Design Thinking: Teaching for the Future

By Aaron Scholpp

Key insight into design thinking that is the most personally relevant to my future practice has to do with creating inclusive learning environments for students. Design processes like Universal Design for Learning is a framework for designing flexible instructional environments and proactively integrating supports that address learner variability (*Mao and Rao, 2016).* Teaching in an environment that is inclusive to all students is very important to me and is a part of my teaching philosophy. I want all of my students to be successful in the classes I will teach and having multiple means of expressing what they know will be incorporated into my future teaching practice.

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Another aspect of design based thinking that I found relevant: the group work that is involved. Each student comes into each class with their own interests and expertise. Creating situations where students can showcase these interests is essential because each student can contribute something to a project that the other students may not be aware of or know. All students come in with different experiences and when combined, groups can pool their collective resources to accomplish the assignment.

Assignment 2 has allowed me to apply design based thinking to the instrumental music curriculum. Through this research, I have found it to be very applicable to what my future band classroom can look like with Universal Design Learning (UDL) implemented. At the beginning of this course I was struggling to find any connection to the band curriculum and design based thinking. Most of the examples with design based thinking usually involved math or the sciences and this was daunting. After reading the articles and class discussions I realized it is not so much about the subject matter that you one is teaching to apply design thinking but the approach to the subject is what makes the difference.

Applying UDL allows for a wide range of learners to approach a lesson from multiple ways to access, process, and internalize information. UDL allows for flexibility for the students and allows the teacher to create a safe and inclusive learning environment for the students. It has allowed me to address meaningful problems because UDL allows for multiple means of engagement, representation, and action and expression.

Going forward, the best way for me to adopt these principles and processes is to always try to push myself into thinking outside of the box and not settling for non-inclusive standardized teaching practices. Another thing going forward in adapting to this process is I'll attend workshops on applying design based thinking.

References
Rao, K., & Mao, G. (2016). Using Universal Design for Learning to Design Standards-Based Lessons. *SAGE Open*, 6(4), 1-12. DOI: 10.1177/2158244016680688