

periods in daily and weekly vocalizations of teachers,” *Journal of Acoustical Society of America* 121 (2007): 469-478; E. J. Hunter and I. R. Titze, “Variations in intensity.”

¹⁰ I. R. Titze and K. Verdolini Abbott, *Vocology* (chapter 3).

¹¹ R. T. Sataloff, et. al., “Prevalence of abnormal laryngeal findings in healthy singing teachers” *Journal of Voice* 26 (2012): 577-583.

the Learner, Scott states, “When I attended school, the philosophy of education seemed focused primarily on educational processes: reading, writing and arithmetic . . . My perception is that today’s philosophy of education focuses primarily on intellectual performance: academics, achievement tests, and adequate yearly progress.” He goes on to discuss education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. There was a different focus, as you will see.

“The three H’s—heart, head, and hands—were a familiar concept to educators in the 1800s and early 1900s (33). His book also mentioned a few other education pioneers. In 1910, Chauncy Colegrove, Iowa State Teachers College, wrote: “We have now pointed out the aims of education in each of its three great divisions, the culture and training of the hand and the body, the head, and the heart. With these broad aims, all the work of the school should be in harmony” (113).

In 1908, Charles Oliver Hoyt wrote: “Harmony between the head, the heart, and the hand [must] be maintained. This gives a threefold division of . . . education” (p. 89). In our time, there has been a clear shift in our thinking about a well-rounded education in our public schools. The idea of trying to teach to someone’s “heart” would seem outside of the scope of what we feel a public school education should entail. Or is it?

With test scores being our main focus, one would ask if this approach is working. John Haittie, an Australian professor of education, set out to research what kind of teaching, teaching practices, and teachers have an impact on test scores. Or, in his words, “What kind of teaching, teaching practices, and teachers impact learning?”

In his book, *Visible Learning for Teachers—Maximizing the Impact on Learning*, Haittie documented his research on common educational practices such as homework, ability grouping, interventions, peer tutoring, Piagetian programs, cooperative learning, and simulations, etc. (266). He listed 150 influences or achievements. His book makes it very clear that teachers do have an impact on their students’ learning. While discussing the critical role of the teacher in education, he admonishes them to “know thy impact.” But he doesn’t stop there. He brings up the point that if we can truly make a difference in how much our students learn, where is the discussion about what we want our students do learn?

In the preface of his book, Haittie writes:

What is the nature of the learning that you wish to impact? My hope is that it is more than passing surface-level testing. It involves impacting a love of

Why Do They Sing? Students Speak Up

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(Used with permission of Illinois’ *Podium*, Winter 2015)

“There is an artist imprisoned in each one of us.
Let him loose.”

—Bertrand Russell

It is no secret that our schools are data-driven institutions. Presently, the data with which we are most concerned is the data we receive from standardized test scores. Hiring of personnel, budget decisions, and course offerings end up being tied to the outcomes of these tests.

Many schools have increased their students’ credit hours for graduation to include more required hours of the core subjects. If we are hoping to see our schools’ average test scores increase, it would seem a logical step to increase the students’ exposure to these subjects. Is there anything wrong with this approach? Are we getting the results we hoped for? Are there any drawbacks to this intense worry over standardized test scores?

At our “Welcome Back Teacher Institute Day,” our district hired a speaker named Darrell Scott. At the time of the meeting, I didn’t recognize the name. I will tell you more about him later in this article.

He began to talk about his vision for education. As he began speaking, he gave us a brief recap of educational philosophy for the past couple of hundred years. In his book, *Awaken*

learning, inviting students to stay in learning, and seeing the ways in which students can improve their sense of healthy being, respect for self, and respect for others as well as enhanced achievement. What achievement is and how it is valued needs to be a major debate in schools, communities, and societies; right now, such curricular questions seem more determined by test specifications than by such a lively debate.

Bull's eye! Of all the school mission statements I have read, I have yet to find one that says that their school's mission is to produce students who will score as high as possible on the ACT/ASPIRE/PARCC Test. What achievement actually is should be debated in schools, communities, and societies.

When was the last such debate held in your community? As Haïttie stated, "Such curricular questions seem more determined by the test specifications than by lively debate." Notice also his mention of a concern for what we might characterize as aspects of the "heart." He invites teachers to help students improve their healthy sense of being, respect for self, and respect for others. They are in tandem with enhanced achievement. Are we returning to the three H's as described above?

I mentioned Darrell Scott at the beginning of this article, and I told you that I would tell you more about him. As you recall, he was the guest speaker at our school's Institute Day. While he began by telling us about himself, it was revealed that he was from Littleton, Colorado. His daughter, Rachel, attended Columbine High School in Littleton and was the first student killed at the tragic Columbine High School shooting.

One month and a week after Rachel was killed, Darrell was called to testify in Washington DC. On the day he testified, he said: "Tragedies like the one at Columbine require a refocusing of the United States educational system. Education must focus on building character in students and teaching them principles like the ones Rachel valued: compassion, kindness, and caring... We must put more of our time, effort, and money into helping develop character in our children. It was not a gun that made the decision to kill my daughter; it was two young men."

Does our present educational system and its fixation on test scores and achievement leave students without a place to search for truth and beauty? Do we need more teaching that emphasizes a student's individuality and creativity? Should

we have more subjects that help students find their place in the universe? Do we need teaching that helps students find that their worth is not always found in a test score? Should we place more emphasis on the arts?

I don't have the answers to these questions. But I am curious as to why some students still sign up for a class that isn't needed in order to graduate, isn't going to be on any standardized test, and, most importantly, supposedly will not affect their ACT score.

Are students finding something that they can't find in their other classes? If you poll students and ask them why they are taking certain classes, their response often is that it is required. "I need this class to graduate." "I need this class to fulfill my school's requirement for four math credits."

If you poll your chorus members and ask them why they are enrolled in chorus, my guess is that not one of them tells you that he or she has signed up for your class to fulfill a humanities requirement or to raise his or her ACT score.

I asked eighty of my chorus students why they signed up for chorus. Here is a sample of their responses:

- "Music brings me joy."
- "There is just something that feels good about expressing yourself through music. Any feelings that I'm experiencing, I love to listen to music as a sort of release of my feelings."
- "Music is a door to another world. It takes your mind off of yourself and places your thoughts on the bigger picture of life. Music is a way to worship God and to understand that we are nothing if we do not give a part of us, such as singing, back to the one who gave us a voice."
- "I sing because it's my life... Every time I hear a song I know, I sing and feel great."
- "I am here because it teaches me to express myself when there is no other way."
- "I sing not because I'm great at it, but because I love it."
- "I sing because it's one of the most powerful ways of expressing yourself/myself. It's one of the ways we can connect and understand different cultures, even if we're enemies."

- “I sing because talking is overrated. Singing is a powerful thing. It’s a voice that everyone can share. I sing because I love it.”
- “I like to sing because it makes me feel like I’m alive.”
- “I don’t just like to sing, I LOVE to sing! Singing is what brings my spirits up when I’m sad and calms me down when I get mad...I feel free when I sing. I know my voice can do more than entertain. I think it can touch hearts.”
- “I sing music because I believe in the power of music. Music has saved me from many problems, and I believe that music can save others. Music has made a big impact on my life. It has helped me understand that there is good in life. I suffer from depression, but when I listen and sing music, it always cheers me up. I also sing because when my sister passed away, she never got the chance to hear me sing. I think that if I made a career out of music it would give me a chance to show her and many others my true colors.”
- “I sing because it’s one of the few times I can feel like myself...There are very few things that make me as happy as music.”
- “I love to sing, listen to, and play music constantly. I have had extreme anxiety and I’ve been struggling with depression for a while now, and music always makes me feel like I’m not alone. In many ways, music has saved me.”
- “A couple of years ago, I suffered from anxiety and depression and I didn’t have any friends. Singing was my escape. It made me feel happy and like maybe there was a chance for me to get better...This is why I sing. I sing for my own mental health and happiness. I sing for my dad because he loves my voice. I sing for my sister because she’s my role model, and she has taught me so much about music. I’m happy to be an alto because she was too...Lastly, I sing because I love it.”
- “When I sing, I feel a connection with God. Even if it is not a Christian song, music is so beautiful. It can only have been created by a divine being.”

- “I took this class because I find music is the only real way to express myself. If I didn’t have music, I would just be another face in the crowd.”

Am I opposed to standardized tests? Of course not. Assessment is a must for teaching. I include both summative and formative assessments in my classroom. And yes, I try to incorporate the Danielson Method in my lessons as well as worrying about literacy activities while making sure I am familiar with Illinois State Fine Arts Goals and the Common Core Standards. I am currently working on writing Student Learning Objectives.

Yes, I definitely want to make sure my curriculum includes more than being able to sing the alto part of twelve to fourteen choral works each year. I am always striving to be the best teacher I can be. But ultimately, I must remember why those students are in my class. They want to sing.

“I am not a teacher, but an awakener.”

—Robert Frost

Resources

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