DESIGNING A COURSE FOR
PERFORMANCE ANXIETY IN EDUCATION

By

Heather Healey

A project submitted to the Department of Education
in conformity with the requirements for
the degree of Master of Education

Queen's University
Kingston, Ontario, Canada
August, 2015

Copyright ©Heather Healey, 2015
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project could not have been completed without the interest and support from many people who have contributed to its completion.

Thank you to my supervisor, Dr. Benjamin Bolden, for being an encourager throughout this process. Your gentle nature combined with your ability to push me to do the best work possible was inspiring and extremely helpful.

To my professor and second reader, Dr. Denise Stockley, thank you for planting the seed of designing a course for adult learners. You modeled what positive adult teaching and learning experiences should be and inspired me to use these techniques in my project.

Much appreciation goes to students of mine (past and present) and fellow MEd students who have shared their personal experiences with performance anxiety, giving me the desire to create this project.

Thank you to my amazing parents for your support throughout this journey. I’d like to give a special thank you to my mom, Gail Currie, for proofreading many late night submissions and providing very useful feedback.

Finally, a huge thank you to my husband, Shawn Healey, and my sons, Tyler and Kevin, for holding down the fort, for not complaining when I was busy with assignments, and for cheering me on when I felt overwhelmed. I couldn’t have done it without you!
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROJECT OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BACKGROUND AND RELATED LITERATURE</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMBATTING PERFORMANCE ANXIETY</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRAMEWORK FOR COURSE DESIGN</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowles Framework</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backwards Design</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COURSE SYLLABUS</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLASS 1 POWERPOINT (WITH INSTRUCTOR NOTES)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLASS 2 POWERPOINT (WITH INSTRUCTOR NOTES)</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLASS 3 POWERPOINT (WITH INSTRUCTOR NOTES)</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLASS 4 POWERPOINT (WITH INSTRUCTOR NOTES)</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDICES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Pre-Course Questionnaire (Week 1)</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Podium Template (Week 2)</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Mindfulness Script (Week 3)</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Guided Imagery Script (Week 3)</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Pre/Post Performance Reflections (Week 4)</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Project Overview and Purpose

Presenting and performing is part of many subjects within the Ontario curriculum. Teachers, themselves, are also expected to perform with very few strategies for success. This course offers information about performance anxiety and coping strategies to help in-service teachers and their students.

This project was created as an eight-hour class for in-service teachers. It is designed into four separate classes and can therefore be used for professional development (independently from the rest of the course).

Introduction

Curriculum is constantly changing. Sometimes it changes in overall concepts, specific expectations, or just general content. Often, it is only the labels that change or how it is being assessed or evaluated. There are, however, many important concepts that seem to remain part of the null curriculum. According to Flinders and Thornton (2013), "the null curriculum describes what is missing. It includes intellectual processes and subject matter as well as effect. The null curriculum might include singular topics or perspectives as well as entire fields of study"(p.381).

Performance anxiety and associated coping strategies appear to be part of the null curriculum in Ontario elementary schools and Faculties of Education. Students need to be taught how to recognize symptoms (mild to severe) and coping strategies. Perhaps the best place to
begin to educate the students is to educate their teachers. From Grade One through Grade Eight, students are expected to perform in many areas of the curriculum. However, the arts naturally lend themselves to incorporating performance as a major component of curriculum design and assessment. For some students, this may not be a major issue as they view performing as something exciting or 'easy', allowing them to demonstrate what they know about the topic at hand without having to worry about its delivery. For others, performance anxiety steps in and masks what the student has actually learned and can even result in a misleading assessment of what learning has actually taken place.

Designing curriculum that enhances student performance in many areas of school life and beyond is an exciting undertaking. It is my hope that by creating this curriculum as my final project, I will be enabling educators to have a stronger awareness of performance anxiety or at least a new appreciation for how it can affect their own or students' ideas about performance. Although coping with performance anxiety may never appear in the elementary or high school overt curriculum, it may become more important in the minds of educators, thus becoming an intentional focus within areas of performance. It is crucial that students view performance as something that can be learned. They need to believe that performance anxiety is recognized, respected, and can be partially or completely alleviated when performers are given the correct strategies, time for process-based reflection, and many opportunities for performance.
**Background and Related Literature**

Being in front of an audience is something I enjoy. The adrenaline rush is exhilarating. I believe I have increased my confidence of 'crowd comfort' through a variety of musical and non-musical performance opportunities throughout my life. Job interviews, teaching, parent-teacher meetings, and presentations for social, academic, or professional events are thrilling and I enjoy the challenge of having to perform or present in these situations.

For some people, however, performance has the complete opposite effect. According to Hargreaves and North (1997), performance anxiety (often referred to as 'stage fright') symptoms are much the same as those of any other phobia or fear reaction. The heart pumps harder (palpitations), the liver releases stored energy ('edginess'), the lungs work harder (breathlessness), the stomach shuts down to divert energy to the muscles ('butterflies'/nausea), body fluids such as saliva are redirected into the bloodstream (dry mouth and difficulty in swallowing), there is a sharpening of vision (blurring), skin sweats to cool the working muscles (sweaty palms and/or forehead), and calcium is discharged from tense muscles ('pins and needles'). Research shows that public speaking is the top human fear, ranking ahead of the fear of death for many people (Beer, 2007).

In education (K-12 and post-secondary), participating in several types of performance experiences is mandatory. From speeches to the arts, group discussions to presentations, students are expected to dismiss their inhibitions about performance and complete what is required with little guidance or empathy. Students' innovative ideas and talents often go
unrecognized as they are masked by the effects of performance anxiety. The expectations that are placed upon students to present or perform can be met with extreme levels of anxiety and there seems to be a lack of successful methodologies for overcoming performance anxiety available in schools. Curriculum needs to be designed with motivational, efficacy-building activities that help to alleviate performance anxiety that often accompanies cross-curricular assignments and expectations.

**Combatting Performance Anxiety**

Since 1978, studies have shown that the presence of an audience is associated with greater performance anxiety (LeBlanc, Jin, Obert, & Siivola, 1997). Performance anxiety symptoms may appear when a discrepancy exists between what has occurred in practice and the actual performance itself (Kirchner, 2005). Many performers try to envision an audience, or practice without stops and starts. However, this strategy still proves to be ineffective. Nagel (1990) agrees that:

> Increased hours of practice do not guarantee a performance void of stress and anxiety. The anticipation of a public performance can undermine the confidence of the most talented performer at a time when competence is needed most. Not surprisingly, the physical and psychological symptoms of performance anxiety often prevent the attainment of success (p. 37).

Osborne and Kenny (2005) found that musical performance anxiety (MPA) was more specifically related to social anxiety than trait anxiety. Results of their study showed that
students with less musical training, who engage in less technically demanding performances, scored significantly lower on the MPAI-A (a tool for the assessment of somatic, cognitive, and behavioural components of MPA) than highly trained musicians of the same age who had extensive music training and performance experience. The researchers state that high anxiety is more likely to be experienced in situations in which social or environmental pressures are high. Results also showed significantly fewer MPA symptoms in musicians who performed in front of an audience more frequently, regardless of training. Therefore, it is made evident in the study that frequent exposure to audience is considered another key element in the treatment of anxiety-based disorder (p. 323-325).

Although many other factors may increase levels of anxiety (such as memory slips, technical difficulties, etc.), the effect of an audience has the greatest impact on the level of performance anxiety experienced by the performer/presenter (Orman, 2004). Negative effects of performance anxiety can cause the performance to deteriorate to a level lower than the performer is usually capable of producing (Orman, 2004).

Performance anxiety can also create physical ailments and potentially dangerous situations for performers. It can lead to performers feeling light-headed and faint, which can result in physically dangerous situations when using staging and risers. Tension prevents the vocal mechanism from functioning properly and can cause the performer to have a physical appearance that induces discomfort in audience members (Stothert, 2012).

Personable variables (including age, gender, performance type, performance background, emotions, etc.) have been explored in several studies, with mixed results pertaining to how these factors influence anxiety in performance. Many treatments are available for performers who
suffer from performance anxiety including music therapy, muscle relaxation, cognitive therapy, and temperature biofeedback training.

Although several coping strategies are suggested for educators, the recurring enforcement of provision of regular performance to an audience is highly encouraged (Taborsky, 2007). It is consistently recommended that educators should try to prepare their students for the audience experience in a way that will minimize student anxiety (LeBlanc, Jin, Obert, & Siivola, 1997). Kirchner (2005) states that performing frequently is not always possible, yet strongly encouraged due to its many benefits to the performer. "While it has been reported that anxiety increases with widely spaced exposure to anxiety ensuing situations, such performances increase the musician's confidence level, and the performer is able to gain self-knowledge within the performance venue" (p. 32).

With the use of virtual reality technology, a study was completed to see if anxiety increases in performers who are under the influence of a simulated audience (Orman, 2004). An increase in heart rate and overall symptoms of anxiety were documented when this musical performance environment was created. If this kind of technology were available to all educators, it would be beneficial in creating the 'virtual audience' that would give them the place-based performance practice they need. Realistically, however, this would not be available or affordable for many educational institutions.

Based on the literature related to performance anxiety that supports frequent exposure to an audience as a coping strategy, it is evident that educators and employers need to find effective, accessible opportunities where their students/employees can perform/present. Perhaps by creating more opportunities for performance across the curriculum, students will gradually
become more comfortable with the task of performance. However, such performance opportunities need to be supported by educators with knowledge of performance anxiety and a variety of strategies for helping students overcome it.

Performance is a major component of both K-12 and post-secondary music curriculum. Although students seem to have an expectation of performance requirements, it is still very important for music educators to provide safe and nurturing experiences for all students. According to Arneson (2010), the singing voice reflects all of the problems and emotions a person has in his/her private life. It is imperative that personality, components, and situational/environmental influences which may impinge upon vocal freedom and personal expression be considered in the assessment portion of performance curriculum. Part of performance anxiety stems from the fact that it is a natural reaction to situations in which we expose ourselves to judgment and evaluation. For many musicians, success in performance is closely connected with notions of self-worth (Pitts, 2003). The educator must repeatedly create opportunities that are safe, enriching, and encouraging in order to increase the level of performance-efficacy within the student. Offering multiple opportunities to perform in a variety of contexts is crucial and needs to be integrated into the curriculum. It is also important, however, that the student accept responsibility to try to prepare and perform in ways that are suggested by the educator to mitigate performance anxiety.

Research shows that performance anxiety is a major cause of students' inability to perform at their skill level. Providing safe, nurturing environments in which students can perform repeatedly may assist in building performance efficacy. Preparing students today for educational or job-related performances of tomorrow needs to be an important aspect of
educational curriculum. Accordingly, I have designed a course for pre-service teachers that will help them to gain knowledge and understanding of performance anxiety and associated coping strategies.

**Framework for Course Design**

This course was designed as an 8-hour (4 x two hours) module within a Faculty of Education pre-service teacher education program.

Although performance anxiety is often related to music, it can also exist in many other contexts including cross-curricular presentations, public speaking, large group discussions and eventually, in the workplace. Due to the variety of contexts, this course would be beneficial for all educators, regardless of grade or subject taught. It also serves as a tool for building performance efficacy within teacher candidates and educators who may struggle with performance anxiety themselves.

If we are asking students (regardless of age) to perform, without providing them with explicit instructional preparation to do so, we are communicating to them that successful performance is not something that can be learned or improved upon. By informing educators and students about performance anxiety and offering strategies to help to combat its symptoms, we can help those who suffer to succeed, and those who don't suffer to become more aware and empathetic to the struggles and needs of others.
Knowles' Characteristics of Adult Learning

The syllabus was created with Knowles' (1970) six characteristics of adult learning in mind. I used these as a framework for my design.

*Adult learners are autonomous and self-directed.* The course is optional, which means that most of the learners are there by choice. Although there are deadlines given for the assignments, the students are given choices within the assignments. They are also given the option of working cooperatively or individually for one of the assignments.

*Adult learners have accumulated a foundation of experiences and knowledge.*

Considering the fact that this course is for teacher candidates who have had some experience working with children, the learners will be coming into it with prior knowledge and life / education-based experiences. The course consists of learning community activities that allow for the sharing of this wealth of knowledge and experience in order to enrich each learner's community. Learning activities have been designed to enable students to connect prior knowledge and experiences to the course material. The questionnaire that each learner completes allows a window into their experiences and knowledge for the instructor and also allows for flexibility within the content covered. If there are any concerns or experiences that are brought forth through the questionnaire, the instructor can respectfully modify the in-class sharing activities or even the topics of assignments accordingly.

*Adult learners are goal oriented.* As future educators, the learners in this course likely share a common goal and that is to effectively support their learners when they become facilitators themselves. Due to this shared goal, the course focus of building efficacy and decreasing anxiety for learners will likely be beneficial to the adult learners who enrol.
However, as with all adult learning experiences, the goal for taking the program as a whole (and thus, this course) is likely different for each learner. There may be learners who are furthering their careers for financial reasons, or simply because they have been encouraged (or even persuaded) by family to become educators. It is important for the facilitator to keep this in mind, regardless of the assumed common goal of these learners.

Adult learners are relevancy-oriented. All three of the assignments provide choice for the learner and a chance to make the learning experience relevant to them. The narrative writing assignment will allow them to share with their learning communities and find ways to connect and make the assignment relevant to the teaching/learning that they are involved with. This allows the relevancy to assist in the depth of learning that occurs. "...not only do these journals (reflections) stimulate conversations between a faculty member and his/her students, but also when students write about a topic they think about it more deeply and logically" (Fulwiler, 1987). Relevance of the narrative creates desire for the learner to complete the assignments with more energy and excitement, thus resulting in a positive learning experience for the writer, the instructor, and the learning community as a whole.

Adult learners are practical. Due to the diverse approaches to learning that exist in all learning communities, regardless of size, the instructional strategies used for this course will incorporate a variety of teaching/learning approaches and contexts which the learners will be able to apply to their own lives and/or teaching contexts. Allowing for the second assignment to be a chosen or written poem for performance offers a practical solution and possible increase in comfort level. Some learners find it easier to share something they have written, while others find it too private and would rather spend the time looking up someone else's work to share.
Also, giving the option for individual or group work will depend on how practical it would be for the learner to complete the assignment in the chosen scenario. For example, an adult learner who cannot focus in groups or logistically has trouble meeting with group members due to a busy life schedule could find a mandatory group presentation to be very impractical and frustrating. The option allows for each learner to be as practical as they can in making their choice.

*Adult learners need to be shown respect.* I believe this to be true of all learners, regardless of age. However, adult learners have more life experiences (both positive and negative) that demand the respect of colleagues and facilitators. I believe this to be one of the most important characteristics to remember when working with adult learners. Adults need to be shown respect. Instructors must acknowledge the wealth of experiences that adult participants bring to the classroom (Lieb, 1991). The syllabus was designed to show respect for the learner in providing choice and giving a clear representation of schedules, deadlines, expectations, and contact information for any uncertainties. The questionnaire also creates an environment of respect as it shows that the facilitator is interested in learning how to best suit the needs of the learner, but does not pry or put pressure on the learner to share if he/she is uncomfortable or unwilling to do so. Instructional strategies that incorporate diverse teaching/learning styles also show respect to the adult learner. Learning communities will be built upon foundations of what it looks/sounds like to be respectful so that all participants will have the same understanding and appreciation of the level of respect that is expected. Also, considering the nature of the course, a positive, nurturing environment will be demonstrated as it will show the learners how creating a positive learning environment (i.e., setting, activities, communication) can often contribute to an increase in self-efficacy. The basic premise of self-efficacy theory is that "people’s beliefs in
their capabilities to produce desired effects by their own actions" (Bandura, 1997, p. vii) are the most important determinants of the behaviours people choose to engage in and how much they persevere in their efforts in the face of obstacles and challenges. Students will experience an environment that creates self-efficacy awareness and therefore become better equipped to transfer within their own classrooms. Forms of assessment are mandatory in all courses. Often, this is where a lack of respect is demonstrated either towards or by the adult learner. This course incorporates the idea of self-assessment as a way to build a reflective nature within the learner and to allow for the facilitator to see if the learner has progressed. Self-evaluation is the principal method of assessing the progress or success (Russell, 2006). The weighting of the assignments is set; however, the learner will be providing a grade and rationale for the grade for each assignment. This will be averaged in with the grade given by the facilitator.

The wording of the syllabus, I feel, is 'user-friendly' in that it allows the learner to be informed, without a feeling of dictatorship or threat within it. It is professional yet personal and clearly places communication as one of the main criteria in completing the course with success.

Communication between the learners, between the learner and the facilitator, and the learner and his/her students is encouraged. Conversations and reflections allow for growth in learning and the knowledge of performance anxiety. The facilitator is encouraged to create the setting of the room to allow for these types of interactions to occur with ease. Throughout the course, the facilitator is encouraged to be actively 'listening' to conversations between the learners, even when in smaller learning communities. This provides opportunities for further assessment and also can have a positive effect of the natural flow of the course, enabling the
facilitator to respond flexibly to students, for example by changing certain activities or content where necessary or adding in a new concept that arises from discussion.

Finally, an instructor evaluation is to be submitted to the university but an informal evaluation of the course and instructor is also recommended in order for the facilitator to make modifications and improvements to better suit the needs of the adult learners.

**Backwards Design**

This course was created using the backwards design method. Creating the essential question *first*, and working backwards from this question, allows a course designer to focus on the purpose behind the learning throughout the course. It also allows for deeper learning experiences for the students as it provides focus for reflective practices that continuously revisit the essential question. The essential question in this course is: *How can teachers incorporate strategies to prepare themselves and their students for performances and presentations within the classroom and beyond?*

"Teaching is a means to an end. Having a clear goal helps us educators to focus our planning and guide purposeful action toward the intended results" (Vanderbilt University, 2014). Wiggins (2012) explains that to set learning goals, teachers have to review curriculum/course expectations (because there is often more content than can be reasonably addressed within the available time). This ensures that teachers are consistently checking in with the expectations so that students move forward with their learning, building on their knowledge from class to class.
Setting clear goals allows for consistency between educators, especially if most use backwards design methods when creating units.

The four learning goals in this course are:

1) To familiarize candidates with the characteristics of performance anxiety and its effects on performance outcomes.

2) To develop an awareness of the importance of building a safe and supportive environment within a learning community in order to maximize performance efficacy.

3) To explore strategies to help self-learners diminish or overcome performance anxiety symptoms, and

4) To recognize the expectations of performance within Ontario classrooms and other learning and workplace contexts.

Another way to use a backwards design approach is found in Drake & Reid (2010) in which educators first decipher KDB: What do the students need to KNOW (conceptual content), DO (skills), and BE (attitudes/beliefs). This serves as an umbrella for the unit. After deciding the KDB, rich assessment tasks and culminating activities are to be created. In this course, the KDB are as follows:

**Know:** performance anxiety (defined); Self-Efficacy (defined); strategies for overcoming performance anxiety

**Do:** Reflect on personal and peer experiences with performance anxiety; prepare a performance while considering performance anxiety and employing coping strategies; self-assess understanding of performance anxiety and how to
transfer understanding to learners; analyze and suggest strategies to help learners better meet expectations for performance in Ontario curriculum and varying contexts

**Be:** Believe that performance-efficacy can be built within selves and others; understand that performance anxiety needs to be recognized within classrooms and that coping strategies need to be incorporated into classrooms.

Finally, big questions (that still link back to the essential/conceptual question) are written as the base for all daily instruction. The big questions for each of the four classes are as follows:

1) *What are the symptoms of performance anxiety and what are the performance expectations in education?*

2) *What is the role of Learning Communities in alleviating performance anxiety?*

3) *What strategies can be used for diminishing performance anxiety in teaching, learning, and living?*

4) *What is the role of technology in alleviating performance anxiety?*

In alignment with the Ministry of Education's *Growing Success* document, learning activities in this course allow for assessment *for learning* (being flexible to adjust instructional strategies; using differentiated instruction; providing descriptive feedback), *as learning* (self and peer assessments and next steps), and *of learning* (connections to course material in assignments; "ticket out the door" class content understanding summaries). The assignments designed for this course address the essential question and learning goals. Class activities will enhance learners' understanding of these issues and prepare them for success in their assignments. The assignments for the course are as follows:
1) Narrative Writing Assignment or Interview (Learning Goal: To familiarize candidates with the characteristics of performance anxiety and its effects on performance outcomes)

**Assignment Rationale:** Students' narrative stories or interviews will help them to learn about real-life experiences of performance anxiety. Students will be able to make connections between their understanding of performance anxiety and how it fits into their own personal history or the story of others. Making these connections is important for themselves and their students as it makes the learning about performance anxiety have personal meaning and provides greater purpose for developing strategies to alleviate its effects on themselves as educators and/or their students.

**Assessment for Learning:** Students will see and have the opportunity to discuss the assessment rubric the first day of the course. During the second class, students will bring a draft of their assignment to class, and in pairs of 'critical friends' provide feedback to each other suggesting areas for growth. When students submit the assignment, the instructor will assess it with the rubric and invite students to re-submit after considering the instructor's suggestions for growth.

2) Reflective Practices & Performance

**Learning Goal 2:** To develop an awareness of the importance of building a safe and supportive environment within a learning community in order to maximize performance efficacy.

**Learning Goal 3:** To explore strategies to help self-learners diminish or overcome performance anxiety symptoms

**Assignment Rationale:** Students will perform to help them experience what their students may experience when performing in front of their peers. The pre- and post-reflections will provide a deeper insight into the experience itself and into the strategy of reflective practices. The importance of building a safe and supportive environment within a learning community will be one of the areas of the post-reflection.

**Assessment for Learning:** In twos and threes students will have a chance during class to discuss orally what they will write in their reflections, and will be encouraged to consult the rubric to ensure they are considering targeted learning areas. When students submit the reflections, the instructor will assess them with the rubric and invite students to re-submit after considering the instructor's suggestions for growth.

3) Analysis of Curricular or Workplace Performance Expectations: (Learning Goal 3: To explore strategies to help self-learners diminish or overcome performance anxiety symptoms; Learning Goal 4: To recognize the expectations of performance within Ontario classrooms and other learning and workplace contexts)
Assignment Rationale: This assignment will help learners have a better understanding of the expectations of performance within Ontario schools and working environments. Helping themselves and their students to meet expectations will involve the use of strategies introduced in the course.

Assessment for Learning: Paired and group discussions (critical friends) will occur throughout the writing of these assignments. Giving and receiving constructive feedback will allow for deeper learning experiences within the classroom and in the completion of the assignment.

4) Participation in Classroom Discussions/Learning Communities

Learning Goal 1: To familiarize candidates with the characteristics of performance anxiety and its effects on performance outcomes

Learning Goal 2: To develop an awareness of the importance of building a safe and supportive environment within a learning community in order to maximize performance outcomes

Learning Goal 3: To explore strategies to help self-learners diminish or overcome performance anxiety; Learning Goal 4: To recognize the expectations of performance within Ontario classrooms and other learning and workplace contexts

Assignment Rationale: Regular participation in classroom learning communities (large and small) allows for growth in learning throughout the course. It serves as a way to better understand performance anxiety through the experience of communicating learning and experiences and providing and receiving constructive feedback.

Assessment for Learning: Through large and small learning communities, assessment for learning will occur on an on-going basis. This formative style of assessment will also be used in 'tickets out the door' reflections and several of the closing/summarizing activities of each class to see if learners have demonstrated an understanding of performance anxiety, the importance of building performance-efficacy, and connections to Ontario classrooms and other learning and workplace contexts.

Using the backward design method for this course will serve as a model for the teacher candidates as they pursue their teaching careers. By reinforcing the essential question throughout the course and discussing all learning goals, assignments, and assessment methods, the students will be led by example and hopefully apply similar strategies when planning units for their students.
The following is a Course Syllabus that may be given to the students via email before classes begin. It provides an outline of topics, assignments, evaluations, and course readings.

**Performance Anxiety in Education:**
**Course Syllabus**

**Course Description and Overview**

This course provides an introduction to the symptoms of performance anxiety and the incorporation of strategies to build performance-efficacy within teacher candidates and students. Teacher Candidates will learn to apply knowledge and strategies for themselves and their learners who may encounter performance anxiety within a variety of contexts across the curriculum such as performances, presentations, and public speaking. Participation in performance and reflective practices will be mandatory as well as full engagement in learning communities. The course is an eight-hour module and has been divided into four two-hour classes.

**Essential Question:** How can teachers prepare themselves and their students for performances and presentations within the classroom and beyond?

**Goals for the Course**

1. To familiarize candidates with the characteristics of performance anxiety and its effects on performance outcomes.
2. To develop an awareness of the importance of building performance-efficacy within a learning community.
3. To explore strategies to help self-learners diminish or overcome performance anxiety symptoms.
4. To recognize the expectations of performance within Ontario classrooms and other learning and workplace contexts.
Topics and Issues in "Performance Anxiety in Education"

A. Performance Anxiety
   a. Performance Anxiety Defined
   b. Symptoms of Performance Anxiety
   c. Fearless Performance
   d. Expectation of Performance in Classrooms and Beyond

B. Building Self-Efficacy through Learning Communities
   a. Modelling Growth Mindsets
   b. Encouragement / Praise Mindsets

C. Strategies for Diminishing Performance Anxiety in Teaching, Learning, & Living
   a. Reflective Practices
   b. Relaxation Techniques
   c. Rehearsal Scheduling

D. The Role of Technology in Performance Anxiety
   a. The Digital Masterclass (Audience Simulation)
   b. Global Connections (Virtual Choirs)

Recommended Readings (not mandatory)


### Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment/Interview</th>
<th>Value: 25% of final grade</th>
<th>Due Date: Two weeks after start of course (draft due second week)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narrative Writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective Practices &amp; Performance</td>
<td>Value: 25% of final grade</td>
<td>Due Date: Last day of course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curricular or Workplace Expectations Analysis</td>
<td>Value: 25% of final grade</td>
<td>Due Date: One week after end of course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class/Learning Communities Participation</td>
<td>Value: 25% of final grade</td>
<td>Ongoing (formative assessment)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each of the assignments will include a self-assessment with a grade and rationale for the grade. This grade will be averaged with the grade given by the facilitator.
1) Narrative Writing Assignment  

Approximately 400-800 words

Narrative inquiry is a type of qualitative research that is becoming increasingly important in the field of educational knowledge development. It is based on the premise that people learn both through listening to stories and through creating (telling and crafting stories).

The data that narrative researchers gather are stories. Re-telling or re-writing these stories (also known as re-storying) acts as a first stage of analysis; the re-storying enables the researcher to become intimately acquainted with the data, and so understand it better. When the re-storying is complete, the researcher identifies the new understandings s/he has come to. These new understandings of the stories amount to research findings: new knowledge has been developed. This assignment invites you to engage in narrative research — to learn from your own stories.

TOPIC:

i) Narrative: The premise behind this assignment is that you (or someone you know) have experienced some form of performance anxiety. This can be taken from your experiences of childhood, in classroom settings, as a teacher candidate, or in another context that has required a form of performance/presentation. Draw form your own rich experiences or the storytelling of another. Tell a story that is meaningful to you, and that has potential for improving your understanding of performance anxiety. If you feel that your story is not powerful enough, find someone who is comfortable letting you write their story from their point of view.

Possible Prompts: I had a performance experience... I had a friend... I had a student...
Include: Epiphanies; Meaningful Moments; Small Victories; Frustrations; Failures

ii) Analysis / Connections: Analyze and make connections between your narrative/story and what you have learned about yourself or others in terms of performance anxiety. How can these connections assist you or others in the area of performance expectations?

Richness of Narrative: How well do you draw the reader into the story (descriptive detail)? Please be aware: this process of richly telling your story allows you to come closer to it, providing you a better chance of understanding the knowledge embedded within.

A (Excellent)  B (Very Good)  C (Adequate)  D (Marginal)
Analysis: Have you shown thoroughness and thoughtfulness delving into the meanings related to performance anxiety that the story holds? What does the story illuminate about performance anxiety and your (or your protagonist's) experiences and understanding of it?

   A (Excellent)  B (Very Good)  C (Adequate)  D (Marginal)

Connections: How thoroughly have you pondered the possible effects of performance on those who suffer from performance anxiety? As a future educator, how can you be sure to provide a safe and nurturing environment to meet performance expectations with positive outcomes? What have you learned about yourself and your teaching style in terms of performance expectations?

   A (Excellent)  B (Very Good)  C (Adequate)  D (Marginal)

An exemplar follows which I hope will serve as a useful example of narrative writing assignment.

i) Narrative

Up to this point I have not shared my own personal story related to social anxiety. Given that I am asking everyone here to share stories, I thought it would be helpful for you to learn a bit about my own situation. Truth be known, it is not something that even those who know me well know in detail. Hopefully by sharing it will help others know there is light at the end of the tunnel.

Beginning around high-school age I had severe struggles with public speaking and other performance situations such as playing music.

In grades 7 and 8 I was moved to an enrichment program at a different school with kids I had never met before. I was no longer considered the "bright" one in the class as all of the kids placed there were advanced. I think it was during those years that I started to feel less sure about myself and more anxious about my abilities; particularly in terms of performing and public speaking.

Once in high school there were a few events that I clearly remember that may have been the seeds of my performance anxiety. On the first day of music class we were asked to show our new teacher what we knew about our chosen instrument. I had played the clarinet in previous years, but when I tried to play nothing came out. I couldn't get out a single note.

I remember thinking that the teacher must have felt sorry for me. Intense fear about performing eventually led me to stop taking music classes in high school.
After I stopped taking music class, my fear migrated over to public speaking. Although I always seemed to make my way through, I was deathly afraid of the oral presentations we had to give in English class. So much so, that I would worry weeks or months in advance, once I knew the date of my presentation. I remember having the equivalent of a panic attack during one presentation in Spanish class.

Things continued this way all through high school and into university. My fears also shaped the choices that I made; choosing courses and dropping courses based on the oral speaking requirements. However given that I was in psychology, there was no way to avoid it forever. Eventually it became too overwhelming and threatened my ability to finish my degree. That is when I got a little bit of help.

It is ironic that the help I received came through the university program in which I was enrolled. I admitted to one of my professors the difficulties that I was having. I was lucky enough that he also taught a course in behavioural therapy at the university, and as part of the course his students were required to deliver behavioural therapy for phobias. He asked if I would like to participate as a client and I agreed.

Behavioural therapy consisted of me first coming up with a fear hierarchy (a list of my feared situations in ascending order). The student who was administering the therapy then led me through progressive muscle relaxation exercises while introducing different levels of the fear hierarchy without letting me become too anxious.

The whole process was so relaxing I often left feeling rejuvenated. I looked forward to it every week. The icing on the cake was when I did my presentation at the end of the year for that professor’s class. He said I hardly seemed anxious at all and he was right. I felt very little anxiety.

Although I will never be a natural public speaker, I am no longer overcome by fear. When necessary I am able to speak in front of an audience and know that I will not have a panic attack. I still feel anxiety from time to time, but it is nothing like the fear that I used to have.

ii) Analysis

Although my fears were mostly limited to performance anxiety, I have also struggled on and off with social anxiety in regular settings. However, it has not been significant or impairing enough that I have sought treatment for those concerns. I do believe that without the help of that professor early on I would have been struggling much more in general at this point in my life. The coping strategies that were offered to me made a huge difference in my experiences with performance anxiety. Had I been shown these strategies earlier in my life, I may have made much wiser choices along the way and avoided missing out on many life experiences.
iii) **Connections:**

*What I hope everyone will take away from my story is that you are not alone, that things can change, and that it is okay to admit your fears and challenges. In addition, there are effective treatments that can make a difference in your life.*

*Having empathy towards others is important in creating a safe environment for performance. I hope that I will continue to improve in my performance abilities and that I will be able to support others in their performance situations.*

*By applying new strategies such as.....*

[http://socialanxietydisorder.about.com/od/copingwithsad/a/A-Personal-Story-Of-Social-And-Performance-Anxiety.htm](http://socialanxietydisorder.about.com/od/copingwithsad/a/A-Personal-Story-Of-Social-And-Performance-Anxiety.htm)

---

**2) Reflective Practices and Performance Assignment**

Choose or write a poem (at least 16 lines) to present to your fellow learners. The poem does not need to be memorized, however, it needs to be familiar to you and presented in an engaging fashion. The poem will be presented in front of your classmates and will be recorded for further reflection in the last class.

On the day of your performance, you will be responsible for completing pre-performance reflection and post-performance reflections. (See Appendix)

**Performance Experience:** Did you choose and present the poem to your classmates? Did you listen attentively to the other performances to notice any of the symptoms of performance anxiety that we have discussed in class?

- **A (Excellent)**
- **B (Very Good)**
- **C (Adequate)**
- **D (Marginal)**

**Analysis:** Do your pre- and post-reflective assignments indicate an awareness of the importance of building a safe and supportive environment within a learning community in order to maximize performance efficacy? Do the reflections describe strategies employed and how they worked/felt?

- **A (Excellent)**
- **B (Very Good)**
- **C (Adequate)**
- **D (Marginal)**
Connections: How have you connected this experience with experiences in the past? How has this made you feel about your expectations as an educator when asking students to perform or present? Is there anything that you would do differently now that you have experienced this?

A (Excellent)  B (Very Good)  C (Adequate)  D (Marginal)

A poem follows which I hope will serve as a useful example along with prompts for pre-and post-reflection.

My Shadow
~Robert Louis Stevenson

I have a little shadow that goes in and out with me,
And what can be the use of him is more than I can see.
He is very, very like me from the heels up to the head;
And I see him jump before me, when I jump into my bed.

The funniest things about him is the way he likes to grow-
Not at all like proper children, which is always very slow;
For he sometimes shoots up taller like an India rubber ball,
And he sometimes gets so little that there's none of him at all.

He hasn't got a notion of how children ought to play,
And can only make a fool of me in every sort of way.
He stays so close beside me, he's a coward you can see;
I'd think shame to stick to nurser as that shadow sticks to me!

One morning, very early, before the sun was up,
I rose and found the shining dew on every buttercup;
But my lazy little shadow, like an arrant sleepy-head,
Had stayed at home behind me and was fast asleep in bed.

Questions to consider in pre-performance reflective response:

How are you feeling about your upcoming performance?
Did you use any of the performance anxiety strategies covered in class? Have they helped you to feel a stronger sense of performance-efficacy?
Any other thoughts/reflections?
Questions to consider in post-performance reflective response:

How are you feeling about your performance?
What was good and not so good about your performance?
What connections can you make between your performance experience and topics covered in class?
What can you take away from this experience that may have an effect on your learners?
Any other thoughts/reflections?

3) Curricular or Workplace Expectations Analysis 800-1000 words

A. Choose any subject from the Ontario Curriculum to analyze. Look for expectations that incorporate some form of performance and possible strategies to assist in meeting success criteria. Do the expectations increase throughout the grades? Are the students prepared for the expectations placed upon them? How can you, as an educator, ensure that students can meet with success in areas of performance in Ontario schools? Be sure to reflect upon your findings and include suggestions for improvement using some of the strategies discussed in the course.

OR

B. Interview an employee who is responsible to present or perform in his/her workplace. Create questions that provide insight into how educators may need to better prepare students for performance in the workplace. Organize your questions into subheadings: Experience and Behaviour, Opinions and Values, Feelings, Knowledge, and Final Thoughts. Look for repeated themes/ideas that may occur throughout the interview. Be sure to include possible coping strategies discussed in the course that could help with performance anxiety sufferers in the workplace.

Rubric for Curriculum Analysis

Detail of Information: How well did you research the curriculum to find expectations of performance anxiety?

A (Excellent)  B (Very Good)  C (Adequate)  D (Marginal)

Analysis: What did you discover about the Ontario Curriculum's performance expectations that you may not have realized prior to this assignment? How thoroughly have you considered these expectations of performance and what they imply in terms of teaching and learning in Ontario classrooms?
Connections: As a future educator, how can you be sure to provide a safe and nurturing environment to meet performance expectations with positive outcomes? What have you learned about yourself and your teaching style in terms of performance expectations?

A (Excellent)  B (Very Good)  C (Adequate)  D (Marginal)

An exemplar follows which I hope will serve as a useful example of a curriculum analysis.

i) Ontario Curriculum Performance Expectations with Analysis:

The Ontario Curriculum policy documents are designed for teachers to align what they teach in the classroom with the provincial expectations. For the purpose of this paper, I looked for performance expectations in The Arts (Grades 1-8) with a specific focus on Music and, more specifically, the expectation of performance.

Within the curriculum, it is mentioned that students are to develop the ability to create and perform music so that they will be able to find in music a lifelong source of enjoyment and personal satisfaction...experiencing the joy of creating and performing music (p.16). Besides the suggestion for teachers to make changes to the activities, there is no mention of any coping strategies or recognition of performance anxiety within the examples given. It seems to be an assumption that all students will receive personal satisfaction and lifelong joy through the opportunities for performance.
The overall expectations of music consist of (i) creating and performing, (ii) reflecting, responding, and analyzing, and (iii) exploring forms and cultural contexts. I will be focusing only on the first two for this assignment. The fundamental concepts from grades one through eight consist of many elements of music but there is no mention of the development of the skills needed for recognizing, understanding, or alleviating the symptoms of performance anxiety.

Students are first introduced to performance in Grade One and continue on to Grade Eight. The expectations are as follows:

C1.1 sing songs in unison and play (starting in Grade Two – on instruments) simple accompaniments

C1.2 apply the elements of music when singing, playing, and moving

C1.4 use the tools and techniques of musicianship in musical performances (i.e.: sing with relaxed but straight posture and controlled breathing; rehearse music to perform with others)

All of these specific expectations require that the student perform, but do not mention any content related to what the performer may be experiencing or feeling and how to recognize and alleviate symptoms of performance anxiety.

Starting in Grade Two, however, the reflective portion of the curriculum lends itself to a type of self-evaluation of a variety of performances.

C2.3 identify and give examples of their strengths and areas for growth as musical performers, creators, interpreters, and audience members

This reflective part of the curriculum gives hope to the idea that performance anxiety may surface and allow for a teacher to address and strategize to assist its sufferer. These reflections carry through until Grade Eight with some being self-reflections and some peer reflections.
Reflections examples include group reflections and sharing with a partner (primary), providing peer feedback (junior), and changes to a deeper level of self-reflection (intermediate).

C2.3 set goal to improve their performance skills, reflect on how successfully they attained their goal, keep a practice journal, record, and analyze their own performances throughout the term.

It is through this portion of the music curriculum that the students could be taught to look a little more deeply into the characteristics of performance anxiety and strategies that work for them.

iii) Connections:

If we truly wish to meet the needs of all students, is it fair to assume that only the ‘true performers’ will find joy in performance as is outlined in the beginning of the document? Are we setting students in Ontario up for failure by teaching them that there is a black or white mentality when it comes to performance? Perhaps by designing more curriculum around the ‘grey’: understanding the process of performance, a larger number of students would be able to overcome or at least understand how performance affects theirs and/or others’ demonstration of learning that occurs. For example, the curriculum expectations could include:

- reflect upon possible performance anxiety symptoms felt pre-, during, and post-performance
- complete a list of strategies to ensure the absence or alleviation of performance anxiety symptoms in your performances OR
- show empathy for those who suffer from performance anxiety and offer possible coping strategies

The Ontario Curriculum has successfully incorporated the arts into curriculum. The opportunities for repeated performances are suggested and post-reflection plays an important role in the students’ experiences. Performance anxiety is experienced by people of all ages, yet
seems to be just accepted or ignored, without providing strategies or opportunities to better understand and hopefully overcome it. Strategies that educators may incorporate to help students understand and minimize symptoms of performance anxiety may include.....

Rubric for Interview

**Detail of Information:** How well did the interview questions allow for in-depth responses about performance expectations in the workplace?

- **A (Excellent)**
- **B (Very Good)**
- **C (Adequate)**
- **D (Marginal)**

**Analysis:** What did you discover about workplace environments that you may not have realized prior to this assignment? What recurring themes were found in the interview?

- **A (Excellent)**
- **B (Very Good)**
- **C (Adequate)**
- **D (Marginal)**

**Connections:** How thoroughly have you pondered the expectations of performance in workplace contexts? As a future educator, how can you be sure to provide a safe and nurturing environment to meet performance expectations with positive outcomes? What strategies would you implement into your planning? What have you learned about yourself and your teaching style in terms of performance expectations?

- **A (Excellent)**
- **B (Very Good)**
- **C (Adequate)**
- **D (Marginal)**

An exemplar follows which I hope will serve as a useful example of an interview and analysis.

**Performance Anxiety in the Workplace (Interview):** This particular interview was with a Manager (Jim) who was responsible for conducting small and large presentations to his fellow colleagues and beyond the company. The interview was semi-structured, audio-recorded, and approximately 30 minutes in length. Thirteen questions were designed under subheadings of Experience and Behaviour, Opinions and Values, Feelings, Knowledge, and Final Thoughts.
Transcription of the Interview

Purpose: The purpose of this interview is to determine if performance anxiety plays a role in corporate/managerial positions and if so, what interventions could help to alleviate its effects on the presenter/performer.

Confidentiality: This interview is being conducted solely for the purpose of a Bachelor of Education Course assignment. Pseudonyms will be used in the transcript.

i) Interview:

Format: I will be using a variety of types of questions in relation to performance anxiety in the workplace. There are 13 in total. It should take approximately 30 minutes to complete the interview. Feel free to ask for clarification at any time or to contact me after the interview should you have any concerns. Do you have any concerns or doubts about the interview before we begin?

Jim: No.

Interviewer: If I followed you through a typical 'presentation experience' over the course of two weeks of preparation and presentation, what would I observe?

Jim: In prepping for a presentation, certainly the anxiety and concern is probably more in prepping for the presentation, actually, than the delivering of it. So trying to formulate thoughts and what I'm going to say and how I'm going to say it...the way I deliver the presentation, I think that's probably, for me, more of... I think I experience more anxiety pre-delivery more than
anything. I think may be just challenged with making sure that I keep it concise and to the point, not trying to capture everything that I'm trying to say...knowing the audience or not knowing the audience - those sorts of things, right?

**Interviewer:** Okay. Good. That's very helpful. Now, how often are you expected to present in front of a group of three or more people?

**Jim:** Three or more? Regularly.

**Interviewer:** So, when you're talking about these larger presentations, the ones that make you feel the way you described, would that be a much larger group?

**Jim:** Oh yeah, much larger group. Day to day I'm always with smaller groups. Presentations to 3-5 people is typical of a day-to-day work experience but when I was referring to the first question, I was talking about 50 people in a room; like at a conference or something, a seminar, city council meetings. The day-to-day interaction with colleagues - three to five people - not so much. There's a comfort zone there in those types of conversations.

**Interviewer:** Interesting. So, would you consider the smaller group interactions to be more conversational experiences over presentational in style?

**Jim:** Ya, Ya. Exactly, it would be that.

**Interviewer:** Does the content of the material you are presenting have an effect on the level of performance anxiety that you experience?

**Jim:** Absolutely. Yep. I mean, certainly being comfortable and confident in what I'm talking about is easier than something that I might not be so familiar with and maybe that's part of it too. Maybe with things that I'm not overly familiar, maybe I try to come across like I know it better than I do.
**Interviewer:** So, if you had to talk about the content that you are not as familiar with the smaller group (of three or four people) would you expect to experience as much anxiety?

**Jim:** I think the preparation for it is just different, maybe. Again, back to the connection of anxiety to preparation - if it's an unfamiliar topic with people I don't know, it's a little too much of 'the unknown' - whereas if it's people I know, but don't know the topic as well, it's easier.

**Interviewer:** I see. Does the context (where you're doing the presentation) seem to have an effect on your performance anxiety level?

**Jim:** Ya, ya, ya. For sure. So at a conference, right, you have a podium, and a mic, and you've got equipment and a screen, and if it's off sight from where you normally present you never know if the equipment is going to work, or how the room's set up, that's a really big part of it for me.

**Interviewer:** I'm rolling off of what you've just said for this next question. If you were able to prepare for your presentation in that same context (without an audience), would that make a difference on your PA level?

**Jim:** Yes, for sure. Before the audience was there, if I could practice my presentation in the actual room, I think it would be very helpful.

**Interviewer:** Even without being able to access the equipment needed?

**Jim:** Yes. It would be ideal to be able to do a complete run-through with all of the tech, etc., but just being in the room itself would help to alleviate some of the feelings of anxiety, I think. For sure.

**Interviewer:** What physical symptoms, if any, have you experienced before, during, or after a presentation or performance?
Jim: So before - certainly butterflies in the stomach, you know, restlessness. During - it's hard to describe during I think, because once you get going, you don't really think about anything else. After - I'm always stressed or anxious about whether I delivered it the right way, whether or not I veered off from the topic. I usually get good feedback, but I'm always looking to improve the next time I have to present.

Interviewer: Back to the question about context, what if it was the opposite situation so that if you had the same 50 or 60 people and brought them into a context that's comfortable for you?

Jim: Ya. That would make a difference.

Interviewer: That would make a difference? Which scenario do you think would make more of a difference - to ease your level of anxiety?

Jim: I think bringing them to me. Into my environment. Yes, absolutely it would be...because, if you think about it....when I have to deliver a presentation offsite, I'm traveling to the site, I don't know the environment, and I think that adds to the anxiety of the presentation experience.

Interviewer: Do you believe that strong presenters/performers are born or can they be developed?

Jim: I think that performance skills can be developed, but certain people have 'got it', right? (laughs). Some people just do it really well. I admire people who do it really well, actually. I mean, I sit in on presentations just as often as I deliver them and you know, you can always pick out the people who, in my mind, do it and do it well. But I think it can be learned.

Interviewer: Okay, thanks. Do you believe that the workplace should offer formal training to deal with presenting?
Jim: Absolutely. I would really, really appreciate it if our organization would offer more of that training to middle/senior management, in my position. I have training opportunities where I can go and get those things outside of work, but usually my outside training is not focused in that area. It could be, it could be, I guess but if it was offered in work hours, that would be great.

Interviewer: What are your thoughts about "digital audiences" (skype, facetime, etc.) and their possible effects on performance anxiety? Do you think it offers the same experience to simulate live performance experiences?

Jim: It definitely does not create the same amount of anxiety. I actually think I'm more comfortable - again, maybe because I'd be in my own environment. The flow of the presentation wouldn't be as personal but I'm definitely more comfortable talking in front of a camera to thousands of people on the internet....it would still be easier, I think, than the more formal, traditional type presentation. That's an interesting question, because I'm realizing that it is a lot about the context of presenting.

Interviewer: How did you feel about presenting or performing throughout various times in your life (not for this job)?

Jim: I was never overly keen on doing it. Ever. I am far more comfortable today than I ever was in years past because of my role, my position, and because I do it more, but, thinking back to the past - no. It was never really my thing. I didn't like to do it.

Interviewer: In your opinion, where could we possibly witness 'performance anxiety in the workplace' (besides for large presentations)?

Jim: Maybe in smaller committees, there may be some. Interviews, performance reviews with supervisors. Maybe even for a new employee staff meetings could experience that. I always try
to give opportunity for round table open discussion at the end of meetings where everyone has a chance to speak, but maybe for some employees this could be very stressful.

**Interviewer:** What is currently in place to help employees alleviate performance anxiety? (I know you already touched on this in a previous question).

**Jim:** Not a lot. Human Resources offer a number of training courses but not specifically in those areas.

**Interviewer:** Is there any other information you would like to add? Final thoughts?

**Jim:** No, I don't think so.

**Interviewer:** What was your impression of the interview?

**Jim:** It was really interesting for me to have this interview. Thank you!

**Interviewer:** No, thank you for taking the time to speak with me.

**ii) Analysis:**

Through careful analysis, it was determined that the participant had experienced performance anxiety from an early age and still struggled with it in the workplace. "I was never overly keen on doing it. Ever. I am far more comfortable today than I ever was in years past because of my role, my position, and because I do it more, but, thinking back to the past - no. It was never really my thing. I didn't like to do it." His belief that some people are born performers did not discourage him from his conception that performance skills can also be learned and improved upon with repetition. Although his levels of performance efficacy have increased over the years, he continuously questions his performances upon their completion,
being hard on himself despite positive feedback. The anxiety that accompanies him during preparation for presentations is ever present, and has a greater effect on him than during presentations or afterwards.

Fear of the unknown was also emphasized several times throughout the interview. The concept of 'context of performance' was a major factor and its effect on performance anxiety was quite a revelation for both the participant and myself. "Ya, ya, ya. For sure. So at a conference, right, you have a podium, and a mic, and you've got equipment and a screen, and if it's off sight from where you normally present you never know if the equipment is going to work, or how the room's set up, that's a really big part of it for me... before the audience was there, if I could practice my presentation in the actual room, I think it would be helpful... just being in the room itself would help to alleviate some of the feelings of anxiety, I think. For sure."

Feeling uncertain or unfamiliar with the venue, the technology that he would be using, and at times, the content, itself, caused a greater increase in performance anxiety levels. The participant also hypothesized that the familiarity or size of the audience would have a lesser effect on his performance anxiety levels if he were in a familiar context. Digital audiences (via Skype, etc.) would be even easier, however, he felt that the personal connections would not be made at the same level as in-person presentations.

Performance anxiety in the workplace was also addressed several times by the participant. He felt that it was ever present in small and large group presentations, interviews, performance reviews with managers/supervisors, staff meetings (especially for new employees), and roundtable discussion opportunities. Although it would be supported by the Human Resources department to seek support for minimizing/managing performance anxiety, no
financial support has been given up to this point. The participant stressed the need for formal training in dealing with performance anxiety in the workplace, during regular working hours. "I would really, really appreciate it if our organization would offer more of that training to middle/senior management, in my position. I have training opportunities where I can go and get those things outside of work, but usually my outside training is not focused in that area. It could be, it could be, I guess but if it was offered in work hours, that would be great."

iii) Connections:

Performance efficacy, fear of the unknown, and the need for workplace performance anxiety strategies and workshops were main themes found in this interview. I am still uncertain as to whether the 'practice makes perfect' or at least 'practice minimizes performance anxiety' has the greatest effect on a presenter/performer in the workplace. As the participant mentioned, over time his level of performance efficacy has increased. Perhaps it is due to more experience in familiar contexts (location and audiences) that decreases the anxiety, and therefore increases the performance efficacy. Some strategies that I would incorporate into workplace environments are.....

In Closing

Please feel free to discuss with me at any time throughout the course any questions or concerns that you may have about the content, course, or assignments. I look forward to meeting you and learning together.
**PowerPoint Presentations**

The following section consists of powerpoint slides and instructor notes for each of the four classes. As outlined in the course syllabus, the classes are divided into the following topics:

i) Performance Anxiety
ii) Building Self-Efficacy through Learning Communities
iii) Strategies for Diminishing Performance Anxiety in Teaching, Learning, & Living
iv) The Role of Technology in Performance Anxiety
Welcome!
Please help yourself to some coffee or tea while we are waiting for everyone to arrive.

This helps to create a warm and relaxed environment for all. Engage in casual conversation with students as everyone settles in.
Today's Goals

- become better acquainted
- share our experiences of past performances
- have a better understanding of performance anxiety and its symptoms
- discuss our learning goals and what we want to take away from the course
- go over course assignments
Becoming Acquainted

- Introduce yourself to your elbow partner.
- Share one true and one false fun fact with one another.
- Have fun guessing the truth!

After 5 minutes of partner discussion and guessing, have students introduce their partner to the whole group by stating their name and the true fact.
Experiencing Performance

In a small group share:

- What experiences you may have had with performance (childhood, adolescence, student)
- What experiences you may have had with performance (as teacher candidate)

Give students approximately 10-15 minutes to share their stories with one another. During this time, post the chart papers (teaching, learning, workplace, social events) around the room. Give each student a marker.
Performance Contexts

- Pair up with someone who has the same birthday month as you. Discuss and record a few points about how, when, or where performance is used in the following contexts:

1. teaching
2. learning
3. workplace
4. social events

- Using the markers provided, add your ideas to the posters on the four walls of the classroom. When you have finished, take some time to do a tour of all of the posters to see what other pairs added.

Circulate around the room to listen to the discussions in the room (formative assessment).
IN THE CLASSROOM, THE WORKPLACE, SPECIAL OCCASIONS...

PERFORMANCE ANXIETY...
Symptoms of Performance Anxiety

- heart pumps harder
- liver releases stored energy
- lungs work harder
- stomach shuts down to divert energy to the muscles
- body fluids such as saliva are redirected into the bloodstream
- a sharpening of vision
- skin sweats to cool the working muscles
- calcium is discharged from tense muscles

Read through the symptoms aloud while students follow on the power point.
Why Teach about Performance Anxiety?

- It is evident that educators and employers need to invest in finding suitable, affordable interventions to alleviate performance anxiety.
- Sufferers of performance anxiety have the right to be given appropriate tools of intervention.
What matters most is how you see yourself.

Louie Bryan M. Lapat

- the educator must repeatedly create opportunities that are safe, enriching, and encouraging in order to increase the level of performance-efficacy within the student (Pitts 2003)
Assignments

- Participation (discussions/classroom activities) 25%
- Narrative Writing Assignment 25%
- Reflective Practices with Performance Task 25%
- Analysis: Performance Expectations in the Ontario Curriculum 25%
  (self-assessments/rationales for each to be averaged with mark from facilitator)

Distribute course syllabus and read through assignment expectations/rubrics together. Be sure students are aware of the exemplars in the syllabus that will be very useful for them to refer to when they are working on their assignments. Ask for questions or needs for clarification.
REVIEW OF LITERATURE: PERFORMANCE ANXIETY

- Presence of an audience is associated with greater performance anxiety (LeBlanc, Jin, Obert, Siivola 1997)
- Performance anxiety is more specifically related to social anxiety than trait anxiety (Osborne and Kenny 2005)
- Performance anxiety can create physical ailments and potentially dangerous situations for performers (Stothert 2012)
- Provision of regular performance to audience is highly encouraged as a coping strategy (Taborsky 2007)
- Virtual audiences (incorporation of technology) were able to trigger performance anxiety (Orman 2004)
- Presentation skills are needed in many areas of education and the workplace (Arias et al. 2014)

Have students choose one of the bulleted points that resonates with them. Ask for thoughts through whole-group discussion.
Ticket-Out-The-Door

I liked.... I now know..... I wonder.....

Distribute small squares of paper for (anonymous) tickets. Play soft music to create a warm atmosphere. Students are to place the tickets into the box at the back of the room.
Building Self-Efficacy through Learning Communities

Creating a safe, nurturing, growth environment for teachers and learners

Have coffee and tea ready again to create warm atmosphere.
Metaphor for Community

Use the plasticine provided to create a metaphor for "community"

Be sure that plasticine (in a variety of colours) is available for the students to use. After 10 minutes, have students share their metaphors in pairs and then place them all on a table in the room for viewing. (During this time, place 3-4 large cut out “podiums” around the room to be used later in the class).
Building UP through Community

* It is essential that educators create safe environments that consist of open communication and acceptance of failure

* Find someone in the room with your eye colour and share your positive or negative experiences as a teacher and/or student

Using eye colour helps to mix up the group and break the habit of always sharing with the same person. If there aren’t enough ‘pairs’ then facilitator may have to assist with partnering or allow for groups of three. Bringing in our personal experiences helps to build trust within the learning environment. Students should feel safe, but also given the option to pass.
Albert Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory

A person's belief in his or her ability to succeed in a particular situation. Bandura described these beliefs as determinants of how people think, behave, and feel (1994).

Introduction to Self-Efficacy. Ask the students to read the definition silently. Ask students how they think this compares to self esteem. (This will be clarified in next slide).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Self-Efficacy Beliefs</strong></th>
<th><strong>Self-Concept Beliefs</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>judgement of confidence</td>
<td>judgement of self-worth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>context sensitive</td>
<td>not context sensitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can be task-specific</td>
<td>not task-specific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>used in reference to goal</td>
<td>cognitive self-appraisal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>domain-specific</td>
<td>can be domain specific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a question of CAN (Can I do this?)</td>
<td>a question of being/feeling (Who am I? How do I feel?)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Bandura's Words...

"Educational practices should be gauged not only by the skills and knowledge they impart for present use but also by what they do to children's beliefs about their capabilities, which affects how they approach the future. Students who develop a strong sense of self-efficacy are well equipped to educate themselves when they have to rely on their own initiative."
Creating a Community with a Growth Mindset

https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=PeDeOwSAoro

Ask the students if they are familiar with the term *growth mindset*. If so, ask for them to share what they already know about it. Be sure that students realize the importance of having growth mindsets as performers and as audience members. Play youtube: TedTalk: Creating a community with a growth mindset (Jeremy Frith & Rachel Sykes)
How does this relate to performance? Discuss with your elbow partner and record your thoughts on the cut-out "podiums" provided.

Give markers to students while they are discussing. Encourage them to write some of the connections on the podium posters around the room.
The Importance of a Praise Mindset

https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=NWv1VdDeoRY

How can this apply to performances and learning communities in our classrooms?

Discuss ‘Praise Mindset’ and what it might mean. Show Carol Dueck’s Praise Mindset video and then discuss possible connections to performance in learning communities and classrooms.
After reading the "podium posts", refer back to your plasticine metaphor. How can you add to it to incorporate one or more of the concepts that were discussed today? Take the last few minutes of class to make your changes.

* self-efficacy
* praise mindset
* growth mindset

Give students a few minutes to read the posts on the podium posters in the room. Then give students a few more minutes to (possibly) make alterations to their metaphors. Ask for volunteers to share their changes with the class. Allow for 10 minutes at the end of class to meet with Critical Friends to discuss progress on the narrative assignment. Encourage the students to refer to the rubric and exemplar as often as possible. Be readily available for any questions/concerns about the assignment. Remind students that they need to be choosing and practising their poems for the presentation/reflection assignment.
Strategies for Diminishing Performance Anxiety

Teaching, Learning, Living

Once again, have coffee and tea ready. Take five minutes for "in a nutshell": students share one fact at a time from the past two classes. This serves as a good review before moving ahead with the course curriculum.
Reflective Practices

- pre- and post- reflections provide opportunities to grow as performer
- having to put worries and thoughts down on paper allows us to better understand our feelings and to grow from our experiences
- provide a window to our deeper selves
- shared reflections create community and appreciation for learner needs

Ask the students to read the following slide to themselves. Share thoughts with elbow partners for a few minutes.
Reflective Process Questions

Process reflection questions address how a person has come to hold a certain perspective. This helps learners find the source of an assumption or belief (Cranton 2007).

How do you see yourself as a performer? How did you come to see yourself this way?

How long has the task of performance made you feel anxious?

Can you remember a time when you didn't feel this way?
Discuss how our assumptions often influence our self-efficacy. Process reflections help us to try to get to the root of our assumptions. This is an excellent video that shows how our self-image changes as we go through life. Having self-compassion and acceptance of imperfection is more difficult as we age but is so crucial in increasing our self- and performance-efficacy.
Reflective Premise Questions

Premise reflection questions get at the very core of our belief systems. They encourage the examination of the foundations of perspectives (Cranton 2007).

Why does it matter that you are afraid of performance?

What are the consequences of your being afraid of performance?
Mindfulness...
Partner up with someone who you have not worked with yet in this course. Come up with a definition.
Mindfulness is a way in which one is highly aware and focused on the reality of the present moment, accepting and acknowledging it without getting caught up in thoughts about the situation or emotional reactions to the situation.

(Barbezat & Bush 2013).
Mindful Eating
An experience with mindfulness

See Appendix C
Guided Imagery

- Another tool to help students question their own beliefs and increase self-awareness about performance anxiety.

- Let's give it a try.....

See Appendix D
"Setting the Stage"
Rehearsal Scheduling for Performance Success

- Create a practice schedule for a performance or presentation that is expected to be done in two weeks' time
- Incorporate at least two new strategies from today's class
- Share with your elbow partner and combine your ideas to be shared with our entire learning community next week

www.sa.sc.edu
THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY: DECREASING PERFORMANCE ANXIETY

Last day for coffee and tea. Bring in some snacks as well to celebrate and create an extra relaxed environment for performances. Place posters on walls before class starts. (Headings should be: Digital Masterclass; Simulated Audience; Recording for Reflection; Recording for Submission; Virtual Choirs).

Have students meet with critical friends to discuss how they are feeling pre-performance. (5 minutes)
POETRY RECITATIONS

- Please complete the pre-performance reflection that is on the table
- Presenters will perform in alphabetical order and will be video recorded for further at-home reflection
- Time will be given at the end of all performances for the post-performance reflection

(Before class, have reflection pages available)

1) **Pre-Performance Reflection**
How are you feeling about your upcoming performance?
Did you use any of the strategies covered in class?
Have they helped you to feel a stronger sense of performance-efficacy?

2) **PERFORMANCES**

3) **Critical Friends Post-Performance Reflection/Discussion**

4) **Post-Performance Reflection**
How are you feeling about your performance? What was good and not so good about your performance? What connections can you make between your performance experience and topics covered in class? What can you take away from this experience that may have an effect on your learners?
BRAINSTORM...

- Various charts have been posted around the room for you to post your thoughts (digital masterclass; simulated audience; recording for reflection; recording for submission; virtual choirs)
- Take 10 minutes to circulate and add your sticky notes as you see fit
- Sit down once you have contributed to as many charts as you feel you can

Give each student 8-10 sticky notes for this activity. After 15 minutes move on to next step (see slide).
SHARE TIME!

- Take a chart to a table with a small group
- Read through the sticky notes and summarize the information to be shared with the entire learning community using a creative means of presenting the information (song, skit, mime, tableaux, poem, etc.)

Give 15 minutes to practice before presenting to one another.
After group presentations, discuss the pros and cons of using technology as a tool for decreasing performance anxiety symptoms.

Watch video of Eric Whitacre’s Virtual Choir.

Discuss thoughts at end of video.

https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=6WhWDCw3Mng

—Eric Whitacre: Virtual Choir’s "Sleep"
Remind students to submit their final assignment by the end of the following week. Also, remind students to complete grades and rationales for each assignment (including participation).

Ask students to fill in facilitator evaluation before leaving.
References


Ontario Ministry of Education. (2010). The Ontario curriculum grades 1-8: The arts [program of studies].


Vanderbilt University: Understanding by design (2012).

Appendix A

Pre-Course Questionnaire

The following Welcome Questionnaire may be used by the instructor to better understand the learners in the course. It should accompany the course syllabus one to two weeks before classes begin to allow the learners sufficient time to complete and return to the instructor.

Welcome Questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. It will be beneficial to everyone in our learning community if I can learn more about you, your experiences, and your expectations for this course. It is a Word document, so please save, add in your responses, and email back to me by the end of the week.

I look forward to meeting you soon!

Your name:
Email:

1. What experience, if any, do you have with having to endure some form of performance anxiety yourself? With a learner?

2. How do you anticipate this course might assist you in your practicum or other teaching experiences?

3. How do you prefer to learn? What are your optimal conditions for learning?

4. What do you hope to learn and/or accomplish in this course? (Don't worry if you are uncertain at this point or if you change your mind throughout the course!)
5. What reservations, if any, do you have about the course?

6. What do you want me to know about you as we begin this course together? Please share those things that will help me appreciate your situation and how it may affect your approach to learning.

7. Are you currently enrolled in Primary/Junior or Intermediate/Senior? ______

8. What, if any, questions do you have for me at this point?
Appendix B

Podium Template

The facilitator may use this template in Week Two activity. Making five or six copies would allow for many podiums to be placed around the room.
Appendix C

**Mindfulness Script**

The following is a script to be read by the instructor after distributing one raisin to each learner. It serves as a great introduction to mindfulness.

*Imagine that you have just come to Earth from a distant planet without such food. Now, with this food in hand, you can begin to explore it with all of your senses.*

*Focus on one of the objects as if you’ve never seen anything like it before. Focus on seeing this object. Scan it, exploring every part of it, as if you’ve never seen such a thing before. Turn it around with your fingers and notice what colour it is. Notice the folds and where the surface reflects light or becomes darker. Next, explore the texture, feeling any softness, hardness, coarseness, or smoothness.*

*While you’re doing this, if thoughts arise such as “Why am I doing this weird exercise?” or “How will this ever help me?” or “I hate these objects,” then just see if you can acknowledge these thoughts, let them be, and then bring your awareness back to the object.*

*Take the object beneath your nose and carefully notice the smell of it. Bring the object to one ear, squeeze it, roll it around, and hear if there is any sound coming from it.*

*Begin to slowly take the object to your mouth, noticing how the arm knows exactly where to go and perhaps becoming more aware of your mouth-watering consistency as you chew.*

*When you feel ready to swallow, consciously notice the intention to swallow, then see if you can notice the sensations of swallowing the raisin, sensing it moving down to your throat and into your esophagus on its way to your stomach. Take a moment to congratulate yourself for taking this time to experience mindful eating.* (Stahl & Goldstein 2010)
Appendix D

Guided Imagery Script

The following is a script for the instructor to read to lead learners through a guided imagery experience. It can be easily modified to be more or less specific if desired by the instructor. It should be read very slowly, being sure to pause at commas and semi-colons.

This public speaking visualization is a guided imagery script that uses visualization to allow you to imagine yourself calmly and successfully giving a speech or public performance.

To begin, choose a comfortable position, seated or lying down. Make sure that you have no distractions around you and are not trying to do anything besides focusing on these words and allowing yourself to become relaxed.

Get comfortable, preparing to relax. Start to relax your body. Take a deep breath in and breathe out. In, and out. Continue to breathe deeply, slowly, and comfortable.

I'll count down now, from 10 to 1. As I say each number, you can become more relaxed. Let's begin.

10: feeling your muscles start to relax; 9: your hands and feet are warming and relaxing;
8: your muscles are becoming loose and heavy; 7: notice your attention drifting; 6: relaxing even further now; peaceful; 5: a tingly feeling of relaxation spreading through your body, pleasant and relaxed; 4: further relaxed and peaceful; 3: free of tension; 2: almost completely relaxed now; 1: you are now deeply relaxed. You are very deeply relaxed and comfortable.

Allow this feeling of relaxation to grow, becoming even more relaxed, calm and peaceful.

Keep with you the feeling of relaxation as you think about public speaking. Notice your
reaction, physically and emotionally, to the concept of talking in public. Perhaps in the past this
has been a source of anxiety for you. Notice how you can be relaxed and calm while thinking
about speaking in front of others. Stay calm and relaxed; peaceful and relaxed.

In the future you will know that the stress symptoms you may experience when faced with
speaking publicly indicate excitement. This is a positive feeling, filling you with energy. The
thought of speaking in front of people fills you with good feelings of excitement and anticipation.

You may even be feeling a bit excited now, just thinking about public speaking. Let this
feeling subside as you return to a state of deep relaxation.

Take a deep breath in. Hold, and exhale. Breathe in, and out; in, and out. Continue to
breathe deeply, noticing how you relax a bit more each time you exhale. Breathe in and relax,
breathing out. In; relax. Breathe; relax.

Keep breathing slowly and calmly. You can relax like this any time you need to.

Whenever you want to calm down, you can breathe deeply, and relax; like you are relaxing now.

Now, let's begin a guided imagery exercise to allow you to imagine successfully speaking
in public, and enjoying the positive experience. In this visualization, imagine that everything
goes perfectly. Imagine what it would be like to be the most confident, best speaker a person
could possibly be. Create an image in your mind: an image of an excellent public speaker.
Imagine a confident, well-spoken person. See that this person is you. Picture yourself as a
superb speaker.
Begin to create a mental picture of yourself preparing to give a speech. Imagine that you are preparing in advance to speak. You are feeling confident, excited. You are looking forward to speaking.

After your focused preparation, you are ready to speak. When the day arrives for you to speak, you are excited and eager to begin.

Imagine going to the location where you will speak. See yourself looking forward to speaking. You are excited, eager to talk in public. You can't wait to share your knowledge. You have memorized the words easily, and know that they will come to you exactly as you need them.

Picture entering the location where you will speak. Maybe it is an auditorium or another place. Many people are gathered to see you. You love it. They can't wait to hear what you are going to say and you can't wait to share it with them.

Imagine getting up to the front of the room, ready to speak. The crowd waits expectantly.

Picture all the details of this scene. See yourself standing at the front of the room, feeling confident. See the people in front of you, waiting to hear you speak.

Imagine yourself beginning your speech. You are confident. Your phrases and words are well timed. All throughout your speech, you are breathing calmly and deeply, pausing between each sentence. You maintain a comfortable, smooth rhythm. You talk with smooth, clear speech. Ideas flow. Your hard work and extensive preparation allow your speech to be easy, automatic; almost rote. Everything seems so familiar. It is such a great feeling.

Imagine giving your speech. See yourself as you enjoy this moment. You are confident, comfortable, and having a great time. The anticipatory excitement you felt at the beginning has smoothed into a feeling of confidence and calm.
You feel so at home in front of all these people. They listen, enjoying listening to you speak as much as you are enjoying speaking. You enjoy this experience immensely.

When you reach your conclusion, and speak the final words of your prepared speech, imagine giving the audience time to ask questions. You answer every question easily and proficiently. See your excellent answers satisfying each member of the audience.

The audience is pleased with your performance. You are pleased with your performance. The exhilaration of having completed this public speaking fills you with happiness, contentment, and pride. It feels amazing to have done this. You are a little bit disappointed it is over because you enjoyed it so much.

Notice how you can feel confident and calm when doing public speaking. This includes giving prepared speeches, responding to questions, talking spontaneously to strangers. You are skilled and able to do any sort of public speaking. You are able to relax before, during, or after you speak. You are confident and assertive.

Practicing this visualization in your mind is like performing actual public speaking. If you are able to do this visualization and be calm, you can also speak in public calmly. Congratulate yourself for completing this challenge.

Now that you have completed this public speaking guided imagery, take a few moments to reawaken your mind and body; gradually becoming more alert. I'll count to 5. When I reach 5, you will be fully awake and feeling calm and energized.
1: becoming more awake and alert; 2: feeling your mind and body reawaken; 3: moving your muscles a little; 4: almost completely awake now; 5: feeling full of energy and refreshed.

innerhealthstudio.com
Appendix E

Pre/Post Performance Reflections

The facilitator may copy and distribute these during Week Four performance activities for reflective purposes (next two pages).
Poetry Presentation Reflections

Pre-Performance Reflection

How are you feeling about your upcoming performance? Did you use any of the strategies covered in class? If so, have they helped you to feel a stronger sense of performance efficacy?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Post-Performance Reflection

How are you feeling about your performance? What was good and not so good about your performance? What connections can you make between your performance experience and topics covered in class? What can you take away from this experience that may have an effect on your learners?

(Use the back of the paper if you need more room for either of the reflections)