

Kyle Siskron

Music 40

September 21, 2017

Interviewing Kelly Detwiler, Director of Orchestras, Altoona Area School District.

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I interviewed my former orchestra director, Kelly Detwiler, on Sunday, September 17, 2017. I asked a variety of questions and the interview lasted about 26 minutes.

I asked Kelly about what joy her job brings to her. She replied with, "watching children grow and accomplish things they may never thought they were going to do." For example, Kelly directs the 7th grade orchestra, 8th and 9th grade orchestra, and the high school orchestra (10-12), so she gets to watch her students grow for years.

When I asked her what she wishes she would've gotten to do during her undergraduate experience, Kelly explained that she wished there was a program that allowed you to go and work with younger kids. "Working with your classmates really doesn't help prepare you, since they already know a lot about what you're teaching them." When I asked Kelly what professional development opportunities would be valuable to me, she told me that I should go to conferences and to things specifically geared towards my weaknesses. "I also feel like playing in symphony orchestras, pit orchestras, and community events helps keep my ear, skills, and expectations up." Kelly also told me that I should open my eyes to everything that PSU has to offer and to not focus on just classical music.

I asked Kelly to describe the best moment of her student teaching. "When my semester was over and the students had taken me in and made me feel good. It wasn't a sendoff, they were sad that I wasn't going to be there anymore. I could connect with them and that made me feel great!" I also asked about the scary parts of her job. She jokingly answered, "working with my husband." But on a serious note, she gets nervous with the 7th grade class. Altoona has eight different elementary schools, and some of the schools do not allow music lessons during PSSA

prep. Each elementary school is at a different level because of this and it is hard to find something that everyone can get what they need.

Testing affects her by, "making things difficult. They are hurting kids by not letting them go to music class. It is a shame. I know we need standards, but to take away music is just terrible. If the district would read articles, they would know what music does."