

Teacher Interview
Maddison Beaudoin

The teacher I have chosen to interview is Vanessa Harnish. She was one of my high school music teachers and I have chosen to interview her because of the impact she made on my life and because I hope to become a music teacher like her.

KEY:

- VH: Vanessa Harnish
- MB: Maddison Beaudoin

1. Why did you become a music teacher?

VH: I had a great elementary music teacher, and I loved being involved in any and every musical activity I could be a part of. I think because she made music class so enjoyable, I wanted to be a music teacher. When I went to high school, I had two excellent music teachers. I decided I wanted to teach high school after I co-oped at my former elementary school in the music classes. I wanted a career in music, and I wanted to pass on the positive music school experience that I had as a student.

MB: Ms. Harnish and I have many things in common, one of which is the reason we want to be a music teacher. I too had a music teacher in elementary school spark my love and interest for music and since then have been able to be apart of anything musical I could be apart of such as pit band and orchestra. Ms. Harnish was actually the one who inspired me the most to become a music teacher.

2. What are some struggles you find with teaching, especially in music?

VH: One of the major struggles in music is that there are so many different levels within the music classes and you have to find a way to provide a positive and challenging experience for all students. In a grade 9 class, I may have students who

have never played an instrument, and then others who have been playing since grade 5 and have a lot of knowledge and skill. Also, depending on the school, I may have a lack of resources or a fantastic supply. Resources have greatly varied from school to school for me. Another challenge can be the kind of support your administration provides you with. I have had supportive administration, and then others who I felt limited the program, including whether or not they would allow me to take students on trips (which really limits the students' experiences).

As well, sometimes guidance puts students in your class (especially grades 9 and 10) who don't really want to be in the class, so you have to find a way to reach that student and make it a good experience for them, and the entire class. You may also have students who negative attitudes who can affect the entire energy of the class unless you find a way to tackle the problems right away so that bad attitudes don't affect your class community.

Cell phones and the addiction to them is an issue. Students struggle with regulating themselves, and so they will miss content as they are playing on their phones and then ask you for help later as they weren't focused on the lesson. It is also disrespectful. Building a culture of respect is an important goal of mine.

MB: Different skill levels in a music class from my experience can also be a struggle for a student. Advanced students may find that the class is boring and want to do more whereas a student with little to no skill will find the class discouraging. I also hope that someday soon all schools will have the same resources as ever other school so that every student can have an opportunity to learn.

3. What do you hope to get out of teaching?

VH: I hope to pass on my love of music to students, and provide a positive experience so they want to keep music in their lives as supporters of the music community, or participants. I also want to have fun in my classes, as much fun as

students! I also get to enjoy a job where I have enjoyable musical experiences every day.

MB: Having Ms. Harnish as a teacher I can honestly say that she has achieved this goal in my eyes. Inspiring students is one of the main reasons I want to become a music teacher and to be able to provide students with an opportunity to do that is just amazing. Keeping music in one's life is very important and I think that if students have the right teacher, it happens.

4. **What are qualities you think a good teacher should possess?**

VH: A good teacher should be kind, patient, forgiving, and enthusiastic. They should care about the quality of classroom experience that each student receives so that school is enjoyable but also has the students learning and challenged. A teacher has to be extremely knowledgeable about their content, highly skilled and be able to break down concepts into steps so students are able to learn. Teachers have to be able to adapt to the class that they have, and so every time I teach a course it is slightly different as I cater it to the students I have, their interests and skill level. You also have to be creative as a music teacher, and find ways to reach students in high school who may not had a positive elementary music experience.

MB: I agree with these qualities. I think that a teacher should possess all of this because otherwise, the students will be bored, can get frustrated and most important they will not receive the knowledge and education that they should be getting. Being able to adapt is possibly one of the most important qualities. If a student is not understanding something, it is up to the teacher to find another way of explaining it so that the student understands.