



Teaching Beginning Orchestra Students in a Virtual Environment

Anna Raber



Research Question

How do string teachers build and foster optimal teacher-student relationships with beginner string orchestra students in a fully virtual teaching environment?

Method

- Qualitative study, informed by phenomenology
- Surveyed and interviewed participants
- Analysis: thematic coding allowed the researcher to create codes while examining the data
- Three major themes emerged from the data

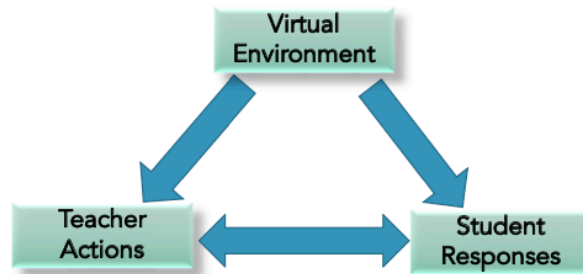
Participants

- Three teachers of beginning string students who taught in a fully virtual environment. Pseudonyms Esther, Carol, and Laura.
- Three students of these teachers who had begun learning how to play their instrument in a fully virtual learning environment. Pseudonyms Henry, Elizabeth, and Tyler.

Theme #1: Ramifications of teaching in a Virtual Environment

Coded 95 times throughout the data, and contains three subthemes

1. Obstacles to virtual learning and instruction
 - Esther: "Being able to go over and physically change their bow hold on their instrument, or their position...you just can't do those through a virtual setting."
2. Impacts of virtual lesson format on building relationships
 - Esther: "Even though I have less students, I still feel like I don't know them as well as I know my in-person students even when I have twice as many of them. You just get more opportunities to talk to them."
 - Tyler: "being on a device changes things, because interaction in-person is different than interaction on a device."
3. String pedagogy in a virtual learning environment
 - Playing, echoing, duets, playing games, air-bowing, lots of review.



Theme #2: Teacher Actions in a Virtual Environment

Coded 108 times throughout the data, and contains three subthemes

1. Positive verbal feedback
 - Tyler enjoys, "getting patted on the back figuratively," during lessons.
2. Engaging in conversation
 - Elizabeth stated that she enjoyed one-on-one conversation with her string teacher
3. Flexibly meeting students' needs
 - Examples: making videos, curbside tuning, varying the pacing of instruction

Theme #3: Student Responses to the Virtual Environment and Teacher Actions

Coded 91 times throughout the data, and contains three subthemes

1. Student progress and growth
 - Teachers noted varied progress between their students. Some advancing more quickly, others more slowly.
 - One of Tyler's favorite aspects of lessons is "getting some constructive criticism...it's really helpful because then I know how I can improve."
2. Learner Motivation
 - Teachers used phrases like, "kids are invested", "really hard worker", motivated by little challenges", and "very dedicated".
 - Henry described the numerous ribbons he earned for passing challenge songs. Elizabeth talked about how excited she is to play in an ensemble with her peers.
3. Lesson anecdotes
 - Each teacher shared a story of a unique situation that occurred in a lesson with a student, highlighting genuine connection between the teachers and their students.

Ramifications

For Music Education

- Train pre-service teachers on technology resources and platforms
- Equip teachers to engage students through conversation
- Emphasize the importance of creativity and flexibility

For Students & Parents

- Be patient and persistent
- Be willing to ask questions and communicate with the teacher
- Ensure the student has a strong internet connection and updated device
- Find ways to foster intrinsic motivation in the student

For Teachers

- Be flexible, creative, and patient
- Demonstrate a positive attitude, enthusiasm, and encouragement toward students
- Leave space for spontaneity, be ready to capture a moment of connection with students