EDITOR’S NOTE

In this issue, Craig Reynolds Hurley and Rebecca Atkins investigate an instructional practice involving the introduction of expressive elements. Does it make a difference in singers’ expressive performance if they learn a song by first mastering the pitches, rhythm, and text before adding expressive elements (what the researchers call a post-expression sequence) or when all elements are introduced simultaneously (an infused-expression sequence)? Middle school students were randomly assigned to groups using these two approaches before learning songs at home. The researchers have provided links to the learning sequences used in the study as well as the song selections, which, in addition to their findings, will be valuable to choral educators and those who teach choral methods courses in preservice music teacher education.

Juliet Hess turns our attention to preservice teachers’ imaginaries, in this instance their capacities to construct images of students with disabilities based on what may be stereotypical assumptions rather than firsthand experience. Hess offers a loving critique of Universal Design for Learning, an asset-based approach that is commonly used in preservice teacher education, to problematize the way that Universal Design for Learning conveys the range of human variations that encompass disability. Hess also calls for teacher educators to confront narratives that often arise in media portrayals and public representations of individuals with disabilities. She calls for educators to “recognize disability as a valuable element of human difference rather than as a deficit and, hence, teach accordingly.”

El Sistema is a movement that has captured the attention of the general public as well as those within music education, particularly in light of the aims espoused by its founders. Amanda Ellerbe’s case study of a community youth orchestra focuses on the way various participants in the group conceive of its capacity to instill citizenship among its youth. She uses a theoretical framework elaborated by Martha Nussbaum to view participants’ perspectives in light of the concepts of legalism and communitarianism, raising the complexities of viewing music as a vehicle for social change.

Assessment has captivated the attention of policymakers, school communities, teachers, and researchers for more than 2 decades in public education. Brian Shaw acknowledges that the broad process of assessment and its implementation can take on multiple and potentially divergent meanings. His content analysis of five research journals and five practitioner journals provides an overview of the pervasiveness of assessment topics in these publications, the prominent topics they address, potential differences in the way assessment is framed in discourse between researchers and practitioners, and whether these emphases have changed over time. Shaw’s recommendations for addressing gaps and limitations and pertinent questions about the purposes of assessment should provide fruitful avenues for strengthening professional inquiry and practice in this vital area of the field.

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