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Introduction to the Teaching & Learning Section

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Teaching and Learning

Introduction to the Teaching & Learning Section

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The Teaching & Learning article in this issue of *OMJ* is “Music as Mirror: The ‘Choosing My Personal Theme Song’ Exercise” by Thomas Conklin and Nathan Hartman. In addition to offering *OMJ* readers a good classroom exercise designed to increase student self-awareness, the authors also suggest a structure for finding and sharing this concept. Beyond the mechanics of the exercise, however, Conklin and Hartman examine the assumptions of music as a symbol of self and comment on some of the differences between using music as a vehicle of personal growth and the use of other art forms (e.g. painting, poetry, or photography).

Among other things, music provides cultural context to our experiences. As an artifact of where and when we live, music places us among a larger population and, often, a specific subset of shared aesthetics. This is an intensely personal medium but also a way to feel connected to others who share the identity of the same station, attend the same concert, or otherwise listen to similar music. The concept of listening at this level constitutes the base of music in every society and becomes what the Pandora web site calls the “Music Genome.” By tapping into this gene pool in a classroom exercise, the instructor and students free up self-awareness and share the experience.

I think Teaching & Learning readers will find this challenging and immediately useful. I look forward to using this exercise myself and I know you will want to do the same.