


Speaking Without Words: Developing Communication Skills Through Choral Conducting in International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (IB MYP)

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Abstract

Although communication is designated as a core competency within the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (IB MYP), its practical development remains structurally absent from arts guidance. Choral conducting offers a different pedagogical logic. In this context, conductors must convey musical intention exclusively through physical signals, and as student conductors they must simultaneously direct, correct, and motivate ensemble members through rehearsal interaction. This makes choral conducting one of the few educational practices where nonverbal and verbal communication are both demanded and teachable at the same time. Despite this potential, the IB MYP Arts Guide provides no conducting-specific communication framework, leaving teachers without structured support. This study investigates how choral conducting classes can be designed to develop nonverbal communication as the primary channel through which broader communicative competence is built, in middle school students (ages 11 to 16) within the IB MYP framework. A Design and Development Research methodology guided three phases: reflexive thematic analysis of IB MYP documents and teacher interviews, a three-round Grounded Delphi study with international experts, and dual expert validation. Four curriculum gaps were identified, most critically a disconnection between ATL communication designations and conducting-specific practice. A Grounded Delphi process generated and validated six competency domains, with Nonverbal Communication and Gesture Use (M=4.17) and Rehearsal Strategy and Problem-Solving (M=5.00) emerging as most communication-central. Two categories of expert validation yielded pedagogical soundness ratings of M=4.60 and confirmed MYP structural alignment. The resulting three-stage framework demonstrates how choral conducting can serve as a structured pedagogical vehicle for developing communication skills within the music classroom, offering IB MYP practitioners an empirically grounded model where the ensemble



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rehearsal becomes the site of deliberate, assessable communicative growth.

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