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“To Create Meaningful Learning Experiences:” Review of *Peer Mentoring in Music Education*

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Book Reviewed: Goodrich, A. (2023). *Peer mentoring in music education:
Developing effective student leadership*. Routledge.

Abstract

In *Peer Mentoring in Music Education: Developing Effective Student Leadership*, Andrew Goodrich investigates how peer mentoring fosters the creation of student-centered, constructive classrooms and supports meaningful learning, student leadership, and initiatives for diversity, equity, inclusion, and access. This book builds upon Goodrich’s extensive scholarship in multiple music education settings by investigating the roles of teachers and students in peer mentoring and situating his work within the broader education discussion. Additionally, Goodrich provides rich examples from real classrooms in various settings and purposes to illustrate the potential of peer mentoring within music education classrooms.

In constructivist practice, the student plays a critical role in not just their own learning but that of the students that surround them through peer modeling and collaboration, with the teacher serving as a facilitator and moderator of students' active learning (Bandura, 1977; Dewey, 1938; Wiggins, 2015). Within music education, several scholars have called for a critically active role for the student and a less authoritarian role for the teacher (Allsup & Benedict, 2008; Duke, 2012; Miksza, 2013; Morrison & Demorest, 2012; Scott, 2011; Scruggs, 2009; Shieh & Allsup, 2016). Research and pedagogy studies have investigated ways that students can be responsible for their own learning within music settings (Berg, 2008; Hatch, 2022; Prichard, 2021; Roesler, 2017; Weidner, 2020; Yackley, 2021).

An important line of scholarship in this area focuses on peer mentoring, which has been championed for nearly two decades in the work of Andrew Goodrich. As defined by Goodrich (2023), "peer mentoring refers to peers' mentoring and learning from each other and the actions that occur when they lead each other in the process of sharing prior knowledge and experiences and constructing new knowledge with each other" (p. 22). Goodrich is eminently qualified to lead the discussion on this topic, as he has addressed peer mentoring in a myriad of settings: high school and university jazz ensembles (Goodrich, 2007, 2016b; Goodrich et al., 2014), beginning band (Goodrich, 2021b), elementary school and high school programs (Goodrich, 2018), adult music making (Goodrich, 2016a), online settings (Goodrich, 2021a), undergraduate methods (Goodrich et al., 2018), and marginalized groups (Goodrich, 2020, 2022).

In *Peer Mentoring in Music Education: Developing Effective Student Leadership* (Goodrich, 2023),¹ Goodrich pairs the theoretical with the practical while investigating the topic from multiple facets. His pedagogical discussions include an exhaustive review of scholarship from within and outside music education and contextualization of that previous work within the unique setting of the music classroom. He emphasizes that peer mentoring is not new by including examples from ancient Greek and Roman texts, vernacular practices in jazz and samba, and the work of Dewey, Vygotsky, and other education luminaries. At the same time, he embeds original research narratives from over a dozen actual classrooms and their teachers throughout the text to demonstrate the multi-faceted ways in which peer mentoring can be used to facilitate effective learning in various settings. *Peer Mentoring in Music Education* is the rare book that serves both as an introduction to those new to peer mentoring and a meaningful reflection for those already using peer mentoring through a comprehensive, model-driven approach.

¹ All page references from this point forward are from *Peer Mentoring in Music Education* (Goodrich, 2023).

Overview

The introduction presents three themes found throughout the text: student leadership, meaningful learning, and diversity, equity, inclusion, and access (DEIA). Immediately, Goodrich establishes the relationship between peer mentoring and student leadership. Despite being related and potentially generative of one another, these two concepts serve distinctly different purposes. Leadership focuses on a service mindset that enhances the quality of the overall program through the efforts and agency of the individual. By contrast, "peer mentoring allows for increased student autonomy and places greater responsibility on students to contribute to their learning" (p. 1). Wisely, throughout the text, Goodrich distinguishes between both concepts and demonstrates how effective peer mentoring can lead to quality student leadership. In the initial chapters, concepts of DEIA feel like an afterthought while being acknowledged as necessary, with limited explanation of specific practices to achieve diversity and inclusion targets. Fortunately, through the vignettes of actual classrooms, Goodrich later explores how peer mentoring can serve to amplify marginalized voices, with an emphasis on racialized and LGBTQ+ students and students with disabilities.

Goodrich's book is written in two parts. Part I provides the foundations of peer mentoring with several practical resources embedded within the theoretical and pedagogical discussions. He uses carefully scripted "snapshots" of actual classrooms to introduce each chapter to immerse the reader into the topics that follow. Additionally, he scatters teacher-tested "quick tips" throughout the text, which serve as strategies for quick implementation of introduced concepts for those utilizing peer mentoring for the first time. Part I emphasizes concepts of meaningful learning while providing mention to leadership and DEIA.

Through narrative inquiry, Part II presents four different teachers and their classrooms to demonstrate the many different ways in which peer mentoring can be applied to the classroom. Each chapter introduces a teacher's unique context and provides a "narrative portrait" related to peer mentoring. Following each narrative, Goodrich reflects on the narrative to relate the teacher's experiences to concepts from Part I. Through these examples of real classrooms, Goodrich's primary themes of meaningful learning, student leadership, and support of DEIA come forward convincingly. Together, the pairing of Part I and II provides an invaluable resource for understanding the scholarship of peer mentoring deeply while embodying it in actual practices to facilitate incorporation in a range of music classrooms.

Part I

Chapter one provides a Gestalt view of peer mentoring by embracing its traditions, practices, and purposes. By focusing this first chapter on meaning making, knowledge acquisition, and

student engagement, Goodrich emphasizes that peer mentoring serves as a tool for student learning before all other purposes. His engaging narrative of Mrs. Jackson's jazz ensemble exemplifies the sort of rich, student-centered learning space that peer mentoring can promote and prepares the reader for an in-depth discussion of various approaches to peer mentoring. Goodrich introduces the reader to hierarchical and non-hierarchical models of peer mentoring. He also acknowledges the different knowledge types that can be taught through peer mentoring and describes the many ways in which different students might interact with different sorts of knowledge. Throughout the chapter, he distinguishes peer mentoring from other student-centered learning processes, not to disparage other practices but rather to focus on the unique roles within this pedagogy of student-as-mentor and teacher-as-facilitator, which are developed in later chapters.

Chapter two is the most detailed chapter of the book as it investigates the specific roles of the teacher in creating an environment for peer mentoring and in supporting the development of critical skills for students to mentor one another effectively. Goodrich emphasizes the co-creation of brave spaces where everyone is not only safe but also “values contributions from all students” (p. 41). In these spaces, the teacher's job is to center DEIA concerns by looking for power structures within the classroom and considering who is being othered by its protocols and culture. Goodrich emphasizes the need to include opportunities for all students to engage as both mentor and mentee through non-hierarchical mentoring to build individual awareness of the learning processes.

Goodrich advocates that the teacher thoughtfully and carefully match mentors and mentees, recognizing that the most capable students do not necessarily make the most appropriate mentors. During peer mentoring, the teacher plays the role of the chief mentor by modeling critical practices and then coaching both mentor and mentee on how to engage in reciprocal peer mentoring relationships. Quoting one of his participants, Goodrich notes, “Even though the teacher is the ‘specialist,’ the rehearsal room is full of intelligent people” (p. 56). This chapter carefully guides the teacher through processes for sharing agency and engaging all students in mentoring accompanied by clear, practical examples.

Chapter three describes the various roles that students can assume within peer mentoring. Goodrich draws attention to the expectations of students who enter peer mentoring, with both the mentor and mentee sharing “mutual understanding of both the reasons for participating in mentoring and the importance of valuing the mentoring process” (p. 66). He reiterates the flexibility of mentoring assignments to meet specific student needs and highlights how mentoring can deepen student learning to be impactful for both mentor and mentee, including examples of non-hierarchical structures where both students in the dyad serve alternately as mentor and mentee. He also discusses how the profusion of online collaboration tools

provides more flexibility with peer mentoring, including collaborations outside and across schools.

To close the chapter, Goodrich argues that reflection should be required and is the most important (and frequently overlooked) part of the student's role in peer mentoring. When both mentor and mentee engage in reflection during and after mentoring activities, both gain insight into what has been learned and how different engagement strategies enhance student learning. While this section of the chapter would be strengthened by more concrete approaches for facilitating this sort of reflection, the discussion of reflection practices highlights a critical way to maximize meaningful learning opportunities.

Chapter four directly confronts the issues of student leadership and socialization. Considering peer mentoring occurs within a complex social network, Goodrich emphasizes that monitoring social integration is critically important as a springboard for effective student leadership and peer mentoring. Teacher modeling of and monitoring verbal and nonverbal interactions are critically important, as issues of peer pressure, misguided sarcasm, and disparate abilities can impact the effectiveness of leadership and mentoring. Importantly, Goodrich recognizes that a key difference between mentoring and leadership is their outcome, and he draws attention to the musical and non-musical benefits that strong leadership can generate alongside meaningful learning from mentoring (e.g., inclusive identity, development of community, and social cohesiveness).

Unfortunately, this chapter misses one significant discussion, which is the largest oversight in an otherwise comprehensive text. In considering issues of socialization for both peer leadership and mentoring, individual student identity (e.g., racial, ethnic, gender, cultural) can play an outsized role. I expected this discussion within this chapter, but Goodrich does not acknowledge how differing student identities influence student mentoring and leadership within the social space of the classroom. This missing discussion in the context of socialization is particularly noteworthy given that DEIA is one of three pillars upon which the text is built. Fortunately, he investigates issues of DEIA less directly but in context during the complex narrative portraits of Part II; still, the failure to acknowledge identity in the specific discussion of socialization for mentoring and leadership seems like a significant oversight.

Part II

Through the detailed narrative portraits of four music educators, Goodrich reinforces his underlying themes of peer mentoring as meaningful learning, student leadership, and DEIA through peer mentoring. Due to his selection of educators with distinctly unique backgrounds in terms of schools, cultures, and practices, he demonstrates how flexible peer mentoring can be and how it can be used in any educational setting. Dana Monteiro teaches samba in a New

York City high school and utilizes peer mentoring to emulate the methods of Brazilian samba schools where peer teaching is a foundation of vernacular practice. Kara Ireland D'Ambrosio is a TK-8 general music teacher in California. Her use of peer mentoring highlights cross-age leadership opportunities and demonstrates the careful balance for the teacher to nurture and not suppress peer mentoring. Middle school band director Sharon Phipps from Massachusetts provides an approach to peer mentoring in ensemble settings that resembles more traditional models of student leadership. Her narrative demonstrates the intersection between mentoring and leadership as well as the constant monitoring and development needed to advance ability-based mentoring. Finally, Vince Cee, who has taught orchestra in a variety of settings, including Alaska, Arizona, and Malaysia, highlights the versatility of peer mentoring and the importance of understanding the community within and outside the classroom.

These portraits are critical to this text, not in that they provide exact models that can be emulated as presented, but rather in that they provide possibilities for educators to develop their own approaches. Too often in texts that integrate theory and practice, educator profiles are supplemental to the primary text and fail to extend the discussion beyond theoretical or pedagogical sections. Taken as individual stories, Goodrich's narratives are interesting anecdotes, and as I previewed the text, I initially dismissed them as superfluous to the more academic discussions of Part I. However, these portraits should be carefully studied as critical models of the potential for and flexibility of peer mentoring.

Goodrich concludes his book with a postlude of sorts entitled "Blended Progression," from which two lines stand out: "Peer mentoring and student leadership are *blended* together so that peer mentoring is student leadership," and "The *process* of peer mentoring and student leadership remains a most important aspect of learning and plays a major role in developing a community of learners" (p. 185, emphasis in original). These two sentences are powerful as they exemplify Goodrich's core arguments. In both peer mentoring and leadership, music educators must remain focused on the communal space of their classrooms and the constant advancement of collaboration toward learning through those peer engagements.

Takeaways

Goodrich's *Peer Mentoring in Music Education* is a valuable addition to music education scholarship. He places the focus of the music education classroom on the growth and development of the individual student while leveraging the shared communal space mediated by the teacher in which students interact together. He reclaims "student leadership" from the auspices of serving the administrative tasks of the music classroom to instead engage students as actors in their own learning and that of their peers. The emphasis on meaningful learning is the single most important takeaway, recognizing that "meaningful" has implications in multiple dimensions—academic, musical, personal, social, and cultural. Peer mentoring

presents new perspectives and points of leverage for student learning by providing students the opportunity to teach one another and use their peers as additional resources. It provides an outlet for student leadership that produces tangible benefits regarding students' learning in the classroom. It opens a space for student voice, particularly for students who might otherwise find themselves marginalized due to race, culture, ability, or other factors. This text will serve as a valuable resource for undergraduate and graduate-level courses as well as for professional development groups looking to provide more student-centered practices toward meaningful learning.

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