

# All-State: Banding Together

by Christopher Jannings  
and Emily Heuschele

Approximately 30% of K-12 string teachers in the United States do not play a string instrument as their primary instrument. While recent research points to myriad reasons why this is true and how this can be problematic for our string programs, it is important that we accept our reality and actively support our non-string playing colleagues to help them become better string teachers. Many non-string playing string teachers have shown over time that with ambition, a willingness to ask questions and learn, and a strong support system, they are able to provide their students with an exceptional string education. Emily Heuschele and Christopher Jannings' presentation on the topic at the 2021 MNSOTA All-State Teacher Workshop covered the following major areas: The "Why"; Mindset; Pedagogical Content Knowledge; and Additional Resources

The following bullet points outline highlights from the presentation. Should you have any questions, feel free to reach out to Emily ([emheuschele@gmail.com](mailto:emheuschele@gmail.com)) or Christopher ([csjannings@gmail.com](mailto:csjannings@gmail.com)).

## The "Why"

- Approximately 30% of string teachers do not identify as string players (Gillespie and Hamann, 1998; Tast, 2014; Mick and Alexander, 2018)—this puts a significant amount of importance on pre-service training and professional development opportunities for non-string playing string teachers
- There is great variation in requirements for string techniques and string methods among colleges and universities locally, regionally, and nationally (Austin, 2006; Smith, 1995)
- 35/51 states (includes District of Columbia) define "music" as a single subject area (May et al, 2017).
- Only 16 states differentiate between vocal and instrumental. South Carolina has a "violin" license; all other states have combined instrumental licensure (May et al, 2017)
- Between 2005 and 2017, music teacher licensure trended towards more broad-field certification (Henry, 2005; May et al, 2017)
- MacLeod (2010) found that band and orchestra teachers teach differently;

this runs contrary to the traditionally held belief that teaching instrumental music is based on skills and techniques common to both wind and string teaching (licensure and teacher training certainly seem to be modeled on the belief that they are based on the same skills)

- Pre/early service teachers generally do not see themselves teaching outside of their specialization (Parker and Powell, 2014)
- Limited self-efficacy in playing string instruments may translate to limited self-efficacy in teaching string instruments (Mishra, 2006)
- Concerns of pre-service teachers in a "cross discipline" situation include not knowing enough about specific techniques, pedagogy, or performance skills (Hamman and Ebie, 2009)
- Respondents remember taking string techniques/methods, but retained very little information that would benefit them (Sckipp, 2010) Some struggle with bowing, shifting, and vibrato. Some lack of comfortability with fingering and position knowledge.
- Many non-string specialists begin teaching strings because they have been asked to fill a need within a district (Sckipp, 2010)
- Non-string specialists teaching strings said it was difficult to find professional development opportunities (Sckipp, 2010)

## Mindset

- Some music teachers are required to become string teachers to keep their district position.
- Honor people's accomplishments and talents, i.e., the jazz musician may create a string jazz ensemble.
- How can *you* help out your colleague? Support pep band, marching band, etc.

## Pedagogical Content Knowledge

### *Elementary/Beginning*

- Tuning: you may need to start at the very beginning
- Posture is Sound: Tension-free motion
- WSCP Framework for sound/tone: Weight, Speed, Contact Point

- Strings Triangle Framework for sequencing and rehearsing

### *Middle/Intermediate*

- Literature: Philharmonic series and publishing websites
- Shifting and Vibrato: start early
- Spiccato: foundation for advanced bowing techniques

### *High School/Advanced*

- High School Literature: Interesting/pedagogically sound literature beyond the standard "canon." Resources include *Teaching Music Through Performance in Orchestra* and *The String Orchestra Super List*

Orchestral Bowing: Familiarity with terminology (in multiple languages). Be able to model the desired sound (even just on open strings). Resources include *Orchestral Bowing: Style and Function* by James Kjelland, and Elizabeth Green's *Orchestral Bowings and Routines*

- 2 and 3 Octave Scales—Upper Position Knowledge: Find/generate upper position charts for reference. The 3-Octave Scale introduction/method in *Advanced Technique* (gold book) is highly recommended
- Targeted Exercises in Shifting: Violins and violas in particular should spend more time with 2<sup>nd</sup> position. Refine and improve different types of shift combinations. The shifting/position exercises in *Essential Technique* (green book) and *Advanced Technique* (gold book) are highly recommended

## Additional Resources

- MNSOTA Mentor Program
- *American String Teacher* and *String Notes* magazine articles (membership required)
- Comprehensive String Teaching Textbooks: Rebecca MacLeod - [Teaching Strings In Today's Classroom](#). Michael Hopkins - [The Art of String Teaching](#). Donald Hamann and Robert Gillespie - [Strategies for Teaching Strings](#). Susan Lamb-Cook - [Guide to Teaching Strings](#)

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