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OU, Hong Kong Institute collaborate to teach students

By **Dawn Pauli**, contributing writer

With the mutual goal of incorporating a more creative process in music teaching and learning, Oakland University is partnering with the Hong Kong Institute of Education.

Jackie Wiggins, professor of music education and interim chair of the Department of Music, Theatre and Dance, is collaborating with Bo Wah Leung, a music education professor at the Hong Kong Institute of Education. The two met at a conference of the International Society for Music Education in 2002.

Leung was familiar with Wiggins' work as an internationally known researcher in children's musical creative process. He uses two books authored by Wiggins as texts in his courses.

Wiggins visited Hong Kong to share her expertise and recently hosted undergraduate students at Oakland University.

"The Hong Kong government wants to bring in more creative thinking to their schools," Wiggins said. "Dr. Leung and I have a common interest in studying children's creative process as it occurs in classroom settings."

Wiggins traveled to Hong Kong in November to work with faculty and students to teach them how to incorporate creative process into their school music curricula. She helped Leung and his colleagues, undergraduate music education students, and area teachers understand how to teach music from a constructivist perspective.

This month, 15 undergraduate teaching students from Hong Kong visited OU for two-weeks. All plan to become music specialists in primary schools.

"America and Hong Kong are among a few countries that employ music specialists in education," Wiggins said. "In many other countries, the regular classroom teachers teach music along with other general subjects. This is one of the many things that we have in common."

The OU visitors were delighted with their trip, spending time in OU's residence halls, visiting attractions such as Greenfield Village and attending the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

"Although it was a brief trip, they had an opportunity to experience a more open classroom environment and a more interactive way of teaching," Wiggins said. "Instruction in Asia has often been teacher-centered, and students are not always comfortable sharing their ideas. It's a hard thing to change because it's a cultural change."

The students also had the opportunity to visit area elementary schools where OU graduates or current graduate students teach music, attend a high school band concert and interact with high school band students.

During workshops with Wiggins, she introduced them to teaching music through creative process. They also sat in on jazz improvisation and African ensembles and steel band classes.

"I think their favorite part of the trip was participating in the jazz and African ensemble and steel band classes. They never had an opportunity to study these musics before," Wiggins said.

Wiggins is planning another visit to Hong Kong in March with OU graduate students. The students will attend workshops in traditional Chinese music, taught by Leung, and visit music classrooms in Hong Kong primary schools. They also will have an opportunity to interact with Hong Kong music education students.

Wiggins also is acting as an overseas consultant to Leung and about 20 Hong Kong music teachers who are participating in a research study of the nature of creative music making in primary and secondary schools in Hong

Kong, funded by a grant from the Education and Manpower Bureau of the Hong Kong Government. Her responsibilities include reviewing and providing feedback about creative projects designed by the teachers as part of their work in this study.

SUMMARY

With the mutual goal of incorporating a more creative process in music teaching and learning, Oakland University is partnering with the Hong Kong Institute of Education. Jackie Wiggins, professor of music education and interim chair of the Department of Music, Theatre and Dance, is collaborating with Bo Wah Leung, a music education professor at the Hong Kong Institute of Education. The two met at a conference of the International Society for Music Education in 2002.

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