

Transforming Our Approach: Higher Order Thinking Skills in the
Selection and Development of Prospective Music Educators

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Abstract

The development of inferential skills in reflective practice seems to be associated with development of the undergraduate as a preprofessional teacher. As impetus for the present study, there was a question as to whether these skills might be diagnosed in high school seniors with stated intent of majoring in music education. The strength of the relationships between entrance criteria in a battery of exams meant to screen prospective incoming music education majors was also in question. Two groups of participants (high school students aspiring to become music educators, $n = 116$, and upper level music education majors, $n = 130$) took part in this investigation which compared higher order thinking skills demonstrated in an observation analysis task. It utilized certain procedures from a previous investigation (Standley & Madsen, 1991). Prospective freshmen demonstrated similar abilities in this task compared to those studied in the pilot (Sheldon & DeNardo, 2000) and freshmen who participated in the 1991 study. Upperclassmen demonstrated greater abilities in the observation task compared to prospective freshmen. When entrance examination variables of prospective freshmen were analyzed for relationship, few strong correlations were found. Evaluating higher order thinking skills in an observation analysis task may be a useful tool in identifying students who may tend to accelerate and flourish in music teacher training programs. These data may also serve to identify those with lower level higher order thinking skills at the outset of a teacher training program. This observation tool which assesses higher order thinking skills may be effective for the selection, retention, and professional development of music teachers and could lead to greater effectiveness among future music educators.