Marketing Your Professionalism

Tips and Strategies to Prepare and “Psych” Yourself for Interviewing, Personal Branding, and Acquiring That First School Music Teacher Job

by Paul K. Fox  paulfox.usc@gmail.com  www.paulfoxusc.wordpress.com

Outline for College Music Education Majors, Prospective New or Transferring Music Teachers

✔ PMEA 2017: Ready to Hire! Interviewing Strategies to Land the Job

1. Everything you need is here: https://paulfoxusc.wordpress.com/becoming-a-music-educator/
2. Load this URL of the 2013 PMEA conference handouts (Mr. Fox's “ghost” teacher pages) to download files (ASAP before they become inactive): http://www.uscsd.k12.pa.us/Page/6361
3. Do you know what it means to be a professional? – Can you define the term professionalism?
4. Construction of a professional activities archive – the precursor of your résumé and e-portfolio
   a. A “Me file” of bulleted accomplishments with dates
   b. Assessments and transcripts
   c. Scholarships and other awards
   d. Education experiences (don’t forget student teaching and other field assignments, private teaching, substitute teaching, summer camps, sports, scouts, church, marching band sectionals or field assistance, choral accompaniment or coachings, etc.)
   e. Sample artifacts like solo recital and chamber/large group concert programs
   f. Sample lesson plans, achievement targets, rubrics, and student assessments
   g. Original compositions and arrangements
   h. Congratulatory notes and letters of reference
   i. Philosophy of music education and personal mission statement (see #5 below)
5. Jim Frankel’s guiding questions offered as an introduction to his PMEA technology sessions
   a. What is your personal mission? Why?
   b. What is the role of music in a child's education?
   c. Are we creating performers, theorists, teachers... or lifelong music lovers?
6. Certified to teach what? – Are you a specialist or a generalist?
7. General categories of interview questions
   a. Music and music education content and methods
   b. General education terminology and concepts
   c. Philosophy, goals, past experience, and education (avoid an emphasis on a specialty)
   d. Personality traits, social skills, and habits of “professionalism”
8. Alphabet soup – Do you know these acronyms? What if they come up at an interview?
   a. ADD or ADHD
   b. AYP or now SPP
   c. The Four Cs and P21 group
   d. DOK or HOTS
   e. EQ, EU and UBD
   f. ESEA and NCLB
   g. GATE
   h. IEP
   i. Madelyn Hunter’s ITIP
   j. PDE’s SAS portal
   k. PLC
   l. PSSA and PVAS
   m. RTI
   n. SLO
9. Jargon, Trends, and Issues – Be familiar with as many of these as possible!
   a. The Common Core
   b. Whole Child Initiatives
   c. 21st Century Learning Skills
   d. Flipped Classrooms and Blended Schools
   e. Multiple Intelligences
   f. Customization, Differentiation, and Individualization
   g. Formative, Summative, Diagnostic, and Authentic Assessments

10. What makes the “ideal candidate” for becoming an educator? – Tools of assessment
    a. Charlotte Danielson’s Four Domains from The Framework for Teaching (Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities)
    b. Core Teaching Standards (see back page, Upper St. Clair School District hiring criteria)

11. Pre-Interview – Preparations before the meeting
    a. Self-assessment of personal strengths you wish to convey to the prospective employer
    b. Development of a balanced/unified (non-specialist) comprehensive philosophy of music education, your own mission, vision, goals, and personal values
    c. Preparation of personal examples (detailed anecdotes/stories) showing how/when you have been modeling professionalism and the core teaching standards
    d. Practice and drill on story-telling skills and answering common interview questions
    e. Research of the school district, music program, job opening, and curricular innovations
    f. Trial run (knowing exactly where you are going – time needed and traffic patterns)

12. Positive interview techniques
    a. Calm, positive, open, friendly, sensitive, and cheerful attitude
    b. Warm greeting and firm handshake
    c. Relaxed speech, posture, and body language
    d. Use of interviewer’s name when talking
    e. Sitting at an angle, not directly in front of interviewer (no barriers & defensive posture)
    f. Consistent eye contact, appropriate smiling and responses, and listening to interviewer
    g. Honesty and saying what you really mean (you may be “stuck” with your answers)
    h. Freedom to make admissions such as “I do not know” (inexperience is not a crime)
    i. Sharing of one hard copy and several digital versions of your résumé and portfolio (#4)

13. Bad habits (avoid these at all costs)
    a. Tardiness
    b. Sloppy, trendy, or informal dress
    c. Repeated verbal pauses or repetitive exclamations of “Ahh,” “Umm,” “Like,” etc.
    d. Use of weak words that suggest a lack of conviction (“kind of,” “sort of,” or “I feel like”)
    e. Unsubstantiated or unsupported statements
    f. Verbal clutter (too many run-on statements) or “bird walking” (veering off the subject)
    g. Any form of fidgeting (tapping, spinning a pen, etc.) or touching your face, hair, clothes
    h. Failure to look directly at the interviewer(s)
    i. Responses that go overboard or volunteer too much information
    j. Flip conversation or answers that are too casual, personal, or informal
    k. Forceful, dominating, one-sided, or opinionated views and arrogant attitudes
    l. Non-verbal cues that reflect nerves (slouching, looking down, clenching hands in lap)

14. Post interview – Debriefing of yourself
    a. Interview journal – writing of everything you did right and wrong while it is still fresh
    b. Record of names/e-mails of the participants, and job placement process (dates/forms)
    c. Summary of needed documentation, portfolios and other information for follow-ups
    d. Personalized thank-you letter (set yourself apart from the other applicants)
15. Sample interview questions by core teaching standard (USC criteria or most popular)

a. Who had the greatest influence on you to become a music teacher and why? (Most Popular)
b. What are the most important qualities of an outstanding educator? (Most Popular)
c. What is your personal philosophy of student discipline? (Most Popular)
d. How would you assess the learning in your classroom/rehearsal? (Most Popular)
e. What purpose does music education serve in the public schools? (Most Popular)
f. What is the importance of professional development and how will you apply it to your career? (Most Popular)
g. What are your personal goals? Where do you see yourself in ten years? (Most Popular)
h. How do you recruit students to "grow" a music program? (Most Popular)

A1. Concerning music education, what is your philosophy and mission? (A – Educational Philosophy)
A2. What is your view of the teacher’s role in the classroom? (A – Educational Philosophy)
A3. What is most important to you (and why): music content, outcome, or process? (A – Educational Philosophy)

B1. Describe a successful lesson plan you have developed. (B – Knowledge/Education)
B2. What units would you plan for ___ grade general music? (B – Knowledge/Education)
B3. List a few selections you might program on a choral (or band or string) concert. (B – Knowledge/Education)
B4. What steps would you take to teach someone how to improvise? (B – Knowledge/Education)
B5. How do you get a child to match pitch? (B – Knowledge/Education)

C1. What rules and expectations would you establish in your classroom? (C – Classroom Management)
C2. How will you control behavior in large ensembles? (C – Classroom Management)
C3. How would you deal with a difficult student who has gotten off-task? (C – Classroom Management)

D1. How will you incorporate the use of technology in your classroom? (D – Technology)
D2. How have you utilized technology to assist in instructional preparation? (D – Technology)
D3. Summarize a list of software programs and other technology you have mastered. (D – Technology)

E1. Describe your strengths in oral communications and public relations. (E – Oral Expression)
E2. How would you disseminate information to the students in support of your daily lesson targets? (E – Oral Expression)
E3. Provide sample announcements you could make at an a) open house or b) public performance? (E – Oral Expression)

F1. Discuss your strengths in writing and/or written communications. (F – Written Expression)
F2. What role does the Common Core have in general music (or music ensembles)? (F – Written Expression)
F3. Describe your last or favorite college essay or article on music or curriculum. (F – Written Expression)

G1. Describe your leadership style. (G – Leadership)
G2. What actions would you take to get a group of peers refocused on the task at hand? (G – Leadership)
G3. Illustrate your role in a group project or collaborative assignment. (G – Leadership or H - Teamwork)

H1. How would you involve students in the decision-making or planning of your classes/ensembles? (H – Teamwork)
H2. How would you involve parents in your music program? (H – Teamwork)

I1. How would your musical peers describe you? (I – Judgment)
I2. How do you typically model professionalism and judgment in dealing with conflict? (I – Judgment)

J1. How do you differentiate and teach to diverse levels of achievement in your music classes? (J – Problem Solving)
J2. Describe a difficult decision you had to make and how you arrived at your decision. (J – Problem Solving)
J3. How will you accommodate students who want to participate in both music and sports? (J – Problem Solving)

K1. How do you insure that long-term plans and music objectives are met? (K – Planning and Organization)
K2. Illustrate a typical musical (or marching band or ensemble) production schedule. (K – Planning and Organization)

L1. How would you structure a general music (or ensemble rehearsal) classroom of the future? (L – Innovation)
L2. Share an anecdote about a new or innovative teaching technique you have used in music. (L – Innovation)

M1. Describe a project you initiated (or would initiate) in your teaching or extra-curricular activity. (M – Initiative)
M2. What motivates you to try new things? (M – Initiative)
M3. How much time outside the school day should a music teacher be expected to work? (M – Initiative)

N1. How would you define professional commitment in terms of music education? (N – Dependability)
N2. What after-school activities do you plan to become involved? (N – Dependability)

O1. How do you cope with stress? (O – Adaptability)
O2. How do you manage shifting priorities or changing deadlines? (O – Adaptability)

P1. Why did you choose to become a music teacher? (P – Self-Insight/Development)
P2. In your own music-making or teaching, of which are you most proud (and why)? (P – Self-Insight/Development)
P3. If you could write a book, what would the title be? (P – Self-Insight/Development)

Q1. What hobbies or special skills do you have which may influence your future activities? (Q – Energy/Enthusiasm)
Q2. In what extra-curricular activities did you participate at the HS and college level? (Q – Energy/Enthusiasm)
16. Sample content-specific inquiries and basis for second or third-round demonstration lessons
   a. How would you teach “steady beat” or pitch matching in the primary grades? [GENERAL MUSIC]
   b. How and when would you teach syncopation to the intermediate grades? [GENERAL MUSIC]
   c. Describe in detail an introductory lesson on improvisation using 12-bars blues progression. [JAZZ]
   d. How would you assess the learning in EL/MS music classes? [GENERAL MUSIC]
   e. What marching band style do you prefer to teach and perform in the halftime show, and how would you organize the marching auxiliary units (majorettes, color guard, dance team, and/or drumline)? [BAND]
   f. How would you improve the intonation/tone quality/bow technique of a string players? [STRINGS]
   g. Describe the selections you would program for a EL/MS/HS choral/band/orchestra concert in December/May. [ALL]
   h. How would you assist fifth graders performing dotted quarter/eighth combinations hesitantly or incorrectly? [ALL]
   i. When and how do you present the concepts of shifting/spiccato/vibrato to string students? [STRINGS]
   j. Describe a lesson in which you would use classroom instruments. [GENERAL MUSIC]
   k. How do you advise/assist in the student’s selection of a beginning band instrument? [BAND]
   l. What criteria and methods should be used assign voice types for your EL/MS/HS chorus? [CHORAL]
   m. What steps would you take to improve an ensemble’s phrasing/blend/balance? [BAND/STR/CHORAL]
   n. Discuss the process you use in developing the singing voice. [GENERAL MUSIC/CHORAL]
   o. Describe your background and knowledge of each of the following methodologies: Orff, Kodaly, Gordon, Suzuki, Dalcroze. [ALL]
   p. What are your keyboard skills like? Vocal skills? Secondary instrument skills? [ALL]
   q. How would you warm-up a band/chorus/orchestra? How do you tune instruments? [ALL]
   r. Show us how you would start a piece in general music/band/chorus/orchestra. [ALL]
   s. Tell us about a composition/improvisation/multimedia project you have done with students. [ALL]
   t. How would you integrate music with the other academic subjects in the EL/MS/HS? [ALL]
   u. What are the most common problems for beginning instrumentalists/vocalists? [ALL]