



Does What You Don't Know Hurt?

Lately I have been thinking about pedagogical content knowledge with a focus on content knowledge. Many who teach guitar in our school systems are not themselves guitarists. They are fine musicians who have been assigned to teach guitar. Many teach multiple musical disciplines including band, orchestra, choir, and guitar. This is common since our license endorsements are grouped into two very general areas: Vocal/Choral and Instrumental. Endorsements in other fields like World Language are much more specific: Spanish, German, French, Latin, Russian, Mandarin, American Sign Language, etc. Until there is a time that the instrumental endorsement is broken down more specifically (Band, Bowed Strings and Fretted Strings), music teachers will continue to be 'Jacks of All Trades'.

Many guitar educators in our schools are career switchers who hold performance degrees in guitar, but took additional classes for certification. These teachers are very knowledgeable in their content area. There is a growing number of guitar educators who hold degrees in music education with a concentration in guitar. These teachers generally have a good balance of content and pedagogical knowledge. While I do not have the data (at this time), I would suspect that many, if not most, guitar edu-

cators are not themselves guitarists.

To support guitar educators who are not themselves guitarists, I wrote an article for the 2019 Winter edition of *VMEA Notes* titled, "Resources for the Guitar Teacher". I encourage you to investigate these resources as you are able. <https://www.vmea.com/documents/VMEA-Notes/2019/VMEA-Winter-2019.pdf>. This is one way in which to increase your content knowledge. Private lessons with a degreed guitarist is even better.

I suspect that many non-guitarist guitar educators don't know what they don't know. Last year, I observed a guitar class in which the students were playing a piece titled, "Rasgueado". While the students were playing the right notes and rhythms they were not using the rasgueado technique. This would be the equivalent of playing Bartók's String Quartet No. 4 (Allegro Pizzicato) without pizzicato. I asked the students and the teacher if they knew what rasgueado was; nobody knew. In short, it is a right-hand strumming technique that is often associated with flamenco guitar playing. All the teacher needed to do was to look up the word online and he would have found many YouTube videos demonstrating this technique. The moral of the story is to research the music that you teach.

The incident mentioned above brings up a question. Does what you don't know hurt? While it would be impossible for me to list all the elements that an effective guitar educator would need to know, the following list is based primarily on the Best Practices for Guitar that are being created by NAFME Council

for Guitar Education. If you are a guitar educator who is not familiar with these items, I encourage you to investigate these with a degreed guitarist.

- How to change strings on different types of guitars and what types of strings to use;
- Guitar care and basic maintenance;
- Tuning guitar by pitch matching and with an electronic tuner;
- Common scordatura tunings (altered tunings);
- Guitar position
- Efficient left-hand technique;
- Right-hand technique (finger and pick style);
- Clear tone production;
- How to produce natural and artificial harmonics;
- Knowledge of the full fingerboard;
- Fingerboard logic;
- Common chords;
- Movable chords;
- Literature for solo and ensemble;
- Guitar history;
- Where to find music published for guitar (beyond the major music publishers); and

Pedagogical content knowledge is certainly not only about content. The ability to convey knowledge to students in a way that they will understand and apply is just as important. I have had experience with guitarists who were inadequate guitar educators and I have met several non-guitarists who are fine guitar educators. These teachers are Jacks of All Trades and Masters of One: teaching.

Whether or not you are guitarist or a non-guitarist guitar educator, I encourage you to reflect on those things that you may not know that you don't know.

Membership Committee Lisette Satterwhite, Chair

Greetings from your VMEA Membership Chair! I hope you have had a successful assessment season, and are keeping your heads above water with planning spring musicals, solo and ensemble festivals, spring trips, recruiting, graduation ceremonies, and concerts galore!

We are still working on reaching as many music teachers as we can in the Commonwealth of Virginia. New teachers and teachers new to the state email me quite frequently to ask about our organization or for guidance with elements of VMEA that they want to offer to their students, such as district and state-wide events and auditions. For the most part, public school secondary instrumental and choral teachers are joining VMEA without hesitation and in high numbers. Where I still need your help is focusing on those who fall outside this category.

The Virginia Elementary Music Educators Association continues its efforts to increase membership across the Commonwealth. Some small but encouraging improvements have taken place recently, such as non-members of VMEA at-

tending our regional VMEA professional development workshops in February. At our workshop in Arlington, these new attendees ranged from a veteran teacher who has been involved in an Orff chapter but never VMEA, a teacher new to Virginia, and one from a parochial school. To me this is an important signal of growth; we are expanding our audience and therefore, expanding our positive reach in the music education of Virginia's children. Special recognition is due to our excellent presenter and workshop leader, Dr. Laura Petravage. Her high level of professionalism, expansive content knowledge, and expertly facilitated instructional time showed these non-members the quality of the workshops and events that VMEA provides. It is my hope that these new workshop attendees will become members and will share their experience with their friends and colleagues!

Dare I say it and sound like a buzzword-obsessed administrator, I ask you to "think outside the box." A private lesson teacher contacted me with questions regarding the logistics required for her home-

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schooled and private-schooled students to participate in Solo and Ensemble festival. Since several of her students do not have a band director, she is their only likely connection to the benefits offered through VMEA, unless the students' parents research our organization. Our musician world is small; please share our organization with your freelancer or private lesson teacher friends to see if they or their students could benefit from what we offer.

Lastly, summer is coming! Take the time this summer to write an article for *VMEA Notes*! I know how hard it is throughout the year to take time for a publication, but if you do it over the summer, your colleagues (and your future licensure renewal) will thank you for sharing your knowledge.

Best of luck with this last quarter, and I look forward to seeing many of you at the spring VMEA events!

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