

**The Role of Classroom Observation  
in Pre-Service Music Teacher Education (In Progress)**

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**Abstract**

Classroom observations and field-teaching experiences are common practices in music teacher preparation programs. The 2015-2016 Handbook of the National Association of Schools of Music (2015) states that institutions should encourage observation and teaching experiences prior to formal admission to the teacher education program and that, ideally, such opportunities should be provided in actual school situations. While researchers studying early field experiences in pre-service music teacher education have examined pre-service teachers' perspectives (Butler, 2001; Warren, 2001; Conway, 2002; McDowell, 2007; Powell, 2011), student teacher readiness and performance (Fant, 1996; Hourigan & Scheib, 2009), and music teacher identity development (Paul, 1998; Conkling, 2004; Haston & Russell, 2012), research exploring the role and processes of classroom observations may inform music teacher educators in their work with pre-service music teachers.

Despite being a common element of introductory music education and methods courses, there is little research to date that examines the role of classroom observations in pre-service music teacher socialization. "Teacher socialization" (Lortie, 2002) has become widely studied in the context of music teacher education (Roberts, 2000; Bouij, 2004; Scheib, 2007; Isbell, 2008). In her evaluation of a music teacher preparation program, Conway (2002; 2012) found that, although pre-service fieldwork surfaced as one of the most valuable aspects of teacher preparation, participants identified early observations without context, specifically a lack of direction as to how the pre-service teachers should focus their observing, as lacking value and expressed the need for research focus on

classroom observations as a part of pre-service music teacher socialization. Powell (2011) stated that research examining observation methods and sequencing would be especially valuable to understanding pre-service music teachers' skill development.

The need for continuing research focused on classroom observations in pre-service music teacher education is acknowledged in past literature (Ballantyne & Packer, 2004; Brophy, 2002; Conway 2012; Powell 2011), but classroom observation has yet to be investigated in depth aside from its connection to field-teaching experiences. The purpose of this study is to explore the role of classroom observations in the socialization of pre-service music teachers enrolled in an introductory music education course at a large midwestern university. The research questions guiding this study are:

1. In what ways, if any, do pre-service music teachers' perceptions of teaching change as a result of completing several classroom observations over the course of a semester?
2. In what ways, if any, do pre-service music teachers' perceptions of student behaviors (in the context of a music classroom) change as a result of completing multiple classroom observations over the course of a semester?
3. What do pre-service music teachers find most valuable about classroom observations required for the course? And, conversely, least valuable?

Data include semi-structured interviews (Merriam, 1998) with the participants, participants' written notes during the observation, participants' post-observation reflections, and the researcher's fieldnotes from observing the participants during the music classroom observations. It is the researcher's hope that this study will contribute to the body of work that informs music teacher educators in their preparation of pre-service music teachers.

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