

**Hourigan, R. M. (2009). The invisible student: Understanding social identity construction within performing ensembles. *Music Educators Journal*, 34-38.**

I am still not sure how I feel about the ideas presented in this article. I do see the importance of social inclusion in a music ensemble and classroom sense, but I also see the problems it presents as well.

From speaking with one of my past high school music teachers, I have heard about the challenges she has encountered trying to make a lesson that suits the needs, learning styles and abilities of every student, including those with learning disabilities. I'm conflicted on this idea because, while I admire the idea of being inclusive to everyone and giving them the same opportunities, I don't think these kinds of classes are fair to the students. It's not fair to the students who are serious about pursuing a professional career in music nor to the students who may have a disability. I can see how this could present challenges in finding a fair balance for both learning types.

The idea of a mentorship may help to find this balance, but I'm not sure how convinced I am yet. This gives those "above average" students the chance to peer teach and expand their leadership abilities while providing encouragement to the student receiving the peer teaching. These are great positives to be gained on both ends. I suppose seeing this program in action may make it easier to see how effective it really is.

While I support the idea of having an inclusive atmosphere in music ensembles, I don't quite see it as the only option. I think there is a place for such ensembles, where anyone who enjoys singing or playing music can participate, but I do not think it should be the only thing offered in schools. This links back to the idea of community music in a way. It provides a way for students in the school system who may struggle academically, in the traditional sense, to feel good about themselves. Music is definitely a form of therapy and expression for people of all backgrounds and abilities, and it is an important statement to be expressing in music education. Yet, we should also offer streams for varying levels of experience. People who have more formal training have a right to improve their skills just as those with no training have the right to learn the basics. While acknowledging the "invisible student" is important to promote healthy relationships in ensembles, we can't begin to ignore the flourishing student either. There needs to be a balance. We shouldn't deny either group their rights.

I can see how nurturing strong interpersonal skills between students in the ensemble would help to contribute to a healthy choir or band relationship overall. If people are able to socialize well with one another, they can perform well together as well. It is this sense of connection, going as deep as building friendships with everyone, that enhances the group's collaboration. To quote one of my favourite movies, *Drum Line*, "One band. One sound." Promoting team work within different sections of the ensemble is a great way to accomplish this. I see the usefulness here when Hourigan talks about not letting them work

with the same groups each time, or even allowing for these cliches to form in the first place. I believe it is the duty of the teacher to explain to the students that no man is left behind, so to speak, and how it is everyone's responsibility to ensure no one is left out. It is NOT the teacher's job to find a place for everyone to fit it. It is the student's' responsibility to be inclusive, and only the duty of the teacher to model this ensemble's dynamic to the students. I found myself really connecting with this idea and supporting the idea of inclusiveness.