

INFUSE JOY IN ELEMENTARY MUSIC CLASSROOMS

CREATE A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT WITH YOUNG STUDENTS BY FOCUSING ON PLAY AND MOVEMENT.

What do the following people have in common: Condoleezza Rice, former U.S. Secretary of State; Jerry Gay, an engineer who helped build the Hubble telescope; Alan Greenspan, former Federal Reserve Chairman; Richard Carranza, chancellor of the New York City Public Schools; and Steven Spielberg, renowned American filmmaker? Their successful careers were shaped in part by their experiences as young music-makers.

In an article titled “Seeing the World through the Eyes of a Child,” Lisa Rosas, an entrepreneur and inventor, asks, “Have you ever noticed at a certain age we stop playing and become more attuned to responsibilities and to things that need to get done?”

Rosas then reflects upon how, when watching children in their natural settings, we observe “authenticity, vulnerability, laughter, tears and pure joy.”

As music educators, we need to bring that authenticity and sense of pure joy into our music classrooms starting in elementary school.

A NURTURING ENVIRONMENT

When new students venture into music classrooms for the first time, they are filled with excitement and fear — they are excited to try something new and fearful of not being successful. How do we capture their youthful enthusiasm and allay their fears?



By creating an environment that nurtures curiosity and creativity.

For example, when a “wrong” note is played, you need to figure out why it was played incorrectly and how you can help the student play the note as it was written. Do not put the student on the defensive by asking, “Why did or didn’t you do ...?”

Instead, be positive and nurturing and say, “Let’s try X to see if we can improve Y.”


For the most part, young children exist in the present, and their lives are about movement and play. Movement is a part of everyday life, and those of us who have children know that static activity does not lend itself to play. Music programs live in the present, and music-making is definitely not a static activity.

DON’T FORGET ABOUT YOURSELF

Whether you’ve been teaching for less than one year or more than 20 years, be sure

to nurture yourself as well. Life coach and best-selling author Lauren Mackler defines seven ways to be nurturing to yourself.

1. Send loving messages to yourself, which include giving yourself a pat on the back when deserved and being supportive of yourself as needed.
2. Take good care of yourself.
3. Do nice things for yourself.
4. Set healthy boundaries with others.
5. Become your own advocate.
6. Believe in yourself.
7. Be compassionate with yourself.

Music teachers know how influential and life-changing music can be. It helps us live more from the heart. We smile. We enjoy relationships. We are passionate and enlightened. We let go. We don’t suppress our emotions, and we express ourselves freely. In short, we view the world through the eyes of a child. And when we do that, we are already on the road to success. 



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marcia Neel is senior director of education for the Yamaha Corporation of America Band and Orchestral Division. She is president of Music Education Consultants Inc., and serves as the education advisor to the Music Achievement Council. In this capacity, she presents sessions with practical success strategies for music educators at state music conferences, district in-service days and dealer workshops. To inquire about hosting or attending a session in your area, contact marcia@musiceducationconsultants.net.

The Yamaha Master Educator Program

A group of exceptional master educators has come together who can inspire teachers and students to realize their full potential.

Workshops offered by the Master Educators are designed for middle school through collegiate levels and include topics such as: Student Leadership, Habits of Successful Middle School Band Directors, Design Clinics for Marching Band, Conducting Pedagogy and Strategies for Connecting Movement Vocabulary and Musical Intention, Advocacy and Parent Involvement & Student Retention.



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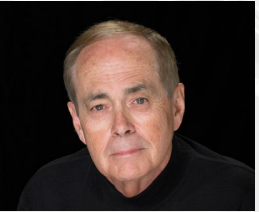
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The Yamaha Master Educator Program’s Mission is to provide inspiring professional development opportunities and artistic music collaborations for music educators at the local, state and national levels.

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