

### Ethics Reflection

Teachers are responsible for much more than only instruction and activities that occur in a classroom on a daily basis. Music teachers may be naturally inclined to formulate strongly unique relationships and connections with students due to the inevitably “close” nature of music-making activities. Oftentimes, students who choose to enroll in music courses become close to their music teachers as a response to the vulnerability and creativity that occurs. As a result of the comfortability and safety being encouraged in the music classroom, students may feel inclined to disclose personal information and experiences to teachers. Therefore, every teacher may have their own way of approaching these situations depending on personal ethics and school-enforced policies. As a student-teacher and as a short-term guest within my school placement, my role holds cautionary elements pertaining to ethics and professionalism. Therefore, it is advised for student-teachers to always maintain a professional demeanor and adhere to the guidelines and procedures of both the mentor-teacher’s policies/school procedures. It is also important to note that our mentor teachers may have a “different” position and may reflect how they choose to handle “ethical situations” with their students, that may not be considered appropriate for the student-teacher. The professionalism and ethics guidelines for student-teachers are meant to ensure the protection of both the teacher and student body from any misinterpretation, misconduct, or legal issues.

Ethical teachers are those who assess the situation and execute a proper response depending on the evaluation. A common example for young teachers (especially those who are in a junior/senior high teaching position) is the issues involving social media. First, teachers should consider setting their social media accounts to private if the accounts are not for professional use. Personal social media accounts that could involve posts that may or may not be deemed appropriate for a school/professional setting, should be made private for the protection of the teacher and the students, who will inevitably be curious. (This also applies to the disclosure of personal cellphone numbers.) If an incident occurs in which a teacher’s social media account is not set to private and the students have accumulated knowledge regarding the teacher’s personal/social life, a formal class discussion may be needed. Unfortunately, if a small group of students received information from social media about the teacher, and has chosen to disclose their findings to the entire class, it may be the teacher’s responsibility to address this to the class as a whole, and also the parents, if necessary. I would advise the teacher to have a formal class discussion about privacy and professionalism. If the posts have already been viewed by students, the teacher may want to advise and remind

students of the importance of school appropriateness, professionalism, and privacy. If the situation is extremely severe, an email to all the parents regarding the matter may also be appropriate. The email to the parents should include a formal apology, an explanation of the situation (the public setting on the social media accounts), reassurance regarding the teacher's morals regarding school appropriateness, and a mention of the class discussion that will soon take place. Additionally, the teacher should offer the option for a parent-teacher meeting should they feel the need to discuss the incident further.

Another example of a situation that may require a strong ethical stance, could be an exchange between a student of the opposite gender and a teacher. I strongly believe that there should be no reason for students to have any form of "private" meeting with a teacher with closed doors, no windows, and/or no other individuals present. I believe that an ethical teacher can find numerous safe ways to have a meeting with an individual student, even if it is about a piece of non-public information such as grades, behavior, personal topics, etc. If a teacher is caught in a situation in which a bystander misinterprets a private exchange with a student, the teacher should have already had precautions in place. In other words, the teacher should be able to explain the reasoning for this exchange, as well as the steps they took to ensure the student was in a safe/publicly exposed area, which would leave no room for any form of inappropriate misconduct. Additionally, if a student attempts to put the teacher in an unprofessional and inappropriate situation, the teacher should be very quick to negate the topic and seek higher authority if necessary to protect their position.

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