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"Free As In Speech, But Not Free As In Beer": The Performativity of the U.S. National Standards¹

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Abstract

This article considers the U. S. National Standards for Music Education through the lenses of Austin, Searle, Butler and Foucault in order to examine the single point of control and sovereignty of governing organizations and to situate the U.S. National Standards as speech acts; that is, written performatives that essentially describe and enact particular sets of responses. I extend those ways performativity has normally been considered and suggest that the standards not only function as speech acts but as an icon whose continual referencing creates on-going acts that constitute a process in which what they suggest and their enactment are united. In other words, I am considering how the standards at once function recursively and both signify and reproduce what music education is.

*You take the blue pill, the story ends, you wake up in your bed, and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill, you stay in Wonderland, and I show you just how deep the rabbit hole goes. (Morpheus to Neo in *The Matrix*)*

The matrix, as it has entered our understanding as a movie, presents an alternative reality that is so pervasive that it is impossible to distinguish 'real' from 'artificial'. The blue pill, to which Morpheus alludes, offers bliss, ignorance. The red pill, on the other hand, shatters the illusion for those who show a predilection toward seeing the world for what it is. With the exception of the "ubermensch" Neo, this pretty much rules out anybody over the age of 18.

When Morpheus speaks of the rabbit hole he is, of course, referencing Alice in Wonderland. Alice, the 20th century's great pragmatist, wanders through the looking glass into an alternate reality, and confronts one absurd situation after another. Alice meets these moments head on, both fueling and challenging the absurdity of the situation, but eventually resurfacing, more self-aware as she sits at the piano to perform.²

In the open source community of computer software and code, Stallman unfalteringly articulates the difference between free or libre, and what he calls user-subjugating software. For him reality is the ethical commitment to a constant and relentless embracing of the first amendment right of speech. For others, the language of code as open suggests that, yes indeed, code should be accessible, but speaking continually of responsibility and freedom tends to get in the way of practical outcomes. To Stallman and others this is a slippery slope that opens the door

for proprietary software, or code whose distribution and modification is prohibited. And for Stallman, this is not only inexcusable but unethical.

All three examples present scenarios in which a systematic misrepresentation of one's relationship to the world constructs a false consciousness. For Morpheus and Alice, misrepresentation presents itself through literary devices; we know these aren't 'real' alternative worlds into which they have fallen. We find joy in the way language is used as the Mock Turtle exclaims: "Well, I never heard it before, but it sounds uncommon nonsense." We nod in agreement as Morpheus says to Neo, "You have to understand, most of these people are not ready to be unplugged. And many of them are so inured, so hopelessly dependent on the system, that they will fight to protect it."³ Immersed in these moments we sit at a distance, full of pride even. With the 'Amen sister' of a gospel chorus, we know what's what. No blue pill for us.

Stallman's world, however, a world we may perhaps recognize as one in which solitary humans (mostly men) sit in front of computers writing sequences of numbers and words that somehow make computers work, is more complicated. Not as obvious to us are those ways decisions come to be made that dictate the way language is used and who has ownership of that language. Not so obvious this fine line between freedom and responsibility and the ease of practical, convenience, and perhaps proprietary ownership and control. Not so obvious is language and actions that keeps "users divided and helpless and gives developers power over the users" (Stallman, 1985).

For Stallman, "sharing and cooperation," the corner stone of what he calls global "social solidarity," is dependent upon our willingness to 'run' code in such a way that there are no restrictions on how one can use, change or redistribute it. Consequently, while they share many similarities and goals, the difference between the open source community and the free software community comes down to the idea of libre and proprietary practices. There is, on one hand, a sense of openness in the code, but choosing to use the word 'open', rather than 'free', allows issues of freedom, and ethics, and responsibilities and convenience" to be covered over. The software may be open in the sense that the code has been made available, but buried within are restrictions that prevent change, modification and redistribution. Code, in these instances, is no longer a continual entry point with guidelines that are meant to be blurred. Code, in these instances, is purposeful and systematic misrepresentation.

The U.S. National Music Standards were presented as guidelines, or open, as it were, with the intent that no matter what the program or context all music programs would have similar standards and goals. Theoretically, this makes the standards more powerful, in that the intent was such that the standards would be applicable in multiple contexts and serve multiples users. But Stallman (1985) suggests that code and software "can only be said to serve its users if it respects their freedom". What if code is designed to put chains on its users? What if the code covers and holds something in place? What would it mean to think of standards as code?

Wishing Will Make it So

The first line of a song I often heard during my youth was, "Wishing will make it so." Well, I suspect that the educators who created today's content standards must have been humming or whistling that tune when they did so. (Popham, Dec., 2000, p. 30)

In varying degrees and levels of commitment and contemplation, I have been thinking about the U.S. National Standards since the late 90's. My first encounter came during my doctoral studies in curriculum and teaching. As I considered the discipline standards in Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and History multiple difference were made immediate. Never mind a content analysis between the documents, or a discursive analysis of the epistemology embedded in the documents; obvious differences, such as a superficial appraisal of how thick each sets of documents were in comparison to the music standards were much more immediate and produced a feeling quite akin to what Reimer (2003) has called "an uncomfortable amount of defensiveness, [and] self-doubt" (p. 2). What wasn't as obvious was how this state of affairs came to be. But at least we had something, and something is better than nothing, right?

Surrounding the crafting and development of the U.S. Standards was an air of yearning, almost desperate in purpose, that seemed to avow "if we build them they shall come." Indeed, Reimer (2003) speaks of that time and the "palpable sense of urgency" in the arts community that spoke of the need for arts educators to:

get the job done as quickly as possible, to demonstrate that, having for the first time in history been given "official" recognition as basic subjects, they were as capable as any other subject of defining the learnings and doings appropriate to them and that they could do so without endless debate and argument such as has characterized aesthetics since the ancient Greeks. (p. 12)

The intent was clear, the authority ratified. Writing these standards could make something come true; writing the standards could make it so.

Written Performatives

I should not dabble with moral theology, but I really believe that one way to get a person to live the good life instructionally is to make it very easy for him. (Popham, 1971, p. 80)

In this paper, I embrace the hacker ethic and take on the "intellectual challenge of creatively overcoming or circumventing limitations" (Raymond, #7, 1997), so that I may examine the goals and purposes of the U.S. National Standards and perhaps by extension the development of other music standards in place throughout our world. Metcalfe and Waugh (2007) point out that "generally the more closed any aspect of a system is, the greater the extent to which responsibility for that aspect falls upon a single entity, and thus is introduced as a single point of control" (p. 7). And while Foucault (1980, p. 97) reminds us that we should not attempt to identify power in a specific origin, but rather recognize those ways it functions throughout a "field of application" and diffused by methods of subjugation, Butler (1997) points out what often seems to be a need for a return of specified power that is reflected in the use of language:

The difficulty of describing power as a sovereign formation, however, in no way precludes fantasizing or figuring power in precisely that way; to the contrary, the historical loss of the sovereign organization of power appears to occasion the fantasy of its return—a return, I want to argue, that takes place in language, in the figure of the performative . . . a wish to return to a simpler and more reassuring map of power, one in which the assumption of sovereignty remains secure. (p. 78)

For many, the term performativity is linked to gender and identity construction, for others the term speaks to a critical pedagogy of embodied practices. For many of us the word performative and performative acts comes to us through the work of Judith Butler. It is a word that has only recently entered our collective lexicon and as such exists in our field on a broad continuum of understanding. In this paper I use Butler, Foucault and others to both examine the single point of control and sovereignty of governing organizations such as Music Educators National Conference (MENC) and to situate the U.S. National Music Standards as written performatives; speech acts that essentially describe and enact particular sets of responses. In my continual endeavor to make sense of this profession I think through and extend those ways in which performativity has normally been considered and suggest that the standards not only function as speech acts, but as an icon whose continual referencing creates on-going acts that

"constitute a process in which describing and enacting what is described coalesce" (Mackenzie, 2005, p. 73). In other words, the standards at once function recursively and "signify, facilitate and ironically reproduce" (Kaplan, 2003, p. 479) what music education is. The standards are the synecdochal 'image' of music education.

At the off set, two things seem necessary. One is to put aside for the moment describing in detail what a speech act entails and to consider first the possibility of written performatives as speech acts. One place to begin is with the work of those in the field of electronic business and commerce who have established the necessity of realizing written speech acts as performatives. Lee (2005) explicates those ways written communications must become performative documents in order for electronic commerce to be viable. This is a process made possible by structured procedures that "enacts the formation and discharge of commitments" that in effect transforms the "contractual, legal, ownership relationship among parties" (Lee, 2005, p. 177). In the case of ecommerce, authorship becomes dependent on a series of actions that designates in the moment and future, authorship and a "signatory group" (p. 180). Time, in ecommerce, is thus not in the very moment of the utterance, but that of future engagements.

The second, is to extend the notion of written speech acts beyond perhaps the obviousness of ecommerce. Lee and LiPuma (2002), grapple with the concept of extending the notion of performativity so that they might think through a "cultural account of economic processes" (p. 192). They are primarily interested in 'capital' and the processes of circulation and exchange. They state the problem as such:

The analytical problem is how to extend what has been a speech act-based notion of performativity to other discursively mediated practices, including ritual, economic practices, and even reading. What is interesting about performatives is that they go beyond reference and description—indeed, they seem to create the very speech act they refer to. More important for our purposes in this essay, they allow for language to “objectify” its own praxis. Produced by their self-reflexive objectification, performative acts can thus be seen to be a presupposition for the very cultures of circulation of which they are a constitutive part. (Lee & LiPuma, 2002, p. 193).

Mackenzie (2005) speaks of an operating system (Linux) as a culture-object. In extending the notion of performativity to an operating system he points out that, "computer code, an exemplar of formal clarity and univocity, seems to be an unlikely candidate for performative analysis." (p. 76). As I shall attempt to point out, this particular set of standards were written to be univocal and as such seems also an 'unlikely candidate for performative analysis'. These

standards have no meaning on their own; they exist with us and as us, they are not separate from; they "circulate between us", and presuppose what music education has been, repeating particular acts that have been repeated through time. It is this circulation and repetition that is of particular importance to us, because as Butler (1997) points out, "It is not simply that the speech act takes place *within* a practice, but that the act is itself a ritualized practice" (p. 51). Consequently, considering the standards as a candidate for 'performative analysis' seems a very likely and necessary place to begin, as repeated acts and ritualized practices epitomize music educational practices.

In the following section I look more closely at the 'history' of the U.S. standards and situate the intent and authority necessary for utterances to be performatives.

From Behavioral Objectives to Performatives

Among memorabilia of my love affair with behavioral objectives are the bumper stickers I had prepared, saying, "HELP STAMP OUT NON-BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES!" I gave these to my students and they put them on their cars (if they wanted an A). (Popham, May 1971, p. 78)

Then a small voice called out from the crowd, "But the emperor's not wearing standards at all; he's wearing old objectives! (Popham, Sept 1997, p. 21)

The National Music Standards evolved out of a series of documents that eventually spawned, *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* (1994). *Goals 2000*, incorporating the language from a previous document produced by the 1991 National Education Goals Panel (NEGP), called for "concrete examples and explicit definitions of what students have to *know and be able to do* to demonstrate that such students are proficient in the skills and knowledge framed by content standards" (italics added) (*Goals 2000*, p. 4). This particular call for 'world class' standards came about through the perennial concern that the U.S. was lagging behind other countries. Of particular attention was the need to move the educative system away from a "basic skills orientation and toward an "ability to reason, solve problems, apply knowledge" (Wixson, Dutro, & Althan, 2003). Even though the arts were not originally included in the government call for standards the general feeling of The National Association for Music Education (MENC), and those involved with larger art concerns, was that this was not an option. Indeed it was felt that it would have been an "untenable position . . . if there were standards in the other basic disciplines, but no standards in music" (Lehman, 1995, p. 6). Thus, by the authority invested in them by a

grant administered by MENC, the standards were developed by the Consortium of National Arts Education Associations.

Robert Mager, who may very well be the father of the behavioral objective, wrote that "An objective is a description of a performance you want learners to be able to exhibit before you consider them competent. An objective describes an intended result of instruction, rather than the process of instruction itself" (1975, p. 5). If interpreted literally, 'know and be able to do' essentially designates behavioral objectives. Elsewhere I have suggested that the music standards were the only standards among the general education standards documents in the U.S. to employ the phrase *know and be able to do* almost to the letter in interpretation and application. Our standards, written as instructional objectives were intended to "convey to others a picture of what a successful learner will be like that is *identical to the picture the objective-writer had in mind.* [italics in text] (p. 19). The process may not be articulated, but our standards are both what we will do as teachers and what is intended the students will do.

Development and Consensus

The following are the content standards taken from the MENC website:

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
3. Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments.
4. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines.
5. Reading and notating music.
6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
7. Evaluating music and music performances.
8. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.
9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

If one were to restate these with 'student' preceding each standard, we are left with: "Students sing alone, students perform, students improvise, etc." We might also insert the phrase 'teachers teach' before each standard, as in: "Teachers teach singing, teachers teach performing, etc." On one hand, learning objectives are said to be first and foremost about curriculum and not about instruction. Yet, not only do these statements make it clear as to what is intended, and a description of what the learner will be doing when demonstrating mastery of the objective, it is

also clear what is expected of the teacher. Theoretically, each teacher may 'teach to' these standards in multiple ways, but in essence these statements remove the teacher from the pedagogical process.

Mager (1984) places objectives into two categories, overt and covert. Covert objectives refer to performances that cannot be observed, such as mental or cognitive tasks. Overt behaviors, on the other hand, are those performances that can be directly observed. Treated as behavioral/learning objectives the standards provide "precise steps, teacher accountability, and evidence to the fact that learning music is measurable and, as a result, a necessary basic" (Kassell Benedict, 2004, p. 3). The presentation of our standards, and the way they were written—so radically stark and bereft of the philosophical and theoretical grounding of the other disciplines—was our attempt to substantiate our status as 'basic', provide much desired curricular legitimacy, and whether articulated or not, constitute who we are. In essence, by their very articulation, they were statements that could effect change.

The wide scale acceptance of these standards are such that as of this date 21 states have based their state standards directly on the national standards, and 29 states have used the national standards to frame the skills and knowledge articulated in the national standards (MENC, October 2007). There are multiple texts devoted to the music standards and workshops, sessions and college curriculum dedicate to 'teaching to' the standards can be found with relative ease. While the standards are voluntary the ethos of the music education community, informed by what is essentially the only institutional policy voice in the profession—MENC—is such that while everyone may not be teaching 'to' national or state standards, chances are, that at very least, teachers know of them and the expectation they should be 'teaching to' them.

Integral to the standards writing process was the call for consensus in the music education community. In print and in conferences the message to music educators was that by breaking into "factions, we diminish our impact on decision makers and on our students" (Hinckley, Jan. 1999, p.7). A united group message was seen as necessary, consequently little to no disciplinarily dialogue addressed what might be problematic behind such a message. Indeed, as Gould (2008) points out, constructs and forms of instruction such as "consensus, community, and agency" are rarely troubled and accepted with "little or no consideration of ways in which consensus depends on coercion" (p. 30). Even as recently as 2007, a task force, comprised of the remaining original authors of the national standards, convened to revisit the 1994 standards and reported to the

MENC National Executive board that "The National Standards were developed by a process of unprecedented breadth and depth that sought to produce a national consensus of artists, educators, the public, and other stakeholders in education" (MENC, 2007, p. 1).

The same 1991 NEGP document that called for world class standards also recognized that beyond establishing consensus around what knowing and being able to do would entail, the challenge of "achieve[ing] consensus on the fundamental nature, purposes, and processes associated with standards and standard setting" (Wixson, et al., 2003, p. 72) would be even more pressing. What is of note for music education is that while consensus building may have been challenging in other fields—indeed the original draft of the national history standards were essentially voted down in the U.S. Senate by a 99-1 vote—consensus building rarely waived from discussions of theory and skill development. Discussions of the fundamental nature, purposes, and processes of consensus building played very little role.

The development process of these standards, and what it means to know and do in music, did not simply begin with educational reform that was "generated in the 1980s . . . with the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983" (MENC, October 2007). Versions of the standards have been ritualized through time since at least 1892, when the Music Teachers National Association Department of School Music passed what seems to have been the first resolution framed by a professional school-music body regarding the aims of school music:

- 1st--sight singing . . . should be taught, in the primary grades and made the basis of all work in music;
- 2nd--good quality of tone should be taught in all exercises and songs;
- 3rd--correct intonation and blended voices in part singing should be developed;
- 4th--musical taste cultivated by the use of the best music in all grades;
- 5th--that emotional or expressive singing should be secured. (In Birge, 1928, pp. 234-235)

In 1974, The National Council of State Supervisors of Music published *The School Music Program: Description and Standards* (with a second edition published in 1986) that described quality music program standards. In the second edition it was stated that, "The identification of standards and achievement levels demonstrated that the music education profession considered its work to be consequential, that it could measure music learning, and that it was committed to remaining relevant to American society" (Mark, 1995, p. 38). 'Standards' of theory and skill development that can be measured have been repeated through time. Indeed, as of the near

future, they will continue to be with us as the same 2007 task force that was convened to revisit the 1994 standards found that the nine original content standards "still represent a valid and desirable vision for American music education today, and we recommend that no changes be made at this time" (MENC, October 2007). If as Butler (1997) has suggested that performatives "succeed", and she sees this as "provisional",

it is not because an intention successfully governs the action of speech, but only because that action echoes prior actions, and accumulates the force of authority through the repetition or citation of a prior and authoritative set of practices. (p. 51).

Clearly, prior actions and repetition of actions have written the history of formal music practices in public institutions. In the following section I look more closely at the issue of performatives and the recursive processes that underlie the standards as performatives and subsequently the recursive nature of what it is to make, do, teach, and learn music.

Speech Acts And Performatives

March Hare: Then you should say what you mean.

Alice: I do; at least - at least I mean what I say - that's the same thing, you know.

Hatter: Not the same thing a bit! Why, you might just as well say that, 'I see what I eat' is the same as 'I eat what I see'!

March Hare: You might just as well say, that 'I like what I get' is the same thing as 'I get what I like'!

Dormouse: You might just as well say, that 'I breathe when I sleep' is the same thing as 'I sleep when I breathe'! (Lewis Carroll)

(After which the Dormouse immediately falls into a deep sleep.)

It is Austin (1962) to whom we first turn as we contemplate the idea that 'saying can make things so'. In a series of lectures given at Oxford University between 1952-1954, Austin demonstrated that rather than just describing, reporting or stating true or false facts, sentences, uttered by persons with particular authority and under particular conditions, could be, or be part of, "the doing of an action" (p. 5). He refers to these statements, that effect change, as performatives and further distinguishes between illocutionary and perlocutionary performatives. Illocutionary performatives function directly through articulation; as in the wedding vow response, 'I do'. Embedded in the words is the legal enactment of marriage: 'Will you take this woman', invites obedience (and even perhaps fulfillment) in the response, 'I do'.

However, it isn't simply the response 'I do' that performs the act as something more than symbolic, it is also the authority and power of the institution that confirms and sanctions the act. There would be no marriage embedded in those words if they weren't sanctioned and ratified by the appropriate institutional power. Indeed, this utterance would cease to exist as a speech act and *only* functions as one because it is ratified and sanctioned by an institutional power. Recanati (1987) states it this way:

By virtue of a certain convention, performing such and such physical action amounts to performing an institutional act. The institution determines what has to be done, who can do it, and in what circumstance. (p. 76)

In the case of the written standards, 'students sing' (for instance), is taken out of the context of non-institutionalized musicing and becomes an institutional act determined by governing policies. And because the intent of the standards is to dictate what students should know and be able to do, and not how they should learn, the connection between pedagogy and curriculum is essentially eradicating, and the shortest path to 'students sing', is set up to be obeyed. The illocutionary utterance 'takes effect' if subsequent acts are of order. The intended subsequent act, in this case, is that an education in music becomes immediate and measurable; basic—something fundamental and necessary. And perhaps 'explicitly defined objectives' had been considered 'basic' previous to the Nation at Risk mandate, but as was pointed out, definitions of what was expected in the general disciplines (Mathematics, Language Arts, Science and History) had shifted.

Perlocutionary performatives, on the other hand, produce their effects as indirect consequences; they may be the realization of the utterance, to obey, for example; or they may produce another perlocutionary 'sequel' (Austin, 1962, p. 118). For instance, I can warn you of something which in turn will alert, or alarm you, which in turn may produce another event. In this instance, rather than the 'I do' moment, one would say, 'By my utterance, I got them to do that'. These sequels don't necessarily have to be through spoken or written utterances. Indeed, perlocutionary acts may involve acts of blackmail, extortion, guilt, even desire.

Searle (1971) departs from Austin and differentiates between two 'sorts' of expressions. He refers to rules that inform or instruct behaviors in pre-existing circumstances, as regulative rules. For instance: 'When attending academic conferences, appropriate dress may be required'. The rule exists separately of the conference and does not constitute the conference itself and

indeed, hardly seems a rule at all. On the other hand, there exist rules that define and create behavior. Searle refers to these as constitutive rules: rules that "constitute (and also regulate) an activity the existence of which is logically dependent on the rules" (p. 41). For instance, rules that make possible the activity itself, such as the rules of a game. Searle points out that "The act of playing football is constituted by acting in accordance with [the] rules [of football]" (p. 41). The rules of football define the game of football. Without the rules there is no football.

Of course, there would be singing without the jurisdiction of policy statements. Yet, two things are of concern. One, the intent of these standards is clear: in order to be officially recognized as a 'basic subject', the dictates of the written statements themselves, while voluntary, have the force of an order and the certainty (born of decades of reproducing individuals who desire leadership), that the order will be heard. And two, the institutionalization and the governing patriarchal authority removes processes from hands of teachers and reproduces ritualistic behaviors that continually self-reference the standards and policy statements.

What conditions make it possible the performative of consensus, the illocutionary utterance and the intended perlocutionary effects? How is it that saying it can make it so?

Desire and Existence

Can saying it make it so? (Austin, 1962, p. 7)

Throughout Judith Butler's work we are reminded that our identity is not something with which we are born but rather something that is continually constituted through the repetition of acts. I have suggested that the standards, written as speech acts, function also as an iconic representation of music education and indeed music. In the case of e-commerce, authorship (or the naming of authority), and the conferring of legality, is dependent on a series of actions that designates both *in* the moment *and* the future. Performativity, then, for e-commerce, is constituted not in the very moment of the utterance, but in those of future engagements as well. Butler engages with this same issue of time, but suggests that in order for the standards (in this case) to work as performatives, they do so, only as they have been repeated in time, in the form of ritual.

The illocutionary speech act performs its deed at the moment of the utterance, and yet to the extent that the moment is ritualized, it is never merely a single moment. The "moment" in ritual is a condensed historicity: it exceeds itself in past and future directions, an effect of prior and future invocations that constitute and escape the instance of utterance. (Butler, 1997, p. 3)

As was pointed out earlier there was no origin point for the national standards, there was simply the continual codification of what had always been done once musicing moved into institutionalized practices (including that of church singing). Butler examines the continual and recursive construction of identity and speaks of the paradox between being "fixed" by a name and the possibilities that exist in the name one has been called. While Butler is speaking of injurious language and the ways in which one can be "derogated and demeaned" (p. 2), I would like to suggest that our desire to be named a "basic" covers (hides) how demeaning and derogatory this naming is. Perhaps the standards served to find us a place at the educative table, but as Butler points out, "such a place may actually be no place" (p. 4).

Gould (2007) addresses the issue of desire and desiring in music education and reminds us that is more often than not framed as lack. Citing Grosz who speaks of lack in terms "similar to those attributed to the feminine: 'insatiable, boundless, relentless, a gaping hole" (p. 4), Gould reminds us that this framing of lack also "corresponds neatly to capitalism, particularly related to property rights of ownership and acquisition" (p. 4). The patriarchal jurisprudence of MENC, and other governing agencies with multiple policy statements, may be demeaning on one hand, but does in effect call us into a social existence that had not been before; through the performative we are "initiated into a temporal life of language that exceeds the prior purposes that animate that call" (Butler, 1997, p. 2).

But I propose that being labeled a 'basic' is being called a name in the derogative sense. Recall that the U.S. music standards, written as behavioral objective/speech acts, were constructed unlike those of any of the other standards. 'Basic', in the standards documents of the general studies, had shifted to something very much not 'basic' but complex and multiple. As was stated earlier in the paper, the 1991 National Education Goals Panel (NEGP) call for 'know and be able to do', suggested that it would be the "ability to reason, solve problems, [and] apply knowledge" that would move us into world class standards; a mandate the other 'basic subject' disciplines embraced. With a solid grounding in philosophy, theory and research, the general education standards articulated the need to address issues of curriculum as always already inextricably intertwined with pedagogy.

We may have been included at the 'standards table' and named as 'basic' by others, but the world is always shifting and rules and practices are always changing, even those of consensual social practices. As Butler suggested, we came to exist "not only by virtue of being recognized,

but, in a prior sense, by being recognizable" (Butler, 1997, p. 5). We were recognizable as 'basic' because they had all just comes from there and left us in their proverbial educative dust.

Lingering thoughts

The Matrix is a system, Neo. That system is our enemy. But when you're inside, you look around, what do you see? Businessmen, teachers, lawyers, carpenters. (Morpheus)

What is the point of thinking the standards as performatives? For me, the issue began with my daughter who utters them as one voices a wish: with the hope and fervency of one who desires to have the world better and secure. "I can't wait to get home and have a donut", and "Getting a puppy will be fun". And perhaps the one that saddens me the most, and perhaps feels the most desperate, 'School is going to be great'. Many aspects of our field sadden me as well. So much of what we do feels desperate. There is a subtle kind of hegemonic genius, and of being preyed upon, embedded in the authoritative positioning that one can use language both with intent of moment–desire and longing–and force of obedience and persuasion.

The brilliance of the standards as performatives is that they cover and hold into place multiple issues. Very few principals, for instance, will suggest (out loud anyway) that students should not be engaging in the arts. General studies teachers don't think we are worthless; at least not the ones who engage in self-reflection. And if they do, it's probably based in the same feeling they have when they observe someone in their own field whose pedagogy remains disconnected to broader understandings. There may indeed be very real moments when music classes take second seating to what are perceived to be more pressing issues within schools. But this isn't deterministic: we don't have to live the life of 'second class citizens'. We have agency in speaking to our needs, of engaging in conversation and dialogue that will address all sides of the issue. The standards can be part of that dialogue but they cannot be all of the dialogue.

Stallman (1985) reminds us of the ethical stance the free software activist must take when confronted with something that can accomplish the task but that isn't 'free'. In these moments one is to respond, "Your program is very attractive, but not at the price of my freedom. So I have to do without it. Instead, I will support a project to develop a free replacement" (p. 4). The standards as performatives reduce and devalue "responsibility" and offer "convenience" (Stallman, 1985); they reproduce our need for validation from the Other. Hackers don't rely on outside sources to validate their engagements, indeed it is their code of ethics to "Mistrust

Authority and Promote Decentralization" (Levy, 1984). Free doesn't mean free beer. It does, however, mean to take responsibility and consider, as Eisner (1985) points out, that writing the standards as they were written "robs them of the very qualities of mind one may be seeking to foster" (p. 117).

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¹ The first part of the title is a direct quote of Richard Stallman's. He coined this phrase in order to call attention to the difference between free speech and free as in price.

² The *Alice in Wonderland* citations are from the original 1865 novel by Lewis Carroll. The piano performance is not of the original story but appears as a plot devise in the 1999 made for TV movie; teleplay by Peter Barnes.

³ All *Matrix* citations are from the 1999 movie: Wachowski, A., & Wachowski, L., writers and directors.