

Monday, May 16th 12:00pm – 1:00pm EST

“And the music room door was just shut”: Stories of teaching and teacher education in music, before and during the pandemic

Presenter: Dr. Danielle Sirek, Assistant Professor of Arts Education at Western University



Generalist preservice teachers in Ontario take, at most, one music education course during their two-year Bachelor of Education program. In entry surveys for our classes, students describe themselves as apprehensive and unconfident in their ability to teach music, confirming previous research (Adler, 2012; Bremner, 2013; Dolloff, 1999). Yet, there is a high likelihood that generalist teachers will be required to teach music (People for Education, 2018). To explore the “reluctant” generalist teacher candidate, we started a longitudinal research project in 2016. Our purpose was to explore how music education curricula, teaching approaches, and institutional practices either create spaces of inclusion and possibility, or throw up barriers, to generalists learning and teaching music. Using narrative inquiry, we explore the experiences of preservice and in-service generalist teachers using focus groups and interviews. The data provide narratives of lived experience, both from teachers within the profession, and student teachers still outside the gates. The “collective story” that our participants constructed through their stories of learning and teaching music serve to, as Richardson describes it, “narrativize the experience of a social category” (1990). While their stories were told with humour and shared laughter, there was also a sense of fatalism and defeat. This presentation documents teacher and teacher candidate stories of fear, hesitation, and obstruction, but also risk and joy, in music education courses and elementary music classrooms before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

About the Presenter:

Danielle Sirek is an Assistant Professor of Arts Education at Western University. Prior to her appointment at Western, she taught undergraduate and graduate courses as well as Additional Qualification (AQ) courses at University of Windsor, holding the rank of Adjunct Associate Professor. Her program of research is primarily focused on arts teacher education; sociology of music education; and intersections between music education and ethnomusicology. Her research is published in journals such as *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, *International Journal for Music Education*, and *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education*; and has been presented at conferences in a variety of disciplines including International Society for Music Education (ISME), International Visual Sociology Association (IVSA), and American Educational Research Association (AERA). In addition to her scholarly work, Dr. Sirek sings professionally with the JUNO-nominated Canadian Chamber Choir; is Associate Artistic Director for the Windsor Choral Festival; and is heavily engaged in community arts.