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Enhancing the Informal Curriculum

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Youth and Student Activities

The formal academic curriculum provides us with an intellectual foundation; however, the ideas encompassed in the formal curriculum need to be augmented, enriched, and tested through the life experiences available in the never-ending informal curriculum.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, the renowned American poet, author, and philosopher wrote: "Life is a succession of lessons which must be lived to be understood." Successful music-making requires more than passive acceptance; it requires proactive inquiry.

To enhance the informal curriculum, an undergraduate music major must create a plan. Listed below are some of the areas a student should consider when planning how to enhance an informal curriculum.

- Live practice sessions, rehearsals, and concerts: Attend as many rehearsals and concerts as your schedule will allow. Be sure to include experiences that lay outside your principal instrument. Be aware of musical events that take place in settings that include school (elementary through university), church, and community. Most rehearsals are open rehearsals.

- Recordings: Develop a multi-genre CD library. Seek out top quality recordings and compare those quality recordings to recordings of lesser quality. Because of the internet, quality recordings are available to anyone interested enough to go looking.

- One-on-one encounters and relationships: Informal music conversations can provide important insights that can change and deepen musical insights. The typical response to someone sharing a mutual interest is appreciation.

- Peers whose principal instrument is the same as yours
- Peers whose principal instrument is different from yours
- Music ensemble conductors at all levels and genres
- Music educators at all levels and genres, including private and classroom teachers
- Professional performers
- Music health professionals, including fields in research; medicine (i.e. ears, nose, and throat); and therapy
- Music industry professionals, including fields in business, publishing, recording, promotion, and fields related to computers and technology

- On-site authentic experience: There is no greater teacher than being responsible. Authentic experiences teach you which questions to ask.

- Volunteer to serve as a leader/assistant in a music or non-music organization

- Volunteer to work at a regional choral music festival, such as a solo-ensemble festival or a large group choral festival)

- Volunteer to lead music sectionals and rehearsals in a variety of settings. Remember to consider school, community, and church organizations

- Seek out a part-time position in music including church musician, summer camp counselor, after-school care, or private instructor

- Professional music organizations: Involvement in professional music organizations is a part of the never-ending informal curriculum. Each year musicians travel throughout the country to enhance their informal curriculums by attending professional music conferences. People make these music convention pilgrimages to challenge themselves with new ideas and musical insights, to participate in an atmos-

Enhancing the Formal Curriculum...continued

phere that encourages the sharing of musical experiences, to meet and network with professionals who can enhance careers, to make new friends, and to visit with old friends.

March 8s-11, 2006 the American Choral Directors Association Southwestern Division Convention will take place in St. Louis, Missouri. Literature has been chosen for a variety of music reading sessions, outstanding choirs have been invited by audition to perform, and inspiring speakers and clinicians have been invited to share their musical ideas and pedagogical insights. Your committee, the Youth and Student Activities Committee, is hosting a session that should interest any music undergraduate planning to teach. The session, First Year Teaching Surprises, features five young, successful choral music teachers from around the Southwest. Only by attending can you participate in the experience.

In the New York Times bestseller, *Strategies: Doing What Works, Doing What Matters*, psychologist and television personality, Dr. Phillip McGraw, writes, "You create your own experience. Acknowledge and accept accountability for your life. Understand your role in creating the results that are your life." I lived in St. Louis for three years and found it to be a great city. So, make your plans to attend the March 9-11 SWACDA convention. The convention will offer us the opportunity to meet.

Alan C. McClung joined the faculty of the College of Music at the University of North Texas in 2002. He conducts UNT's Concert Choir; teaches undergraduate choral conducting, courses in secondary choral methods, and supervises student teachers. He holds a BMED from West Virginia University, a MM in Choral Conducting from the University of Illinois, Urbana/Champaign, and a PhD in Choral Music Education from Florida State University.

Ed. Note: a complete biography for Alan McClung will be included in the Winter Edition of COMMON TIMES.