

## Effects of Peer and Self-Evaluations on Pre-service Teaching Experiences

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### Abstract

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The purpose of this study was to compare teaching evaluations from individuals and peers (N=27) enrolled in an elementary music methods class to determine overall teaching effectiveness for 8 teaching sessions at an elementary school, grades K – 2. Several questions were posed: What was the relationship between peer and self-evaluation ratings of overall teaching effectiveness? Did perceptions of teaching effectiveness improve during the 8 lessons? Which teaching behavior had the most improvement according to self and peer evaluations? Students were divided into 8 groups and assigned a specific intact K, 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> grade class. Each group was given specific musical objectives to achieve at the end of the 8-week assignment. After each teaching episode, individuals evaluated themselves and their peers. Agreement or disagreements with eight statements were included on the evaluation form concerning specific teaching behaviors: clear instructions, eye contact, children participation, teacher enjoyment, objectives met, classroom control, students on task, and improvement from previous teaching. Analysis revealed peers evaluated individual teaching higher than self. Teaching improvement was rated the highest (3.72 on a 4 point scale) on lesson 7 but lesson 8 was higher (3.67) than the first time this statement was evaluated (3.4). Results also found that eye contact was rated as the best teacher behavior and “students on task” was rated the lowest.

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Guiding students to become excellent educators is a goal of university teacher training instructors. Students normally have opportunities to teach one another and observe teachers in the field, but many times they are not able to have field teaching experience before student teaching. Providing this experience is invaluable and lends itself to self and peer evaluations of teaching. Instructor feedback is valuable to the process as well, but working with children in their environment gives future teachers an opportunity to practice their newly learned teaching skills.

Teacher training classes are normally instructor led, with specific feedback given to individual student's teaching episodes during the class. Students are familiar with this structure, as the teacher is perceived to be experienced and knowledgeable with the subject. Occasionally peers also evaluate the teaching experiences. University instructors will ask students to self evaluate their teaching as well in order to help them become more independent as they progress.

Several studies have addressed relationships among peer, self, and instructor evaluations (Bergee, 1993, 1997; Colwell, 1995; Freed-Garrod, 1999; Napoles, 2008). Bergee (1993, 1997) found that faculty and peer evaluations had a high correlation. Experts rated participants lower while peer and self-evaluations alternated between the top and middle ranks (Colwell, 1995). Teacher and peers rated elementary students lower than the students (Freed-Garrod, 1999). Napoles (2008) found that peer ratings were consistently the lowest in comparison to self and teacher evaluations.

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Peer evaluation has been used in musical venues. Bergee and Cecconi-Roberts (2002) compared peer evaluations with instructor evaluations in a university setting and found peer evaluations were higher. Napoles (2008) however, found that peer ratings for teaching episodes were consistently the lowest in comparison to self and teacher evaluations.

Self-evaluation has been used in several studies to include students in the assessment process rather than relying solely on teacher feedback. Teacher training studies have compared self-evaluation to teacher evaluations (Moore, 1976, Napoles, 2008; Prickett, 1987; Rosenthal, 1985; Sims, 1985, Yarbrough, 1987). Results revealed students rate themselves higher than experts. In addition the same outcomes were found to be accurate for university music students (Madsen, Standley, & Cassidy, 1989), music therapy students (Greenfield, 1978), preservice elementary education majors (Colwell, 1995), applied university performers (Bergee, 1993, 1997; Bergee & Cecconi-Roberts, 2002 and beginning university conductors (Byo, 1990). The opposite was maintained by Kostka (1997) in that university keyboard students self-assessed lower than teacher assessment.

Bergee and Cecconi-Roberts, (2002), Bergee (1997), Colwell (1995), Lethco (1999), Barry (1997) and Napoles (2008) examined all three types of evaluation: self, peer and instructor/expert. No strong tendency appeared.

The purpose of this study is to compare teaching evaluations from individuals and peers enrolled in an elementary music methods class to determine overall teaching effectiveness for 8 teaching sessions at an elementary school, grades K – 2. Specific research questions include the following:

1. What was the relationship between peer and self-evaluation ratings of overall teaching effectiveness?
2. Did perceptions of teaching effectiveness improve during the 8 lessons?
3. Which teaching behavior had the most improvement according to self and peer evaluations?

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Participants were 27 undergraduate music education majors enrolled in an elementary music methods class. This is the last music education class taken before student teaching. Students consisted of instrumental and vocal majors. This class was the third in a series of music education methods classes.

### **Procedure**

A local elementary school allowed our students to teach 8 (eight) weeks for 45 minutes to eight different intact classrooms (K – 2). Classroom teachers volunteered to let our students teach music during the set times (9:00am – 9:45am and 9:45 – 10:30am). Classes were taught during the actual Elementary Methods class time. The elementary methods class met twice a week and one of the days was for teaching at the elementary school.

Students were divided into eight teaching groups (5 groups consisted of three and 3 groups consisted of four). All groups had at least one vocal major. Groups were given specific grade level objectives to achieve at the end of 8 lessons. These objectives included melody, rhythm, form, harmony, and dynamics. Each week groups planned lessons and gave them to the instructor for feedback and approval. Lessons were videotaped for further analysis and teacher feedback. The instructor was only able to watch 2 groups each week in person and watched the other lessons via DVD's. Groups watched other groups on a rotating basis in order to see at least half the class teaches.

Immediately after teaching, students completed self and peer evaluations (See Appendix A & B) for analysis. These evaluations were returned the following class for review. In addition, the instructor gave written and verbal feedback to groups after each lesson.

Students evaluated: teacher instructors, eye contact, student participation, teacher enjoyment, objectives met, classroom management, and student engagement and teacher improvement. Statements for each area were rated according to agreement: strongly disagree, disagree, agree, or strongly agree. In addition students made comments about what went well and what should be improved. (See appendix A and B)

Results Data for student and peer evaluations were analyzed for the mean of each group's perception of teaching. Student's self perception of teaching for all statements were averaged to determine the overall mean for all eight teaching episodes (Chart 1). Peer evaluations were also tabulated for overall mean for all eight teaching episodes (Chart 2). Results revealed that peer evaluations were higher than self-evaluations.

The mean for statement's agreement score was determined for each teaching episode. Results revealed students rated eye contact as the highest teacher behavior (3.49 on a 4 point scale) and "students on task" as the lowest (2.97 on a 4 point scale). Mean ratings for each behavior indicated the following (in order highest to lowest): Eye contact (3.49), Improvement (3.48), teacher enjoyment (3.47), children participation (3.47), Objectives met (3.41), clear instructions (3.38), Classroom control (3.07) and students on task (2.97).

## **Discussion**

Peer ratings for this study were higher than self-evaluations, which is in agreement with the research of Bergee (1997) and Bergee and Cecconi-Roberts (2002). However this is not in line with the research of Napoles (2008) that indicated instructor ratings were consistently higher than peer and self-evaluation ratings. This study found that peer perceptions of teaching were higher than self-evaluations. The instructor in this study did not complete an evaluation form, although all teaching episodes for each of the eight weeks were observed. The teacher function in this study was to give immediate feedback and suggestions for improvement. Weekly students received their self and peer evaluation sheets complete with their averages and comments.

As students prepare to enter the teaching profession they must be able to constantly assess their teaching behaviors and effectiveness. Several students commented that having to evaluate what they had just taught gave them a tool to determine their success immediately after the fact. In addition, group dynamics included discussions concerning previous teaching to improve in each area. Peers were able to articulate concerns for student learning and teaching during these meetings.

It was interesting to note that all evaluations were lower for two of the 8 lessons. During one of these days, the children had had a fire drill and the other day included bad weather as well as several substitute teachers. Students were able to evaluate peers three times during the teaching episodes, which enabled each person to determine if their peers had improved their teaching. Peer observations helped students to better evaluate certain teacher behaviors with the hope that their observations would enhance their own teaching. Another area investigated was student perceptions of the best and worst teacher behaviors. The overall best teacher behavior was eye contact (3.49) followed closed by teacher improvement (3.48).

When comparing characteristics of highest-rated teaching excerpts, Yarbrough and Madsen (1998) found that not only was there less off-task student behavior, a higher percentage of approvals, there was also more eye contact. Field teaching on a weekly basis should facilitate teacher improvement. The lowest rated behavior was “students on task” (2.97) followed closely by “classroom control” (3.07). This behavior was discussed at length by all groups in order to determine how to best keep classes under control and all students engaged throughout the 45 minute teaching episodes. Future research could include teacher intensity within field experience and determine if the behavior improves with self and peer evaluations.

While this study revealed self and peer perceptions included steady improvement throughout the eight teaching episodes, it also found that classroom management and student engagement are areas that continue to be of concern for preservice teachers.

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**Appendix A**

Teacher Evaluation – Elementary Lesson #

Student Name

Evaluator Name

Please circle the number indicating your level of agreement with the following statements.

- 1= Strongly disagree
- 2=Disagree
- 3=Agree
- 4=Strongly Agree

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Children understood instructions           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |   |
| 2. Teacher had good eye contact.              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |   |
| 3. Children participated.                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |   |
| 4. The teacher had fun.                       |   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5. Objectives were met                        |   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. Teacher had good control of the classroom. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |   |
| 7. Students were on task all the time.        |   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8. The teacher improved from the last class.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |   |

What did they do well?

What should they work on?

**Appendix B**

Self-Evaluation – Elementary Lesson #

Student Name

Please circle the number indicating your level of agreement with the following statements.

- 1= Strongly disagree
- 2=Disagree
- 3=Agree
- 4=Strongly Agree

- |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Children understood my instructions  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. I had good eye contact.              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. Children participated.               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. I had fun.                           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5. My objectives were met               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. I had good control of the classroom. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7. Students were on task all the time.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8. I improved from the last class.      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

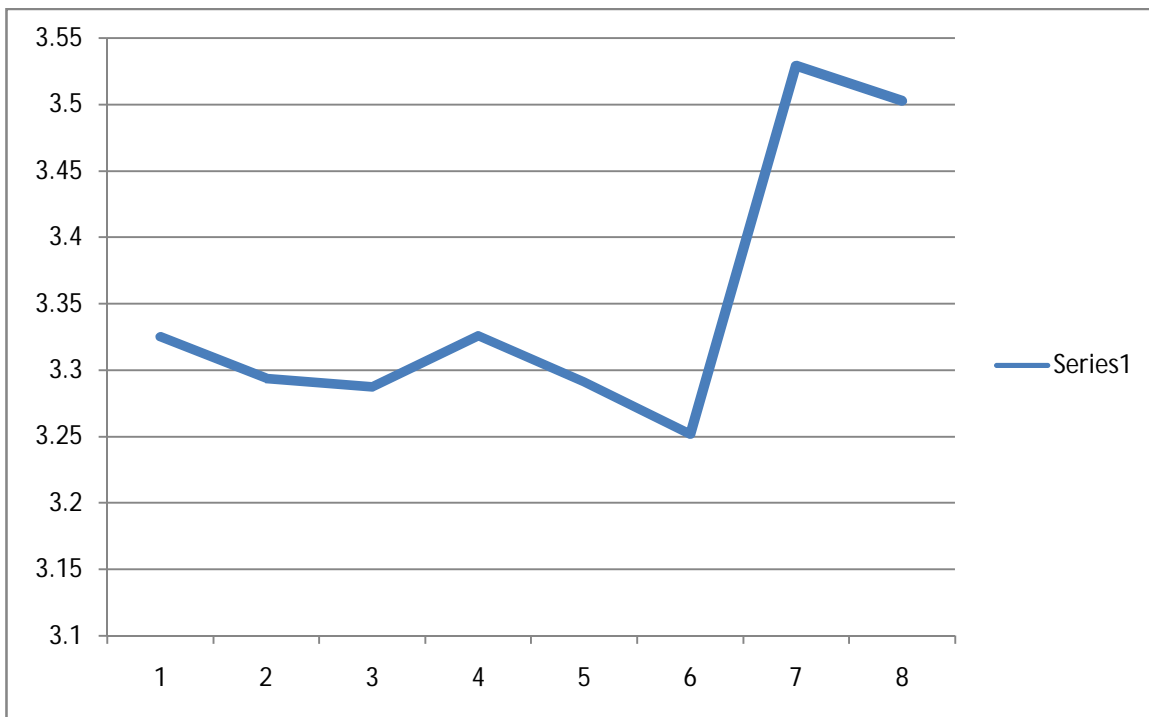
The best part of the lesson that I taught today was:

What will you work on for your next lesson?

**Chart 1**



**Chart 2: Mean Group-perceptions of teaching across 8 observations:**



**Chart 3: Mean Self-Perception of Teaching across 8 Observations**

