SUPPORT ED

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YAMAHA

2020 | VOLUME 5, NO. 2

How to Deal with Difficult Parents

+ Sound Meets Science

Larry Williams

FALLING INTO HIS CALLING

YAMAHA

SupportED 2020 Volume 5, Number 2

Cover photo by Kerem Ülken, EnhansaCreative

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EDITOR'S NOTE

MY TOP 5 FOR THESE TOUGH TIMES

It's hard to believe that we are in our fifth year of publishing SupportED magazine. Looking back at past issues, we are grateful to have this platform to bring you articles and insights designed to inspire and inform you. We know you take your art and vocation seriously, so we strive to bring you the most beneficial information.

In honor of our fifth year, the Top 5 list for this issue will focus on ways to keep yourselves and your programs strong during these troubling times.

1. Take Care of Yourself. Your students and team members rely on your leadership. Make time to keep yourself mentally and physically healthy. Read inspiring articles and books. Treat your soul to new music and allow yourself time to really listen. Immerse yourself in it. Remember why you got into music in the first place.

2. Form or Lean on Your Own Personal Advisory Board. Most Fortune 500 CEOs have a small, trusted group of people they go to for advice, accountability and support. You can emulate this brilliant idea by reaching out to your most trusted colleagues. You can then go to your advisory board as a whole or individually for advice on music, business, spirituality, etc. Remember to include at least one student who can provide that important perspective on your program.

3. Tune In and Contribute. Many think tanks and focus groups are exploring best options for reopening schools, large group teaching, funding, etc. You should be in the know. Check out the fine work done by the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) Foundation, National Association for Music Education (NAfME), Music for All, and your local and state arts advocacy groups.

4. Be Present! If you are not at the table, you are on the menu. If you are not appearing, you are disappearing. If you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem. I could go on. I live by these adages. Now is the time to show your principal, superintendent and school board that you and your program are informed and ready to do what it takes to have a successful year.

5. Think Long Term. We can all expect setbacks and challenges as we adapt to our new reality. There is nothing "normal" about the world right now. We may not win every battle in the short term, but we must learn from every setback and challenge. Our students are more resilient and stronger than we think. Let them see that you, as a leader, are as resilient and strong as they are. Share your vision and show them that you are in it for the long haul!

Musically Yours,

John Wittmann
Sr. Director, Artist Relations and Education

YAMAHA

INSPIRING, EMPOWERING AND EQUIPPING MUSIC EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS THROUGH FINELY CRAFTED INSTRUMENTS, ACCESS TO LIFE-CHANGING MUSICAL EVENTS AND THE SHARING OF GIFTED ARTISTS

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ARTS EDUCATION IS ESSENTIAL

Yamaha Corporation of America joined more than 50 other organizations to endorse the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) "Arts Education Is Essential" unified statement. NAfME and all of the endorsing organizations recognize the necessity for students to have access to arts education, which includes music, dance, theater, visual arts and media arts.

While teaching in the post-COVID-19 world may look different, Yamaha and the other organizations remain committed to supporting arts education, arts educators, community arts providers and, most importantly, arts students.

The three driving principles of "Arts Education Is Essential" are:

1. Arts education supports the social and emotional well-being of students, whether through distance learning or in person.
2. Arts education nurtures the creation of a welcoming school environment where students can express themselves in a safe and positive way.
3. Arts education is part of a well-rounded education for all students as understood and supported by federal and state policymakers.

10 TEACHERS RECEIVE AWARDS

During Teacher Appreciation Week in May 2020, Chance the Rapper hosted the first Twilight Awards, which honored 10 teachers from 10 different schools across the country. The winning teachers were announced by the rapper on a series of Instagram Live broadcasts.

One of the honored educators was Demetrius Heard, a music teacher at Fuller School of Excellence in Chicago. Throughout the school year, Heard's students write and record their own songs. During the shutdown, Heard posted videos of himself making music with his family to encourage his students to keep playing music.

"We need … more black males in the position of teachers at schools, especially public schools," the rapper said to Heard during the live broadcast. "Outside of my home space, there weren't too many strong black male figures, and I … remember the three that I had through the entirety of my academic career – and it makes a world of difference."

Each of the winners received $15,000, and the schools were also awarded $15,000. The Twilight Awards was sponsored by General Mills' Box Tops for Education.

AB IMAGES/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

SINCE 1996, SCHOOLS HAVE EARNED MORE THAN $900 MILLION WITH BOX TOPS FOR EDUCATION.

MUSIC MAKES YOU HAPPY

A new study by The British Academy of Sound Therapy shows that music has a positive effect on people's moods. According to the study, "Using Music as Medicine," 89% of the approximately 7,500 participants said that music was essential for their health and well-being.

The study found that nine minutes was the "optimum" time for participants to feel happy while listening to music — mostly fast-tempo songs with positive lyrics. The study found that 89% reported improved energy levels, 82% felt more in control of their lives and able to take on anything, and 65% laughed more.

The research also found that 13 minutes was the "optimum" time of listening to music for participants to feel relaxed, to release sadness and to focus. Subjects reported having less muscle tension (79%), disappearing negative thoughts (84%), better sleep (82%) and feelings of contentment (82%). For releasing sadness, participants preferred songs with lyrics they could connect with. And for better relaxation, participants listened to music with a slow tempo or ambient music with no lyrics.

The study was done in collaboration with Deezer, a French music streaming service.

GUITAR PHOTOGRAPHER/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

ICE MUSIC

Composer and audio engineer Charles Van Kirk and Josh Robertson from the music production platform Splice traveled to Vatnajökull glacier in Iceland to capture the sounds of ice. In an interview with ABC 13 news, Van Kirk said that a big motivation for the project was "to make some kind of artistic tribute to these glaciers now before they totally recede away."

To capture the natural sounds of ice, Van Kirk used a variety of microphones. He also "played" pieces of ice like percussion instruments, and he and Robertson sang in an ice cave together.

Van Kirk likes to infuse as much sense of place in his musical tracks, so "with these Iceland sounds, I'm taking that to the extreme … using almost exclusively the sounds we gathered in country," he said.

Calling the experience humbling and surreal, Van Kirk said, "this particular iceberg may never sound exactly like that again. It's a beautiful snapshot of a moment in time."

Download the Iceland tracks at Splice Sounds, on.splice.com/2ymvUBF.

VATNAJÖKULL IS EUROPE'S LARGEST ICE CAP IN VOLUME AND AREA.

BEST SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS FOR MUSIC EDUCATION

The National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) Foundation recognized the "Best Communities for Music Education" (BCME) for the 21st time. School districts strive to receive this coveted recognition every year, but in 2020, while the nation's schools were closed due to the coronavirus pandemic, the BCME recognition was especially meaningful. This year, 754 school districts across 42 states were named BCMEs, with New York and Pennsylvania leading the way with 174 and 115 districts, respectively. The educators, administrators, students, teachers and community in these districts demonstrated an exceptionally high commitment to music education.

In conjunction with its BCME program, the NAMM Foundation also gave 148 individual schools (public, private, parochial or charter) the SupportMusic Merit Award (SMMA).

"More so now than ever and as evident by the creative music learning by both teachers and students that continue from home and online, music education plays a crucial role in students' social and emotional connections to each other and the community," said Mary Luehrsen, executive director of The NAMM Foundation, in a press release.

Go to nammfoundation.org to see the complete list of BCME districts and SMMA schools.

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR A

MEMORABLE TRIP

When traveling with students, getting there is ALL the battle.

BY CHRIS FERRELL

One of the most rewarding parts of participating in school music programs is the opportunity to travel. Whether for an invited performance or competition or as a spectator, the memories will last a lifetime.

Just like taking a trip with family or friends, many elements need to be considered in planning and execution. Knowing your students, school, district and community is vital to ensure the best experiences for everyone involved.

THE VALUE OF TRAVELING

Traveling provides enrichment for students in authentic performance practice as well as in real-world cultural connections. Although today's digital environment allows valuable virtual experiences, there simply is no substitute for just being there.

Travel can also improve recruitment and retention of students as well as reinforce the music program's visibility in your school and community. Experiences for students are tangible and can be a rallying point for community members and families to support.

WHERE SHOULD YOU GO?

In choosing destinations for student travel, be sure to consider the cost/benefit ratio in your decision. For adjudicated events, be sure that the feedback and quality of experience for the students are top priorities. Prepare students and parents in advance for the level of expectations and talk about the meaning and benefits of healthy competition. If attending a parade, concert presentation or other exhibition event, consider location, audience and the visibility of your ensemble along with cost for students.

Often, pairing the main event with recreational or sight-seeing opportunities can increase participation and add chances for students to bond and form lifelong friendships.

Making informed and careful choices regarding your destination and itinerary can significantly reduce obstacles and enhance the quality of experiences for directors and students.

THE PLANNING STAGES

After choosing a destination, create a timeline. Depending on the location, size of group and type of activity (major televised parades, for instance), you may need to plan for up to a year or more. Establish milestones in your planning to ensure that funding goals are met, communication with students and parents is frequent and clear, and all required forms and information are gathered.

Consider using a reputable tour company that has experience in student travel. Its staff can provide invaluable services and advice during the planning and travel.

Be sure to explore options for trip insurance. Note any deadlines regarding deposits and cancellations and clearly communicate those with your students and families.

Decide if the trip is optional or mandatory for students. Performances and competitions usually require a minimum distribution of parts or instruments. In the case of marching band, you may require every member.

FUNDING

If your program has a booster club, ask the group to help raise funds for student travel. Often, it has more freedom for collecting money than school system channels.

If funding is routed through the school system, be sure to know all the rules and regulations regarding fundraising before getting too far along in the process.

Consider provisions for students who are unable to contribute financially. The benefits of their participation are worthwhile to pursue.

Types of fundraisers vary dramatically, but finding one or two that work best for your program and community would be better than constant solicitations. These could include business sponsorships, car shows, "taste of" food events, silent auctions and many others.

When raising funds, be specific in your purpose. Telling the community why you are raising money and giving them a specific target will encourage more people to participate or donate.

With proper planning and careful consideration, student and professional travel can be an invaluable part of the complete music program experience. Now get out there and have fun!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:
Christopher Ferrell is the supervisor of instrumental music for the Cobb County School District in Atlanta and performed as a saxophonist with the Dallas Wind Symphony.

DEALING WITH DIFFICULT BAND PARENTS

Band directors and parents want what's best for students, but what happens when they disagree?

BY SARAH LINDENFELD HALL

ASER ROMERO/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Michael Stone has experienced interpersonal conflicts from both sides of the podium. Now band director at Bourbon County High School in Paris, Kentucky, Stone remembers when he was a teen and his own mother regularly argued with his music teacher over topics as simple as the timing of meals during band trips.

"My mom and my band director did not always see eye to eye," Stone says. "She was usually one of those upset parents. I learned a lot watching my band director deal with my mom."

Band directors work daily with students as well as with parents. Sometimes that level of togetherness can spark disagreements — between parents and directors and among parents themselves — that require finely tuned conflict-resolution skills.

Here's what band directors should keep in mind when dealing with difficult conversations and relationships with caregivers.

LISTEN AND REFLECT

Listen before getting directly involved in a situation, says Tim Trost, director of bands at Ayala High School in Chino Hills, California. "Let them air their grievances," Trost says. "Stay calm. Don't get emotional. And don't fire back because that will escalate the situation more."

No matter what, bite your tongue. "Sometimes you just want to blow up and go off," Trost says. "But you can't. As a teacher, you have to remain calm and professional."

Once you know all sides of the story, you'll be in a better place to come up with a solution that both parties can agree to, Trost says.

While feeling defensive is human nature when your policies are questioned, self-reflection is vital, says Kathy McIntosh, director of bands and music department head at Troy (Ohio) City Schools. When she was a young band director, McIntosh spent a lot of time reflecting on whether various questioned policies were fair.

Now, three decades into her career, she's fielded concerns about everything from chair placement and grading policies to drum major auditions. McIntosh recommends reaching out to trusted parents, mentors and professional groups to vet decisions that are causing concerns.

"Even if parents don't like my policies, if they know that I've at least listened to what they've said and taken their thoughts into consideration, even if I don't agree with them, at least they know they've been heard," McIntosh says.

HOLD A MEETING

Stone needed to handle several dust-ups with parents during one regional competition. Two parents didn't like the mess students left. Another was angry she couldn't sign out her daughter early. And other adults were drinking alcohol, violating school rules. During a different contest, parents were upset with each other after students were roughhousing.

After both cases, Stone held a meeting to hear the concerns and lay down the law.

Before meetings like these, Stone writes a script to cover all points. And once the meeting starts, he takes control. "I walk in and don't let anybody else say anything at all," he says.

Stone treads carefully between being bossy and informative. "Even when I'm trying to be in that authoritative role, I still treat people with respect," he says.

> **I have to realize that [band parents] just care. And when I look at it that way, all these parents are like my mom. They just care.**
>
> — MICHAEL STONE, BAND DIRECTOR, BOURBON COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL IN KENTUCKY

Regular meetings with booster groups and their executive boards can also be used to head off concerns before tempers flare up. "Sometimes, if there's an issue that needs to be brought up, we'll bring it to the executive board, and we'll discuss it and come up with a solution," Trost says.

LET TIME HEAL SOME WOUNDS

Sometimes parents may not see the big picture — until later. Once after a subpar performance, Stone, then an assistant band director, listed the missteps to the students. All seemed fine as they headed back to the band room, but one parent pulled Stone and the head band director aside to complain about Stone's critique.

Stone let him say his piece, but the parent was still angry when he left the office and didn't volunteer for some time afterward. Eventually, he changed his tune. "Once he started seeing the growth in the performance quality throughout the season, he came back to me, and he said, 'I understand what you were saying now,'" Stone says.

FIND YOUR ALLIES

Some band parents will always have your back. "It's really important to make sure that you have a handful of band parents who are 100 percent on your side about everything," Stone says.

The booster president for Stone's band regularly resolves parental concerns before they ever reach him. The complaints have ranged from conflicts between students to how Stone addressed a musician.

In other cases, band directors should seek guidance from school administrators, especially if they are young teachers who are getting pushback from much older parents. "The administration probably has a little bit of a pulse on the community and what's going on," McIntosh says.


Kathy McIntosh


Michael Stone


Tim Trost

CONSIDER COMPASSION

Parents are the glue that keeps a marching band operating. "Without the parents' support, we couldn't do all the things we do here at Ayala High School," Trost says.

Conflicts, misunderstandings and differences of opinion can happen for a variety of reasons. But often, says Stone, parents are simply passionate about their children and the music program. That's why Stone's mom, years ago, became so vocal about his band experience.

Those memories help temper his reactions when working with his students' parents. "I have to realize that [band parents] just care," Stone says. "And when I look at it that way, all these parents are like my mom. They just care."

EDUCATION INSIDER BY MARCIA NEEL

THE INSIDE SCOOP: JIM KUZMA

Dr. Jim Kuzma, the principal of Rancho High School in Las Vegas, fully credits performing arts for many of the school's achievements. During his tenure, the school's graduation rate has grown by more than 40%, and the number of Advanced Placement tests administered has more than doubled. Even though the school is located in the poorest ZIP code in the state, it has a thriving performing arts program with almost 37% student enrollment. Chamber groups within Rancho's band were invited to perform at The 2019 Midwest Clinic International Band and Orchestra Conference and the 2020 Music for All National Concert Band Festival.

Q. What music programs are offered at Rancho High School currently?

A. Our performing arts department includes band, orchestra, choir, mariachi, ballet folklorico, dance, theater and theater technology. Our total school enrollment is 3,243, and we have an enrollment of 1,198 students in performing arts.

What have you discovered about the value of music education since becoming the principal of Nevada's largest high school?

I have been in education since 1984 and have worked at six schools in three states. A common denominator that I have discovered is that students in music programs typically perform better in school.

When I arrived at Rancho in 2009, we had a band program with 47 students. The choir was on the brink of extinction with only 15 students. In 2010, Rancho was designated as a "persistently low-achieving" school.

I have witnessed countless schools attempt to improve academically by throwing money at remedial programs. In many of these cases, there is very little gain.

Our approach to turning around Rancho was different. We started by revisiting Maslow's hierarchy of needs, placing emphasis on "sense of belonging." The performing arts provide an excellent venue for students to be part of something truly special.

So far, that strategy has worked well. Our graduation rates have steadily climbed from 54% to more than 96%. The number of Advanced Placement tests administered has increased from 443 in 2011 to 1,131 in 2019. We are now designated as one of Nevada's Shining Stars Schools.

Given the current socioeconomic status of Rancho High School, how are students able to participate and succeed in your programs?

Our school is located in the poorest ZIP code in the state. All of our students get free breakfast, lunch and supper.

There is no reason why our students should not be able to participate in performing arts at the same level as students in more affluent areas. Our instructors are judicious when organizing trips. We ask that the groups participate in fundraising, and we look for opportunities for student groups to raise money.

We also welcome community support. When an opportunity like the prestigious Midwest Clinic presents itself, we find a way to make it happen.

From your perspective, why is music important to humanity?

Music and dance have always been part of the human experience. Music is present during times of celebration and in times of mourning. It connects the past, present and future.

Why is it important to protect access to music education?

Music education introduces students to accountability. When a student does not practice in a performing arts setting, it is clear to everyone. If a student misses a math question on a test, just the teacher and student know.

With the push for more STEM and increased scores on high-stakes tests, it may seem logical to place less emphasis on performing arts. But that would be a mistake. Music education is life-altering and can change the trajectory of a young person's life. Music students also engage in STEM classes and score higher on tests.

Go to yamahaeducatorsuite.com to read the full Q&A with Jim Kuzma as well as the article on Rancho High School in the 2018 Volume 3 issue of Yamaha SupportED.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marcia Neel is senior director of education for Yamaha Corporation of America. She is president of Music Education Consultants Inc. and serves as the education advisor to the Music Achievement Council.

A HEROIC JUGGLING ACT

Larry Williams has turned juggling into a superpower as he continually seeks new challenges and opportunities.

BY ELIZABETH ANDERSON LOPEZ

ASHLEIGH TOWNSEND

JOLESCH PHOTOGRAPHY FOR MFA

If hornist Larry Williams were a superhero, he might be called The Juggler. Williams' music career spans decades and includes his current status as a performer, instructor, collaborator and administrator — and that's just a few of his roles.

"I didn't know I was a juggler until I started juggling," he says. "Right after graduation, I was the principal horn with New World Symphony for two seasons. During my second year, I fell in love with teaching. I loved both equally. Being balanced between performing and teaching was true happiness for me."

As with any good superhero, Williams has a fascinating origin story. He started playing the trumpet in his elementary school band. "I was the last chair, but I didn't care — I just wanted to sit with my friend," Williams recalls. "In middle school band, I was the last chair again. … Then the teacher asked for volunteers to play the French horn. I was dismayed when my friend raised his hand."

Realizing that his sole reason for being in the band was going to move across the room, Williams raised his hand too. "My teacher, Olivia Gutoff, was skeptical based on how bad I was on the trumpet," he says. "My friend played two notes, and she told him he was in. With me, she said to come after school, which I did. I started to play, and it felt right. She must have thought, 'Holy crap, he's a horn player!'"

The French horn was a lot easier to play than the trumpet for young Williams. "Olivia was a horn expert, which I didn't know at the time," he says. "She wanted me to take private lessons with her."

Though he originally declined, Williams took Gutoff up on her years-old offer to work with him during high school when he decided to major in music for college. "I learned so much from her that I earned a scholarship to Penn State [University]," he says. "I later transferred to Peabody [Institute at Johns Hopkins University] and eventually started my career."

THE MULTITASKER

Williams' career has flourished despite — or because of — his constant juggling. "I'm used to having four to seven jobs," Williams says. "I like to have one or two main jobs with a lot of part-time jobs."

MANAGING IT ALL: **Larry Williams is used to juggling multiple projects. In addition to teaching and performing with several ensembles, Williams has been a member of the Lyric Brass Quintet (above left) for over 20 years.**

ROY COX PHOTOGRAPHY

TIMELESS LESSONS FOR 21st CENTURY STUDENTS

Being a 21st century artist is different than when I went to school," says Larry Williams, a French horn performer and teacher. "Being focused on one thing was pretty much demanded to be successful. Now [musicians] are expected to do multiple things and do them well."

Williams encourages students to be entrepreneurial. "You need to know how to create opportunities for yourself," he says. "We have so many good French horn players. ... It's a 'who-you-know' world. Isolating yourself in a practice room isn't a good way to make people know you exist and want to work with you."

Williams also cites personality, along with performance, as a factor for how students can make themselves more marketable. "Do people like sitting next to you in a section?" he asks. "What else do you bring to the table?"

However, Williams reminds students that sharing all the details of their lives in today's social media era can work against them. "I warn students to take care when using social media," he says. "I don't tell them what to post, but I do tell them to be aware. I say, 'You're going to come across someone you want to impress someday, and you have to be cognizant of that. If you're ranting about a peanut butter sandwich for 15 days straight and come to me interviewing for a position, I don't know if I can deal with that every day.'"

Williams teaches another timeless lesson: Be respectful. For example, he encourages students to do some basic research on people and culture if they have the opportunity to tour abroad. "You're not just representing yourself," he says. "You're representing your ensemble, your country and your culture, so it's really important to be aware of that. You don't need to be a scholar, but learn what people value, how they are similar and different from you. That shows respect, which has opened some doors really quickly for me."

Williams experienced that concept firsthand when he participated in a cultural exchange while performing with the Peabody Symphony Orchestra in Russia after the Cold War. "We ran into some people who clearly didn't want us there," he remembers. "They didn't know about Peabody or our orchestra. They just knew we were Americans. Showing them respect goes a long way to get people to trust you. Then when you get to the music, it's business as usual."

One of those main jobs, teaching, has entered a new phase. In the spring of 2020, Williams was appointed associate director of the DMV Music Academy, whose mission is to expose, engage, inspire and guide musicians of all levels in the D.C., Maryland and Virgina area along their individual paths toward mastery. The academy started out as a summer percussion workshop led by Donnie Johns in Hyattsville, Maryland, and featured faculty from the National Symphony Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, U.S. Navy Band, and The Cadets and Santa Clara Vanguard Drum and Bugle Corps. The organization has grown steadily in the past two years, and Williams was invited to join the leadership team to help guide the academy as it expands its programming and its reach.

And — cue juggling pins — Williams concurrently launched the DMV Horn Academy/Larry Williams Horn Studio. "The Horn Academy will feature in-person and online lessons, horn and brass chamber ensembles, a masterclass series, and workshops throughout the year," Williams says. "I'm really excited that DMV Horn Academy will now be one of my home bases. I'll be able to teach horn players regionally while doing masterclasses around the country."

THE COACH

Williams has taught French horn as a private instructor as well as in an academic environment. "I enjoy learning how people learn," Williams says. "If you watch and listen, they teach you how they best process information. Ask them questions and understand their point of view. Don't say, 'This is how you do it.'"

Because each student learns differently, Williams sets out to know them as people. "I start every session by asking them how they are as people," he says. "I need to get a sense of where they are mentally. We're here to play the horn, but it's more important to know how they are."

Williams uses some similarities between music and sports, including being in "the zone." "Part of what I teach is a form of meditation when we are playing," he says. "It's getting students into a mental state where they are deeply concentrated. When you're in that zone, you're working on a deeper level of consciousness."

One of the ways that Williams achieves that focus is by going back to his quest for balance. "In the zone state, you're firing both sides of your brain," he says. "The physical includes your breathing and tongue placement. Then there's the emotional, artistic part. When you get them both in balance, it's like a seesaw. The point isn't that it's level. You have to stay in that small space where you're monitoring and controlling it. I focus on the basic principles of playing the horn, but then I put that aside and ask my students how they're feeling. Then I go back to technique. This back and forth gets them in the zone."

As a teacher Williams often encounters a specific challenge with the zone. "I try to get students out of their own heads," he says. "Younger students often worry if they're playing correctly. I tell them to focus on serving the music. Make it about the audience, the composer, about anything but yourself. You can teach someone to play the French horn really well, but if they don't focus, all that will go out the window when they perform."

He practices what he preaches. "My brain works the same way whether I'm performing or teaching," he says.

THE ADMINISTRATOR

After teaching at the Johns Hopkins Peabody Institute for more than 20 years, Williams was ready for a new challenge. In 2016, he was awarded a fellowship in the Johns Hopkins University Provost's Office where he worked on university-wide initiatives.

The change to the administrative side of academia included some growing pains. "It was very weird," Williams says. "I had to wear a suit every day. There were no students; it was all administrators."

With persistence, Williams figured out that the rules of the road are the same. "We have things we want to accomplish, so we come together to figure out how to achieve them," he says. "I was like a student again."

During the second year of his renewed fellowship, Williams learned about an opening for assistant vice provost for faculty affairs. "I still wanted to challenge myself," he says. "Even though I wasn't sure I wanted to be in administration full time, I wanted to explore it."

Williams also took several business courses from Johns Hopkins and earned an Executive Certificate in Business Communication. Williams says those courses focused on "the soft skills everyone needs, such as how to communicate with different generations. I was the only musician in these classes."

And Williams will definitely make use of those skills as he flexes his leadership, communication and administration muscles with the DMV Horn Academy.

THE COLLABORATOR

Williams still finds joy in performing with others and as a solo artist. "I lean toward playing with others," he says. "Playing music in real time with other people connects us to each other without using words. That's an amazing feeling."

Even when it's just him, "I try to collaborate with the audience," he says. "From a young age, I was taught the point of music was to bring people together."

He encourages students to operate the same way. "I want students to play for others, not just for themselves."

Williams collaborates with more than just musicians. In 2008, he founded the American Studio Orchestra (ASO), which he calls a multimedia orchestra that includes musicians, filmmakers, dancers and other creative minds. "I began having conversations with friends from different artistic backgrounds about what they do, why they do it and what they want to do," Williams says. "I was really inspired to learn that they were asking the same questions that I was. Everybody was happy but seeking to do more."

ROY COX PHOTOGRAPHY

Another collaboration resulted in the Lyric Brass Quintet, which was formed in 1998. "It started as a group of friends who wanted to play and perform but didn't want to tour," Williams shares. "We still play every week and have managed to stay together through multiple changes. We don't realize what an old married couple we all are until someone who doesn't play with us comments on it."

From juggling for so long, Williams has learned the importance of connecting his varied activities. For example, the Lyric Brass Quintet is the brass section for ASO, and the quintet helps with the arrangements.

These days Williams' main focus is the DMV Horn Academy with a complement of side projects, all while combining life as a teacher and perpetual learner. "I've come full circle in a lot of ways," he says. "It's been an interesting ride so far, and I look forward to the future."

And to think that it all started as a happenstance. "If my buddy hadn't raised his hand that day, I wouldn't have the career I have today," Williams recalls. "I'm not one who says you have to know what you want to do right away. I just fell into my calling."

Just as any good superhero would.

DON'T LOSE FOCUS:
Larry Williams tells his students to focus on serving the music. "Make it about the audience, make it about the composer, make it about anything but yourself," he says.

SUCCESS STORY

WHERE SOUND MEETS SCIENCE

Music thrives at the intersection of art, math and science for K-5 students.

BY SAVY LEISER

Art and science work in harmony at Sanders Memorial Elementary School in Land O' Lakes, Florida. Each student has an assigned Apple device to pursue knowledge of STEAM — science, technology, engineering, art and math. Kindergartners through 5th graders use their devices not only to learn coding, robotics and aviation but also to create music.

Sanders Memorial, a STEAM magnet that opened in 2015, has incorporated technology into the study of melody, rhythm and music theory. For the past four years, students have also performed in a tech-based instrumental ensemble called iPad Band.

"STEAM, to us, means not only doing the science, technology, engineering and math but … seeing that art is in all of those subjects as well," says Ryan McCorkle, a co-teacher for the music program.

TECH AND THEORY

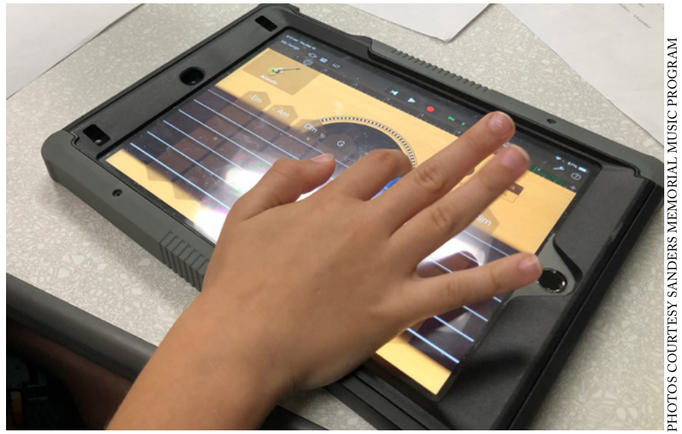
Adding technology to music education is a natural step as professional music becomes more entwined with the world of computers. "Music … on the radio is mostly technology-based," McCorkle says, explaining that synthesizers and mixers have become more common than woodwind instruments in contemporary commercial music.

By using Apple's GarageBand program, teachers break down the elements of music for their students. Scale patterns, form and improvisation are all taught through GarageBand, says James Coyne, co-teacher.

Loops help students identify the melody of a song. "We teach them that a melody is based on the sounds they're familiar with," McCorkle says.

At the beginning of 2020, 2nd graders learned improvisation using a pentatonic scale in GarageBand. "Breaking apart a song they can hear on the radio, [students learn] how it's structured," McCorkle says.

Students in 3rd through 5th grade are also working on creating cell phone ringtones and voting on their favorites. "The winning ringtone becomes our cell phone ringtone for the year," McCorkle says.



PHOTOS COURTESY SANDERS MEMORIAL MUSIC PROGRAM

STEAM IN ACTION: **Students at Sanders Memorial Elementary School use apps like GarageBand to break down music and to create their own.**

CONNECTING MUSIC TO MATH AND READING

Through the comprehensive STEAM education at Sanders, students learn how different subjects intersect. "When they're learning about solar systems, they might do certain things in music and art class that relate to the solar system," says principal Jason Petry. "It's intertwined and embedded in everything we do."

Consequently, music classes aren't only creative; they're mathematical as well. "We remind [students] all the time that music is a lot of math," McCorkle says.

Counting is an important part of rhythm; similarly, sound waves, frequencies, pitch and other scientific concepts are important for a full understanding of music. "We cover sound waves, and we do an experiment with frequencies," Coyne says.

In the sound-wave activity, 5th graders set plates on a speaker, adding different colors of sand to the plates to observe the reaction of the sand at different frequencies. "They learn about hertz; they visually see it with the sand, and they're getting the science of it," Coyne says.

This experiment gives students a visual representation of pitch. "The kids tell us when they see a pitch, and we point out where the nodes are and increase the frequency," McCorkle says.

Computer-generated music making can also tie into

GIGANTE PRODUCTIONS

ELECTRONIC ENSEMBLE: **Co-teachers Ryan McCorkle (above left) and James Coyne (right) and the iPad band at Sanders Memorial. Music apps on cell phones and tablets allow students to make music at school and on their own time (below).**

English and reading. In music class, older students use recording software to create an audiobook. "We do a project where students read a … 1st-grade level text and record that," Coyne says. "They add in sound effects for page turns and background music."

Those audiobooks then go to kindergarten and 1st-grade students to use in buddy reading exercises. "Some of their peers hear a book they've created, and it helps with phonics and comprehension," Coyne says.

FROM INSTRUMENTS TO IPADS

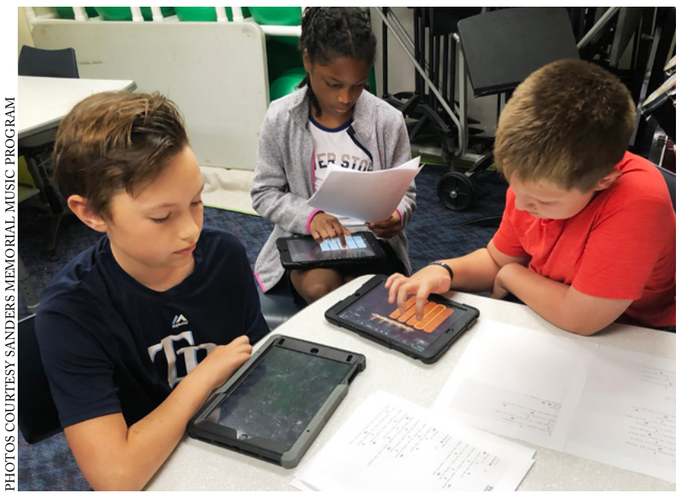
In 2016, Sanders debuted an extracurricular instrumental music ensemble, but instead of playing traditional brass and woodwind instruments, students performed on electronic tablets. This ensemble, known as iPad Band, comprises about 30 students in 4th and 5th grades.

While Sanders has a choir and an Orff ensemble, schools in Pasco County, Florida, traditionally don't begin learning concert band instruments until middle school, McCorkle says.

Making music on a portable electronic device allows for accessibility to all students. "The chance of having an instrument at home is rare," but every family has a cell phone, McCorkle says. "There's an app they can [download] and create music. The link between technology and music is having the ability to create at any time in their own way."

During iPad Band rehearsals, which take place one hour before school, students use GarageBand and Yamaha synthesizer apps to create covers of pop songs. "We begin teaching them how to read chord charts with lyrics," Coyne says. "They start to learn some of the mixing sides when we mix the group together."

iPad Band has performed at school concerts, sometimes on its own and sometimes as a backup band for the choir. The band has even collaborated outside of the music department. "One of our concerts featured our iPad Band performing, our chorus performing, and our art department did live art," Coyne says. "We did '99 Red Balloons' [by Nena], and the art students painted [pictures of red balloons] live."



PHOTOS COURTESY SANDERS MEMORIAL MUSIC PROGRAM

MUSICIANS OF TOMORROW

iPad Band and music technology coursework have inspired students to continue with music in middle school and beyond. "We see students from the iPad Band continue into middle school, and they've joined the band program," Coyne says.

> **"We see students from the iPad Band continue into middle school, and they've joined the band program"**
>
> — JAMES COYNE, MUSIC PROGRAM CO-TEACHER AT SANDERS MEMORIAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

McCorkle recalls one student who became interested in music production. "[He asked] us every day if we [were] going to use GarageBand," McCorkle says. "He wants to be a music producer."

Because Sanders is a magnet school, it feeds into about 13 middle schools. Petry has received positive feedback from administrators at many of those schools about the use of technology in students' development. "What I hear from middle school principals is that students are prepared in being independent, accountable, creative and collaborative with each other," Petry says.

Though music is an auditory phenomenon, the use of technology has helped students engage with it visually as well. "For kids who are visual learners, they can see right then what they've done and how it lines up," Coyne says. "The kids who you thought were going to struggle with the comprehension of it, they're the ones who are like, 'Let's do it again! I want to keep going!'"

FAILING FORWARD

At Sanders Memorial Elementary School in Land O' Lakes, Florida, faculty and students embrace failure. The school has adopted a principle called "failing forward," which encourages a fearless approach to improvement. "You never truly fail unless you give up," says principal Jason Petry.

Ryan McCorkle and James Coyne, co-teachers of the school's music program, advise other teachers not to be afraid of challenges. "You will fail — you will fail once, twice, three times, four times," Coyne says, "But as soon as that one thing goes right, it will push you to the next level."

With the launch of iPad Band in 2016, McCorkle experienced one of these failures. He asked students to bring in devices from home, and they brought all different kinds of handheld devices, from Apple products to Androids. When the devices were incompatible, Coyne and McCorkle realized that they would need to reserve a set of iPads for this group.

One way to embrace failure is to start small and improve slowly. Sanders began by giving individual devices to students in higher grade levels at first, then expanding to the younger kids. "Once you expand into the lower grades, you're growing students," Petry says. "By the time they get into 4th and 5th grade, you can expand it even more."

A cultural acceptance of failure has taken pressure off of students. "When we first opened, the 5th graders were like, 'We're failing, and we're mad, and we're not doing well!'" Petry says.

However, students are now open to new challenges. A combination of rubrics, formative and summative assessments, small-group work and optional test retakes help students step outside their comfort zone.

For Petry, a STEAM approach to music relates to his core mission of keeping students engaged and giving them opportunities to learn. "There are kids who never really liked music, but now they're making jingles or doing iPad Band," he says.

In the end, learning math, science, art and music together lead to a more well-rounded student. "Music isn't just about music," McCorkle says. "It's about making you a better person."

WHAT'S IN YOUR STICK BAG?

From choice of material to weight, percussionists have a lot to consider when choosing drumsticks and mallets for their performance needs.

BY FRANK DIMARIA

A percussionist's gig bag brims with sticks, mallets, brushes, keys, heads and tape. When choosing the implements to include in their arsenal, drummers have important factors to consider.

WOOD, METAL OR SYNTHETIC?

The most important factor is a drumstick's composition, says Dennis DeLucia, percussion instructor and member of the Drum Corps International, Percussive Arts Society and World Drum Corps halls of fame.

Players have a variety of options like wood, metal or synthetic compounds. Because drums are a collection of metallic and skin surfaces, the implements used to strike those surfaces must be unbiased in their tactile feedback, says Tommy Igoe, drummer, educator and author.

Wooden sticks, long a favorite of most players, provide the neutral tactile feedback that drummers seek. By far the most popular wood choice is hickory, which allows the drumhead to respond at all dynamic levels, Igoe says.

Some drumstick manufacturers market and sell metal sticks. Igoe is not a fan. "Just cross them off your list," he says. "Never use metal on a drum set or any drum."

One school of thought suggests that metal sticks will improve a player's strength, but that idea is a travesty, Igoe says. DeLucia agrees, saying he never considers them.

Although most players avoid metal sticks, there are some interesting wood stick made with a metal tip. "I've seen my students use this type of stick to go quickly from a snare drum to a cymbal and/or triangle in some multiple percussion and contemporary band literature," says Sherry Rubins, senior lecturer and coordinator of the percussion program at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

Synthetic drumsticks last forever but are horrible to play with, Igoe says, because they do not offer a player the tactile feedback of a wooden stick.

Some sticks are fashioned out of wood, then chemically treated with a liquid plastic. This process renders a more durable stick but adds weight. "Most people, if they use them at all, use them as a warmup stick," DeLucia says.

When band directors have a choice of wooden or nylon beads, they should explore the nylon-tip model. "If I were a high school band director, I'd buy nylon-tip drumsticks because they last longer than wooden-tip drumsticks," Igoe says.

FOR QUICK CHANGES

Drummers playing in wind and percussion ensembles need to fill their gig bags with a variety of sticks and mallets, Rubins says. Some literature requires percussionists to switch from one stick to another quickly during a performance, so sticks that perform double duty are invaluable. "There are some sticks that are a marimba mallet on one end [with] a round, wooden end on the other," Rubins says.

No player should be without a good set of concert sticks and an implement with both a soft end and a beaded end. Players also need an implement for toms and one for intricate parts on the bass drum.

Variety is not limited to indoor ensembles. Marching snare drummers should also have a number of implements in their stick bags. They should carry two sets of marching sticks as well as a set of brushes. Some marchers like to carry a set of concert sticks, which are typically shorter and thinner than marching sticks, DeLucia says.

THE RIGHT TOOL FOR EACH PLAYER

Drumsticks are typically categorized by a letter and a number, such as 7A or 5B, to indicate weight and diameter. Historically, "A" models were drum set sticks, "B" were concert sticks, and "S" were for street, or marching, use.

"While that nomenclature still exists with some manufacturers, there are also many variations and 'artist models.' You must read the description of the stick, so you can choose a pair that matches the style, student and instrument," DeLucia says.

A common problem is when students use sticks that are too large for the context in which they're performing, Igoe says. For middle schoolers and students with smaller hands, Igoe recommends a 7A stick, which is 15.5 inches long and has a diameter of .540 inches.

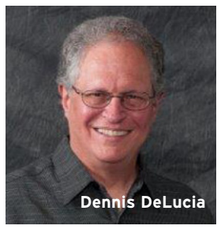
DeLucia agrees. Students ages 9 to 11 should use sticks that are short enough and light enough for them to handle. Players in the same drumline can vary in the size of their sticks. "You need to find a stick that works best for each individual player."

Igoe encourages band directors to listen intently to the sound of the drums in an ensemble. If they're not getting the sound they want, the students are using sticks that are too large, he adds.

"I want those band directors to feel empowered to recommend that 7A or 5A stick," Igoe says. "They'll notice a more pleasing sound immediately rather than what can be an ugly sound coming off the instrument when the implements are too large."


Sherry Rubins


Tommy Igoe


Dennis DeLucia

LETTER TO MYSELF

Every issue of SupportED will close with a letter written by a Yamaha Master Educator to his or her younger self. These letters will offer advice, anecdotes and inspiration for a fulfilling career in music education.

Dear Younger Travis,

TRAVIS J. CROSS

Yamaha Master Educator

Chair of Music, Professor of Conducting, Director of Wind Ensemble and Symphonic Band at the University of California, Los Angeles

Welcome to your first year as a teacher. You are unusually lucky to start your career at an exemplary high school with a thriving band program, strong parental support, abundant resources and an amazing senior colleague. You'll learn a lot living in Minneapolis, a great American city with two full-time professional orchestras, two classical radio stations and a vibrant theater scene. You'll only be a short drive from your wonderful former teachers at St. Olaf College and even closer to the University of Minnesota and its many musical offerings.

Even with those advantages, the next few years will be incredibly challenging for you, and that's okay. Four years of college and three months of student teaching aren't enough to prepare anyone to succeed in this profession. I urge you to seek out opportunities to stretch and grow as a musician, teacher and person.

See and hear as much great art and as many world-class performers as you can afford. Attend other high school and college band (and choir and orchestra) concerts. Join a community band.

Befriend other inspired music educators. Observe their rehearsals and invite them to yours. Share meals, drinks, rides to concerts, video reviews, ideas, frustrations, techniques and repertoire. Play recordings of your ensemble for the best musicians you know and take their advice about how to solve problems they hear. Bring your college band director to your school, even when you're afraid you're not doing everything as well as you could. Why wait until you can already do everything to ask for help?

While you push yourself and your students to do better, remember to exercise patience and think strategically. Whether in your program or within yourself, some things change quickly, some change slowly, and some never change — or the effort required is disproportional to the result.

The one thing I wish I knew when I started teaching is that no rational argument, however well-reasoned or explained, will prevail on a person acting irrationally. Though sometimes it's important to be right — and it's always important to do right — spending hours writing the perfect email to explain why someone's child wasn't placed in the top band, assigned the solo, selected as drum major or why the music festival is more necessary than the winter formal usually fails to make a difference or costs more than it's worth. Instead, invest your time and energy in what you can actually improve — for example, yourself.

If you lead with love for music and your students as well as work really hard, you'll find a lifetime of joy and fulfillment. Now go practice the piano and learn some alternate clarinet fingerings!

Good Luck!

in 2020

YOUNGER STUDENTS OFTEN WORRY IF THEY'RE PLAYING CORRECTLY. I TELL THEM TO FOCUS ON SERVING THE MUSIC. MAKE IT ABOUT THE AUDIENCE, THE COMPOSER, ABOUT ANYTHING BUT YOURSELF.

– LARRY WILLIAMS

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