



Don Pearce—Small Schools Curriculum Officer
smallschools@wmea.org

Oh, the things you will see and do!

It was great to be a part of the conference in Yakima! It is always so much fun to catch up with colleagues. Better yet, it was great to step in and see so many sessions for small schools so well attended. Furthermore, it was a blessing for me to see the preparation, discussions and interactions that occurred in these sessions. I am thankful to be associated with such great teachers who give their time and energy to present viable, timely and superior sessions for our members to attend. Also, thanks to all who attended our Small Schools Luncheon. It was good to see so many people networking and visiting. I have proposed a similar luncheon for the Northwest conference in Spokane. To conclude the conference wrap-up, let me thank you for re-electing me as your Small Schools Curriculum Officer. I am humbled and take this responsibility seriously.

This article's title will stir memories for all of us who have been in this teaching game for a while. I hope it brings an abundance of chortles and chuckles to you. Mostly, this is for the young teachers and teachers to be, who will see what we have seen and so much more.

You will learn to stay awake on bus rides. On the Monday after returning from the Green River Vocal Jazz Festival in 1984, my boss asked if I had noticed the bus veering towards the highway median on I-5 on the way home. I had not. Apparently it happened. I have not slept on a school bus since!

You will see how wonderful the music teaching community is. On the bus ride after the dinner break back to Gresham, Oregon, the engine threw a rod—right through the side of the engine! My colleague Dave Cross heard about it, and piled my kids into the front of his

school's bus, and drove my students and me to Vancouver, even though they were staying Portland. We have so many colleagues like that!

You may walk past a hotel room where the curtains are open and three senior girls are enjoying cigars. When this happened to me, I asked them what they were doing. They said "We are 18, and assumed it was okay." I reminded them that school rules do not recognize that fact—but I gave them points for trying!

You may find out how to see the world through your students' eyes. We were fortunate enough to travel to Europe in 1994, and to see the kids react as they saw things they had only read about or seen in history books. You might see the awe of a student who noted that the moon looked the same in Europe as it did at home here in Washington, or the joy of spending July fourth on a rooftop garden watching 'fireworks' from an approaching squall line of thunderstorms.

You will feel the infinite sadness of your students when someone suddenly passes away. We learned to cope and grieve together. You may visit students, often with other members of your group, in the hospital to let them know you care and are thinking of them.

You may see revelation as your students visit another country. We visited Ukraine four times between 2002 and 2007. I watched my singers play with the orphans in the school where we were staying. I saw how compassionate they were as I watched them give the orphans everything they had except enough clothing to wear home because they knew those kids had nothing. I saw the expressions

on my students' faces as they sang Lysenko's "Prayer for Ukraine," as they witnessed everyone in the room instantly rise to their feet, and noticed the tears coming down the cheeks of the nurses and workers.

You will feel the heartache for your students when things do not go as planned. I have had students who have made terrible choices and are suspended from school, leaving you and your students shorthanded for a show or a trip. You will give time and energy you did not know you had to help students succeed, not only in your program, but throughout the school. You will also cry in a good way. When you feel like you have just had it, you will see a note on your desk from a student you had years ago, telling you what a difference you made in his/her life and how he/she has never forgotten it.

You might have a singer in your program who could not sing a note correctly from sixth grade on. Then you will notice one day when she is senior that she is hitting every note and is singing beautifully. You may cry tears of joy, and your kids will wonder what is wrong with you! Another student who cried last year in class when she could not sing by herself because she was too scared will win a solo award at a festival the next year. Your band might only have 19 students in it, but they commit to the music, play the tar out of it at your WMEA large group festival and get a superior.

Through it all, you will be a teacher of music and of life experiences. You will see and experience many of the wonders of student successes (I hope these are many), and sad experiences (I hope these are few). For those of us with a few years or more into this profession, I hope you can relate to these stories.

For those of you just starting out or in your first couple of years in the classroom (my high history teacher would call you *greenhorns*), I believe that you have chosen the most honorable profession in becoming a music teacher. You will not only shape music in our schools, but you will shape lives. Go and continue to invest in our young people, no matter which level you teach. Show them the joy and love that is possible through music.

**Mark
your calendar,
plan to attend...
Conference 2015**



**National Association
for Music Education**
Northwest Division

**Convention Center Spokane, Washington
February 12-15, 2015**