letters of recommendation, transcripts
Selection	Nominated by director, selected by nine IMEA district presidents	Chair, NCMEA Young Professionals Symposium	FMEHS directors and PMEA officer
Cost	\$30	\$25	Approximately \$350
Number of participants at a given time	35–45	Up to 25	9–16
Grade of participants	10th, 11th, and 12th	11th and 12th	12th
Content			
Location	IMEA annual conference	NCMEA annual conference	PMEA annual conference
Professional development topics	Diverse skills for teaching; life as a music education student; negotiating online world; competition in music	Interview preparation; life as a music education student; life as a music educator	Advocacy; life as a music education student; life as a music educator; sessions on Instrumental/choral/general music teaching; technology
Performance opportunities	Attend All-state performances; attend conference performances	Conducting seminar; attend conference performances; mock college auditions	Attend All-state performances; attend conference performances
College success topics	Panel of collegiate music education student	Audition preparation; interaction with collegiate music education students; mock college interviews	Panels of collegiate music education students and music education faculty
Impact evidence	Positive feedback from students and directors; increased enrollment	Positive feedback from students and directors; consistent enrollment of participants in symposium	Positive feedback from students in reflective essays; consistent application pool
Future goals	Track participants into undergraduate degree programs and first teaching jobs	Track participants into undergraduate degree programs and first teaching jobs	Track participants into undergraduate degree programs and first teaching jobs; corporate sponsorship; pair FMEHS member with a retired-teacher mentor

institutions provide individualized feedback and support. Each participant also actively engages in a choral or instrumental conducting session by conducting a predetermined piece with a high school or collegiate ensemble. Finally, all participants attend other specialized sessions that encompass a variety of topics, have dinner with a keynote speaker, attend the North Carolina High School Honors Chorus and Honors Orchestra Concerts, and visit booths in the exhibit hall to gather more information about specific music education programs.

At the end of the conference, students attend a wrap-up session where all participants complete a survey in which they list each session attended and describe what they learned as a result of their conference experience. While data exist for all participants since 2005, no official tracking of these students has yet occurred. However, based on the responses of the participants' exit surveys, students indicate the Young Professionals' Symposium is a valuable program that exposes and prepares them for the realities of an undergraduate degree program and a subsequent career in music education.

A Pennsylvania Honors Symposium

In 2007, the Pennsylvania Music Educators Association (PMEA) began the Future Music Educators Honors Symposium (FMEHS), a program that runs concurrently with the annual PMEA conference and serves as an early start to professional development opportunities in the music education profession. The program helps students make connections with their future peers and mentors, creating a support system for career preparation. Additionally, it provides opportunities for students to discuss music teaching with collegiate music education majors and professional educators. Because the program is heavily advertised through the PMEA website

and journal and is verbally supported by former participants and high school teachers, its reputation encourages professional interest among students in grades 9 through 11.

Pennsylvania high school seniors who have been accepted at a college or university as a music education major may apply for the symposium. Nine to sixteen students are chosen each year from the applications submitted. In addition to the application, interested seniors also provide letters of recommendation, personal statements, and transcripts. Participants are chosen by a member of the PMEA staff and a past-president of PMEA who also serves as one of the four co-directors. Other co-directors include a current music teacher and one university music education professor, all of whom work together to organize housing, transportation, meals, panel discussions, and the overall FMEHS conference schedule. FMEHS participants wear special name tags to indicate their participation, and they are introduced to the membership both at the opening session and at the first evening's general session and concert.

During the conference, symposium participants participate in various sessions and attend all the all-state ensemble performances. Their sessions include choral, instrumental, general music, technology, and advocacy topics. In addition, participants choose four sessions and concerts that reflect their own interests. Students also participate in panel discussions with current music education undergraduates, university professors, and practicing public school music teachers. Time is provided during each day for group reflection and debriefing with at least one of the co-directors. At the conclusion of the conference, participants are asked to write essay reflections on their experiences.

More than seventy future music educators have participated in the symposium during the past seven years. Symposium attendees are currently

participating in collegiate music education programs throughout Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Delaware, New York, and New Jersey, and members of the first two classes are now teaching and/or pursuing graduate study. As demonstrated by the essay reflections, participants have been overwhelmingly thrilled with the FMEHS program. Comments such as "This program gave me confidence that I was making the correct career choice and renewed my excitement to pursue it," "By attending this symposium, I feel that I have a better idea of what is expected of me," and "Because of the symposium, I now feel much more prepared and confident in entering the world as a successful music educator" are abundant.¹⁰ Additionally, participants specifically highlight the variety of session options and the professional treatment they receive throughout the conference as positives.

Coda

As is evidenced here, multiple approaches exist to provide opportunities for career exploration and to build a foundation that might enhance our students' choice to become a music teacher. Classroom music teachers, music education associations, and collegiate music education programs can work collaboratively to promote music teaching as a career and provide experiences inside and outside the classroom that assist students in making these important decisions. Programs like those described here are beneficial to all music education professionals and help to ensure the health and sustainability of our profession.

Encouraging our school music students to consider teaching music as a career is essential for the future of our profession. Previous research has shown that important conversations take place during the high school years and that influential experiences even occur during elementary and middle school.¹¹

State music education associations and other similar organizations can reinforce these conversations and experiences by providing structured opportunities for students to learn more about our profession.

Because there is currently little research on the effects of teacher recruitment programs such as the ones described here, we encourage future research to document whether students who participate in teacher recruitment programs are influenced by the experiences, pursue music teacher education, and ultimately become music teachers. The Teacher Recruitment ASPA is designed to pursue such projects. If a program like the ones described previously exists in your state, please share your story with the Teacher Recruitment ASPA.¹² If a program like this does not exist, consider getting in touch with music education leaders in your state to explore possibilities for designing such a program. The more each of us can contribute to the future of our profession, the further we can go to ensure it is a future of which we will be proud.

NOTES

- All names in the vignettes in this article are pseudonyms, but the experiences are those of real preservice music educators.
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- David A. Rickels, Kimberly H. Councill, William E. Fredrickson, Michelle J. Hairston, Ann M. Porter, and Margaret Schmidt, "Influences on Career Choice among Music Education Audition Candidates: A Pilot Study," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 57, no. 4 (2010): 292–307; David A. Rickels, Wesley D. Brewer, Kimberly H. Councill, William E. Fredrickson, Michelle J. Hairston, David L. Perry, Ann M. Porter, and Margaret Schmidt, "Career Influences of Music Education Audition Candidates," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 61, no. 1 (2013): 115–34.
- For additional information, please see <http://smte.us/aspas/>.
- Kimberly H. Councill, David L. Perry, Marshall C. Kimball, and Kenneth L. Liske, "Information on State MEA, CMENC, and Tri-M Future Teacher Collaborative Programs" (report given to the SMTE Teacher Recruitment ASPA meeting, Anaheim, California, 2010).
- Other known MEA programs at the time of publication include the following:
 - Alabama (<http://alabamamea.org/pdf/FAME%20application.pdf>)
 - Florida (<http://flmusicd.org/dnn/FloridaMusicSupervisionAssociation%28FMSA%29.aspx>)
 - Georgia (<http://www.gmea.org/ISC/FMEC/FMEC.htm>)
 - Indiana (<http://www.imeamusic.org/activities/honor/fme/index.php>)
 - Texas (<http://www.tmea.org/programs/tfme>)
 - Wisconsin (<http://www.wmea.com/index.php?module=cms&page=61>)
- Additional information at <http://www.ilmea.org/divisions/mte/fmes/>.
- Quotes from 2007, 2009, and 2011 essays, respectively.
- Madsen and Kelly, "First Remembrances"; Rickels et al., "Influences on Career Choice."
- Please see <http://smte.us/aspas/teacher-recruitment/teacher-recruitment-aspas-member-page/> for more information.