

Supporting Music Education: Choose to Teach

How do you know if you want to become a music teacher? Some students just know and others make that decision when considering career options. For many students, sharing the joy of music becomes their passion.

*The information that follows will assist you and your students in **making an informed choice**. Becoming a music teacher can be an **extremely rewarding and challenging career**. If you **love to make music and enjoy working with others**, there is no better way to **convey that passion** than by sharing **your knowledge and enthusiasm** as a professional music educator.*

What Does a Music Teacher Do?

- **teach** classes
- **share** their love of music with students and other teachers
- **prepare** lesson plans
- **develop** curriculum
- **assess** and **evaluate** student progress
- **share** student progress with parents, fellow teachers and school administrators
- **prepare** and **perform** concerts
- **develop** course content based on local, state and national content standards
- **ensure** success for all students while respecting their various interests, abilities and cultural backgrounds
- **use** motivation and positive reinforcement as effective classroom-management tools
- **model** professionalism in all aspects of the profession
- **demonstrate** ultimate responsibility for resources, including
 - time
 - money
 - facilities
 - equipment
 - transportation
 - people
- **communicate** with all parties on a regular basis
- **lead** with enthusiasm

What Do I Have to Know to Be Able to Teach Music?

- **Understand pedagogy:** The techniques of teaching choral, instrumental and classroom music at all levels—elementary school, middle school and high school
- **Demonstrate** an accomplished level of **musicianship:** Mastery of your instrument, conducting, sight reading, singing and studying a score
- **Develop effective time management, organization, communication and facilitation skills**
- **Advocate for music education:** Learn why music is important for all children and how being involved with music contributes to brain development of young children and enhanced student achievement
- **Show compassion:** A music educator must be exceedingly sensitive to all student needs
- **Maintain high expectations:** Focus on achievement and motivate students to meet established goals successfully

What Can I Do Now to Gain Experience Necessary for Teaching?

- **Teach** private lessons on your primary instrument
- **Volunteer** to tutor students
- **Work** at a band camp or summer program
- **Observe and assist** a teacher who can help you gain experience and confidence
- **Join** the future teachers club
- **Demonstrate leadership** in everything you do

Does the Music Education Program Focus on Both Process and Performance?

The process of making music—preparing the product—is very important. Much of the value of music is **experiencing the process** of getting the performance ready. It is through this pedagogical focus that students learn and develop critical thinking skills.

Does the Music Education Program Provide a Variety of Experiences Observing and Working with Students?

A quality collegiate Music Education curriculum should prepare you

- to teach music in any setting through relevant coursework

and classroom experiences addressing how all children, adolescents and young adults learn and develop in music

- to develop and implement age-appropriate teaching strategies through the use of appropriate materials
- for hands-on classroom experiences long before the final semester of the senior year
- to pass all competency exams (music and others) that may be required for certification/licensure

What Does Certification/Licensure Mean?

Eye on Education (WGBH and PBS) defines **Teacher Certification** as “a process by which teachers become recognized by the state as expert teachers, implying that a teacher has mastered the complex art of teaching.” **Teacher Licensure** is defined as “the process by which teachers receive permission from the state to teach. States have minimum requirements, such as the completion of certain coursework and experience as a student teacher. Some states, faced with shortages of teachers in particular areas, grant teachers emergency licenses and allow them to take required courses while they are full-time teachers.”

In completing a degree in music education, you have completed the specific requirements of a degree-granting institution; this will provide you with “entry level” skills for a teaching position. As such, states will issue either a certificate or a license, which will enable a new educator to teach in a public school setting. (Many private institutions do not require the same types of teaching credentials.) If you teach in a different state than the one in which you were trained, you may receive a temporary license until you meet the requirements of that specific state.

Certificates/Licenses are required to be renewed periodically, so you will want to contact the State Department of Education in all of the states in which you plan to apply for a teaching position. **State licensing procedures vary**, but most require ongoing professional development, so it is important to start early by accruing post-graduate credits.

What is the Range of Certification/Licensure Options?

- Each state sets its own criteria for certification/licensing, a process that **acknowledges the preparation** received from an accredited college or university. In addition to possessing the appropriate college degree, most states require teacher candidates to provide proof of passing

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scores on examinations designed to test knowledge in a variety of subjects. Some states allow time for teachers to prepare to take these exams, but many do not. *Most universities provide access to a number of these tests so that students may take them while still matriculated.*

- **Reciprocal certification agreements** also exist between many states, making it possible for teachers who are certified in one state to relocate to another.
- Many music education programs are designed to prepare music teachers for more specific areas of concentration, such as choral, classroom and instrumental music, or K–12.

What are the Requirements for Acceptance into the Music Education Program?

In addition to their own established criteria for admission, most teacher education programs generally require all or a variety of the following:

- a specified grade-point average (GPA)
- an audition
- a pre-professional skills test, such as an ear-training or theory test
- an essay
- an interview
- a portfolio, which should serve as a reflection of your high school music career, including copies of
 - concert programs
 - awards, certificates
 - letters of reference
 - appropriate photos, DVDs, CDs
 - festival (solo and ensemble) ratings
 - indicators of leadership at school, church, community
 - list of memberships in clubs and other organizations; offices/positions held

What about a Placement File/Portfolio?

Many universities provide **Job Placement Offices** on their campuses and offer assistance in career planning through the establishment of a Placement File/Portfolio for each teacher candidate. This tool should be thought of as your promotional package, so spend extra time to make sure it reflects what you want prospective employers to see. It

should be neat, well-organized, provide evidence of good communication skills (including written skills) and show experience working with a diverse student population.

The Placement File/Portfolio should consist of a Résumé that includes:

- Teaching philosophy
- Degree(s) held
- University attended
- Job/Related work experience (list chronologically with most recent year first; remember to include student teaching as well as related summer experiences—particularly those with a music emphasis)
- Membership in professional associations, organizations, clubs, activities; offices/positions held (include attendance at conferences)
- Honors and awards
- Names of prior supervisors, references (include complete contact information)
- Sample lesson plans used in student teaching that demonstrate successful experience working with students of diverse learning styles and including
 - Content standard(s) being addressed
 - Clearly stated, measurable objectives
 - Materials needed
 - Prior knowledge and experiences required
 - Teaching strategies to be used to meet the objectives
 - Indicators of success
 - Recommendations for follow-up
- Other **written** materials used in student teaching, which could include
 - Sample course expectations
 - Letters to parents
 - Concert programs
 - Student motivators
 - Transcripts
 - Letters of recommendation (3) from any or all of the following
 - Cooperating teacher(s)
 - School administrator(s)

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- University supervisor
- Private teacher(s)/other professional(s) who can attest to your teaching expertise
- Parent(s) of students
- Proof of degree
- Test results (scores) for teacher proficiency exams, if available
- Optional: Awards, certificates
- Optional: Appropriate photos, DVDs, CDs

Many school districts want to watch prospective teachers demonstrate their skills by teaching a lesson at one of the schools. Teacher candidates should be prepared for this situation in case it is a required part of the application process.

What are the Alternatives to Teaching in the Public Schools?

- Parochial schools
- Private magnet schools
- Charter schools
- Symphony schools or outreach programs
- Private instruction

Will I Have to Give Up Performing to Teach Music?

No! There are many opportunities throughout communities of all sizes to continue performing. **Performing is an essential tool** of any good music educator and provides an opportunity to be a good role model for your students.



Want more tips on keeping music strong in your schools?
Visit the site devoted to all things music advocacy: www.supportmusic.com

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