



Position Statement

Music Teacher Certification in Michigan

Concerns

The Michigan Music Education Association and the Partnership for Music Education Policy Development have observed that multiple forms of teacher certification available in Michigan are being used to assign teachers to deliver music instruction in our state’s schools, and these various forms of certification vary significantly in quality and thoroughness. These certification types include the JX or JQ (music K-12) endorsement, various “all subjects” certifications (typically focused on grades K-5, or K-8) and the OX “fine arts” certificate. The only form of music teacher certification that truly prepares individuals to teach music in Michigan’s schools is the JX or JQ endorsement, which allows certification holders to teach all assignments in music in grades K-12.

All music certification programs must prepare prospective teachers to meet the same rigorous standards established for college and university trained music educators. Regardless of the certification that music educators receive, MMEA and PMEPPD believe that knowledge and skills in music are absolutely essential and that without them, teachers will not be successful in delivering high-quality music instruction and the musical education of the students they teach will be impaired.

The rationale behind these other forms of “music” certification was to provide a short-term and immediate solution to the teacher shortages that are occurring in many states and in many curricular areas, and to provide administrators with the flexibility to hire individuals to be assigned to teach in multiple arts disciplines. This approach, however, has the potential of being detrimental to overall teacher quality, depriving children of the right to be taught by competent, qualified and certified music teachers. Further, holders of “all subjects” and OX certificates do not have the necessary course work, experience, or musical skills and knowledge required to teach music without guidance and/or supervision.

The “Every Student Succeeds Act” (ESSA) Act of 2015 outlines the necessary components of a “well-rounded” education, and specifically identifies music as an important piece of the puzzle. ESSA further stipulates that all teachers need to be “effective” in their fields—and in Michigan, obtaining a JX or JQ certificate is the most comprehensive way to achieve that goal. Legislators, higher education officials, and local school district officials have expressed an increased interest in, as well as concerns about, variations in music teacher certification. These concerns are also shared by practicing music educators and professors in higher education who teach music education courses.

Guidelines for Music Educators:

- Exemplify for all music students your own respect for teaching and for future teachers.
- Support your colleagues in their individual professional development activities.
- Insist upon comprehensive—and comprehensible—standards for music teacher certification.
- Volunteer to mentor new music teachers.



- If you see flaws or oversights in the music teacher certification process, speak up through your state MEA, to your state's board of education, and to the state or local legislative body that determines alternative certification regulations.

For Music Supervisors and Administrators:

- Contribute to the development of regulations for music teacher certification using research-based information whenever possible.
- Endorse quality music teacher preparation programs that have been specifically designed to recruit, prepare, and license potential music teachers.
- Look for candidates who have undergone rigorous screening that includes tests, interviews, demonstrated mastery of content, and actual classroom teaching experiences, including at least a full semester of guided student teaching, under the supervision of a certified music teacher.
- Provide individualized support and mentoring by outstanding experienced music educators to all certified music teachers in music education positions.
- Match hiring policies and practices with community expectations and district goals.

For Prospective Music Educators:

- Look for programs that are field-based. These programs should offer course work or equivalent experiences in professional education studies before and while you are teaching and offer intensive experience with trained mentor music teachers in their classrooms.
- Look for selective admissions standards, including an audition, an interview, and assessment of your subject matter competency, personal characteristics, and communication skills.
- Seek a curriculum that provides you with the knowledge and skills you will need to help students reach the state's music education standards. Of particular importance are comprehensive music pedagogy courses.
- Expect to learn a wide variety of approaches to student learning and to use a wide variety of instructional strategies that will positively affect student learning, especially in the areas of critical-thinking, problem-solving, and performance skills.
- Look for a supervised internship under the direction of an experienced, certified music educator.
- Expect to meet high performance standards for completion of your program.
- Do not let any "shortcuts" compromise your training experiences and jeopardize the quality and effectiveness of your teaching.
- Seek the support and assistance of college and university music faculty, experienced music teachers, building administrators, and your peers.

For All:

- Invest in self-evaluation and continuous professional development, growth, and improvement.
- The education and preparation of prospective music educators should involve the cooperative efforts of the prospective teacher, current music educators and supervisors, school administrators, and music education professors in higher education.
- Become involved in establishing music teacher preparation and evaluation standards, designing and delivering preparation programs, recruiting and selecting music teachers, and developing criteria for assessing music teacher qualifications, content area knowledge, and teaching effectiveness.