

Teaching Philosophy Statement of Dr. Melissa Morgan

1. Background

I have been fortunate to teach choral music to students of all ages, however, my work as an educator and musician in Saskatchewan is the nucleus of my teaching experience. I believe that teaching provides several responsibilities and opportunities for me as an educator. It is my responsibility to be knowledgeable in my teaching subject but also to understand the student. My responsibility as an educator is to recognize that there are many kinds of learners; therefore, my classroom is one that is student centered and inclusive – encompassing various learning styles. I have the opportunity to engage students in the process of learning by creating an environment that fosters innovative ideas in the classroom.

2. Teaching Philosophy

As a conductor, teacher, and performing musician I've learned that there are correlations between positive relationships and successful outcomes. In essence, good teaching is the result of positive relationships between students and teachers. Ultimately, my goal is to create a community of students who have a desire to lead, take initiatives and take risks while working together to achieve excellence and, therefore, taking pride in the process of musical expression as a community.

My teaching philosophy is founded on the premise that music students need practical opportunities to teach, conduct and perform; and that in a university setting students should have opportunities to 'do' (conduct, perform, compose) as well as 'think' (write, theorize, research). Practical application to teaching may evolve in the form of partnering with local schools to support their music programs or inviting teachers from the community to the university for workshops and sessions.

3. Assessment and Evaluation

Evaluations are meant to spur confidence and confirm authority in a subject. My evaluation methods are dictated by the goals and predicted outcomes of a course and may occur in various formats including but not limited to:

- Presentations
- Essays
- Tests and quizzes
- Performance recitals
- Peer evaluation
- Other project based evaluation

Ultimately, these various forms of assessment further the objectives of the course and in the process of preparing for the evaluations students can solidify the basic and in many cases, more than basic information necessary to understand the particular subject.

4. Long-Term Teaching Goals

The best part of being a professional musician is discovering that there is always more to discover. I have also come to understand that teaching is an art, a skill, and a lifestyle. One of my research interests explores choral music from the Prairie Provinces. There is great value in celebrating one's community – acknowledging the past helps to understand the present and build towards a better future. The Prairie Provinces are rich in artistic resources, including choral art music. For this reason, some of my teaching goals and desires include:

- Developing a strong choral tradition as part of my curriculum;
- Creating a program where students can collaborate with community ensembles to gain practical knowledge and experience;
- Engaging members of the community with the university through the establishment of choral festivals and workshops; and
- Developing a graduate program in conducting.

5. Concluding thoughts

In my own experiences, I have greatly benefited from teaching methods that move beyond textbooks and classrooms. When a student shares with me, that the text of our choir music reminds them of meaningful discussions they had in history class, or when former students mention how a choir tour performance changed the way they understood themselves, I am reminded why it is important for me to teach and why it is important to share music with others.