

# Instrumental Music Education Majors' Confidence in Teaching Singing

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The purpose of this study was to survey undergraduate music education majors' confidence in teaching singing, according to the NAfME K-12 Achievement Standards (NAfME, 1994). Specific research questions were: 1) How confident are music education majors in implementing the 16 singing achievement standards for grades K-12? 2) How confident are they in their own singing ability? 3) How interested or motivated are they in learning more about how to teach singing? 4) Are there differences in confidence among music education majors by year in school? 5) Are there differences in confidence among music education majors by primary instrument?

The *Survey of Confidence in Teaching Singing (SCTS)*, adopted from Madura's (2007) *Survey of Confidence in Teaching Improvisation*, was distributed to 307 undergraduate music education majors at a public university school of music during the fall semester of 2012. Of these 307 potential subjects, 133 had returned completed surveys within one week. A follow-up email was distributed and another 31 completed surveys were returned, for a total of 164 responses (53.42 percent of 307). Due to the concern that nonrespondents' answers might differ from those of respondents, 20 nonrespondents were contacted randomly to complete the *SCTS*. The nonrespondents did not differ significantly from the respondents in any question category ( $p > .05$ ), so the nonrespondents' answers were combined with the respondents' data ( $N = 184$ , 59.93 percent of 307).

Descriptive data were computed for all *SCTS* responses, including means and standard deviations for combined K-4, 5-8, and 9-12 standards, by year in school and primary instrument. According to Madura's (2007) categorizations, combined subjects reported "moderate confidence" for teaching grade K-4 standards of singing, "slight" to "moderate confidence" for grade 5-8 standards, and "slight

confidence” for teaching singing standards at the 9-12 grade levels. To determine differences among the three grade level standards, grade level means were submitted to analysis of variance with repeated measures. Statistically significant differences were found among the means for all three grade levels ( $p < .01$ ). Thus, on average, subjects’ confidence in teaching singing decreased as grade level increased. Subjects reported “slight” to “moderate confidence” in their own ability to sing, but “moderate” to “great interest” in learning more about how to teach singing.

Comparisons of confidence in teaching singing by year in school and primary instrument were determined using a two-way multivariate analysis of variance, with year in school and primary instrument serving as independent variables, and achievement standard means for grades K-4, 5-8, and 9-12 serving as dependent variables. Results of the MANOVA revealed statistically significant effects for year, primary instrument, and interactions ( $p < .05$ ). Confidence increased by year in school (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior) and by instrument area (string, woodwind, brass, voice, piano, percussion).

While the current curriculum seems to be having some impact, more focus is needed for teaching singing at secondary grade levels, and for instrumental music education majors (particularly in string, woodwind, and brass areas). However, subjects reported interest in learning more, and further investigation, as well as curricular collaborations among P-16 faculty, will likely improve music education majors’ confidence in teaching singing.

## References

- Madura Ward-Steinman, P. (2007). Confidence in teaching improvisation according to the K-12 achievement standards. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, 172, 25-40.
- NAfME: The National Association for Music Education. (1994). *The school music program: A new vision*. Reston, VA: Music Educators National Conference.