

Guest Reflection: Lesley Dawe

On January 23rd, our class contacted Lesley Dawe via Skype to talk about her article “Fumbling Towards Vulnerability: Moving Out of the Familiar for Music Education’s Sake.” During this time we were able to ask her questions about her experiences and how her philosophy when it comes to teaching has been working for her students. I found this to be very enlightening and entertaining because these insights were what I thought was missing from her article. She defined her experience as one where she could not be afraid to make mistakes, as she thought it was worth it to have the students be more involved and engaged. At the school where she teaches there are two different programs, general and band. The distinction between the two interested me and the fact that they are taught in very different ways. When teaching the general music program, instruments such as guitar and drums are used to learn repertoire of predominantly pop music. I found her approach to this program to be interesting as she stated that she does not incorporate classical music or make sure the students understand the elements of music because most of them will not continue their music education after leaving that school. While at first this sounded to me as something that could be negative, hearing her explain it helped me to understand her perspective. If the students will learn music for a short time, she argued that she would rather teach them a drum pattern or some chords which they will actually remember in the future, rather than terminology for the elements of music which will ultimately be useless to them. Another question that was asked during our time with Lesley was if being someone who enjoys having an education that is very structured just as she did as a student, would struggle as a teacher. I have always been the type to like my school

day to be very organized, and would freeze up in moments where a lot of creativity was required. I always liked being told exactly what to do. To my relief, Lesley understood this and said the her program is not for everyone and some students do struggle. However, as a teacher you should be able to know what is appropriate for what time and be able to be flexible for your students. This is something I will remember for the future. Overall I think this discussion was very beneficial to us as we were able to learn firsthand from someone who is trying to revolutionize music education in her own way. I believe Lesley can serve as an example for all of us moving forward as we should be afraid to make changes and be vulnerable for our students.