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FEATURING

presentations from

PRESIDENT'S NOTE

Greetings fellow Arkansas Educators,

I hope every ArkMEA member is having a great school year thus far! I am sure your year has picked up as we move into the busy winter performance season.

I am thrilled to have begun my term as the President of the Arkansas Music Educators' Association. The work Dr. Kevin Coker completed as president of our great state chapter has laid a sound foundation for our continued work. As a product of Arkansas public schools, I feel honored to lead this organization and gain inspiration from the diligent work of the many exceptional music educators in Arkansas.

As a music educator, I feel it is important to make music accessible to every student that walks into our classroom. It seems as if an unintentional theme of accessibility, equality, diversity, and inclusion emerged from our Fall Professional Development Conference, which was held last month in Conway. This theme is timely and much-needed as we move out teaching during the pandemic. We have an opportunity to rebuild and reconnect with each other as we reconsider what we value and prioritize in our music programs. For this special issue of the ArkMEA Journal, we will feature written versions of several presentations from this conference.

ArkMEA strives to be a resource for the music educators of Arkansas. ArkMEA reflects our national organization—the National Association for Music Educators—in that our core initiatives are Research and Music Teacher Education, Equity, Professional Learning and Growth, and Advocacy and Public Policy.

I hope that ArkMEA can be a valuable tool for the music educators, future music educators, and students of Arkansas, and I look forward to continuing to lead our organization. As Dr. Jeffrey Murdock's session at our Fall Professional Development Conference reminded us, I hope you find ways to THRIVE instead of simply just surviving this school year!

Musically yours,

CamRyn Stillman
ArkMEA State President

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The ArkMEA journal is the official publication of the Arkansas Music Educators Association.

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FEATURED PRESENTERS

ON PAGE 7

Stephanie Williams

Stephanie Williams is a teacher at Benton Middle School teaching Band, Music Appreciation, and Music Technology. She's been teaching for 14 years after graduating Arkansas Tech University in 2009 with a Bachelor's in Music Education. During teaching, she also graduated with a Master's in Special Education in 2013 and completed National Board Certification in 2018. She sponsors the Ukelele Klub after school and collaborates often with Art and GT classes to create interactive art for students in the school. Williams has started Teaching Music Outside the Box (www.teachingmob.com) to help music educators with lesson plans, navigating teaching, and how to reach students in creative ways. She's all about teaching with humor, empathizing with students, and embraces what everyone has to offer in the classroom. Williams lives in Bauxite, Arkansas with her husband, John, and her 4 year old daughter, Jadie Max. She's a big fan of anything Star Trek, Star Wars, and camping outdoors with her family.

ON PAGE 17

Jeaneau Julian

JEANEAU JULIAN is in her 22nd year of teaching music, with the last 10 years being the Music Specialist at Terry Elementary School in Little Rock, Arkansas. She completed her undergraduate degree in Instrumental Music Education from the University of Oklahoma and earned a master's degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages from Arkansas Tech University. She has completed Three Levels of Orff Schulwerk Teacher Education and has previously served as Treasurer for the Central Arkansas Orff Chapter. In addition to teaching music, she is the ESOL coordinator and records the daily morning announcements for her school. Outside of school, she provides professional development at the district level for elementary music teachers, was the Winter 2022 American Center for Elemental Music and Movement Award Winner, and serves as a Region Representative for the National Board of the American Orff Schulwerk Association.

ON PAGE 18

Karyna Johnson

Karyna Johnson is currently teaching elementary music in Little Rock at Otter Creek Elementary. She serves as the historian for the Central Arkansas chapter of AOSA, and coordinates multiple committees for her school. Karyna attended the UCA Honors College for her undergraduate work and returned to complete her Master of Music Education in 2016. In 2010, she was awarded teacher of the year at Valdez Elementary in Denver Public Schools. She is married with two children who both attend in the Little Rock School District. In addition to her training as an educator, Karyna was a forster parent in Denver from 2009 to 2015, where she received training on brain trauma and development in order to become a therapeutic home. Karyna has presented for Denver Public Schools, TMEA, Little Rock Public Schools, and for the International Society of Music Educators in Greece.

ON PAGE 28

Phylicia Butler

Phylicia Hollis Butler is an entrepreneur, musician, and lifelong educator. After receiving a Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Memphis Rudi E. Scheidt School of Music, Phylicia opened a private piano and voice studio and named it The Music House, which was later renamed Phylicia Hollis Studios. Since its conception in 2013, Phylicia has educated hundreds of singers and musicians of all ages. As a professionally trained musician and singer, she has the opportunity to travel and share her gifts around the world. Phylicia is a believer in continued learning as a key to success. She received her Master's in Education from Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee, and she anticipates the completion of her Education Specialist (Ed.S.) degree from Arkansas State University in December of 2022. Her most notable accomplishments as an educator include being the author of Healthy Choices Healthy Voices: Practical Ways for Becoming a Better Singer, as well as being recognized by North Little Rock School District as the 2022 Ridge Road Elementary Teacher of the Year. Phylicia currently works in various capacities of the music and fine arts industry as a workshop facilitator, worship leader, entertainment consultant, and the elementary music board Chair for the Arkansas Music Educators Association. Phylicia currently resides in Sherwood, Arkansas with her husband Marcus.

CONTENTS

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HOW TO GROW MOTIVATION AND CONNECTION

By Stephanie Williams

What was one of the hardest things as a teacher in the beginning?

For me, it was understanding the motivation of my students. I had a wide range of students who were either apathetic or highly motivated, motivated by freedom of time or motivated by candy. Some wanted to be motivated but were not sure how.
I didn't realize the need for researching this particular topic until March 2020. I was stuck at home with a toddler that wouldn't nap and wasn't entertained unless I was with her. I was simultaneously trying to teach virtual classes and work from 7am to 5pm almost every day. Cue diving into all the parenting instagram accounts, podcasts, and articles as I tried to navigate parenthood during this time.
I came to find that a lot of these parenting strategies could work in the classroom as well. Then, I began to dig into the topic of motivation in students. Extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation. Advocacy. How do you motivate someone who doesn't seem motivated?
I was able to adapt these parenting strategies and apply them to the classroom and saw huge improvements in participation, self reflection, advocacy, and overall acceptance of failures and learning experiences.

Good Job vs. Self Reflection

My number one strategy in improving intrinsic motivation is through self reflection instead of seeking outward validation. I'm not saying that "good Job" should be considered as a bad phrase…but there are definitely better ones that create more lasting determination in the classroom. We always want to bring the successes inward; we want the students to reflect on how they feel versus how everyone else feels about their accomplishments. Phrases like "Awesome! How does that make you feel?" or "I'm impressed with how you ::insert accomplishment here::." These simple changes can create a sense of ownership in students and give them that push toward intrinsic motivation. But remember, this is a long game. It's a marathon. These changes won't be immediate in a student, but over time, you will see an improvement.

Frustration Intolerance

Now, let us talk about Frustration Intolerance. Students these days are having a hard time working through frustration, either not feeling satisfied with failure or shutting down after failing. Instant gratification can be a joy stealer at times and sets up students to lack motivation. So, what can we do to help improve frustration tolerance? Allowing students to fail or problem solve does not make you a bad educator, in fact, you are giving students the ability to find ways to improve their learning. When a student comes up to me and says, "I forgot how to play C on the flute," I take a breath, stop my immediate reaction to just tell him, and say "Hmmm, I wonder how you are going to figure that out? What could you do to solve this problem?" Lo and behold, the student goes to his band book and looks up the fingerings and then checks with a student nearby to see if he was doing it correctly. THAT is the magic of frustration tolerance. Teaching kids to be self-sufficient can help you be a better teacher and help them be better learners.

The Art of Ignorance

One of my favorite things I love to talk about is the art of ignorance. To act like you don't know about current events or slang or the newest TikTok dance (and this might not be an act for some). Playing this up is a wonderful way to get kids talking about stuff. My favorite thing is to spell TikTok wrong (Tick - Tock) because then I get into the debate of how to actually spell versus what the platform is actually spelled as. I've had kids teach me slang terms and I use them an excessive amount in the classroom that day. I have also been known to have kids teach me dances. Is this educational…not really. But does this engage the students at some point in their day, absolutely. Connections are built when you join their world. So, embrace it with open arms.

Handwritten Notes & Why

What about the students that are hard to reach? The student that seems to do no right in your classroom? You feel like you nag them from when they walk into your classroom to when they step out of your doorway. Students that require more love and compassion are the ones that are sometimes the hardest to connect with. One of the best things I've done in my career is handwritten notes. These handwritten notes are gold! I once had a student that was causing all kinds of inappropriate distractions in my class and nothing was working. One morning, I promised myself that THAT DAY I was going to find one positive thing that student did and create such a big deal about it. He was running around my room and not doing his work but while this was happening, he picked up a classmate's pencil and handed it to her - PURE GOLD. After that class, I got a card and immediately started writing, "Today, Jim showed so much compassion towards another student and picked up a pencil for her that she had dropped. It was the sweetest thing I saw today and I'm so grateful to have him in my class. - Mrs. Williams." The next day I asked this student to take the card home and give it to his guardian. He looked at me in shock and said, "What did I do wrong again?" To which my response was, "Nothing, just make sure your aunt gets this from me."

The following day this student came in with a pep in his step. The next thing I knew, he was telling the class, "Y'all need to be quiet while Mrs. Williams is teaching! She's my favorite teacher and she is trying to help y'all!" As I almost fell out of my chair in shock, my heart was soaring. I reached him. I finally found a connection with him. What I learned was that I not only gave him praise from me, but I gave an opportunity for his aunt to praise him too; as the note was to HER and not to him. He had TWO adult interactions that were positive, whereas, he probably had only one positive interaction the entire month. Giving him TWO adult interactions that were meaningful did more for him than if I was to just praise

him in the moment and then go right back to nagging. That day, my relationship with this student grew much stronger - to the point he would see me in the hall and say hi every single time, give me quick, "love ya Mrs. Williams" and he had my back while I had his. This is why we do what we do.

Percentage Ability

Having an exhausting day can make any teacher feel less than. Maybe you are getting over an illness or your personal life has fallen apart, and yet, you show up anyway because you love these kids and this is the job you must do. It doesn't make the day any less hard though. When we have days like this, make it normal to talk about it. You don't have to go into details, but let students know that you are having a rough day but are choosing to be present for them. You would be amazed at how your kids will understand. I like to talk about Percentage Ability. This is the concept that not everyone works at 100%. So, when I'm having a rough day, I might warn the students that I'm functioning at 70% but I'm still going to show up for them. In turn, this has helped my students feel comfortable enough to come up to me and let me know what percentage they are functioning as. This type of open communication reminds kids that they are not alone in feeling depleted, distracted or falling short. Everyone has bad days and there is absolutely nothing wrong with that. You showing up regardless of a bad day 1) reminds them that you care 2) demonstrates what it's like to persevere through a bad day 3) creates a safe space of feeling normal. Students appreciate relatability, so give them something to relate to because everyone has bad days.

Negative Self Talk

We all have that voice in our heads that keep us from doing things or making us feel inadequate. This is our Negative Self Talk or Part Talking. The best thing you can do for students is to talk about this openly. Discuss

that you have a voice that will tell you "You can't do this" or "You aren't good enough" even as an adult. For younger kids all the way up to Middle School, you can give your negative self talk a name and an image. Mine's name is Glen and he is an overbite chihuahua. I tell this to the kids and, of course, they laugh. All of a sudden this negative voice doesn't have power…but it's a ridiculous image. When we give our negative self-talk a hilarious name and persona, it's no longer harmful. I have my students come up with a silly name and image that represents this negative voice. We laugh and come up with crazy stuff, but in the end, the kids have created a safer version of their self talk. After you do this, it is important for you to model this. Talk about your "Glen" and how it's keeping you from doing something you need to do or it's telling you "You can't get this done on time", etc. I always say, "Glen is in my head again. BACK OFF GLEN!" When you model it, the students will model it too.

Remember, you are human and so are your students. Showing our students that we are just like them gives them the ability to feel comfortable and connected, which in turn can create momentum for motivation. For more resources and information, you can visit my website at www.teachingmob.com or follow me on instagram @teachingmob.

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UNTOLD STORIES OF BLACK AMERICANS

CHANGING THE NARRATIVE

By Jeaneau Julian

This article first appeared in The Orff Echo, Volume 54, No. 4, Summer 2022.

ABSTRACT

Several factors can affect communication, the transfer of information. Sometimes stories are lost, miscommunicated, or hidden. In this article, the author shares untold stories through the lens of children's literature and personal anecdotes to facilitate the discovery of our true history through singing, saying, dancing, and playing.

Figure 1. Author in Her Fourth-Grade Play, 1987. *SOURCE: JEANEAU JULIAN. USED WITH PERMISSION.*

History. Herstory. Their story. We all have a story to tell. Many stories have been shared countless times, whereas others have yet to be told. *The Snowy Day* and *The Giving Tree* are two well-known, beloved stories passed down to children and often explored in the music classroom. *Juneteenth for Mazie, Unspeakable: The Tulsa Race Massacre, Jake Makes a World*, and *Ruth and the Green Book*, on the other hand, are not commonplace in the American children's book idiom. Why are some stories hidden from our eyes? How can we ensure these stories see the light of day—in homes and classrooms and around our communities?

Perspective is one key to uncovering this challenge. Nichelle Smith, racism and history enterprise editor for *USA Today*, explained that traditionally the nation's history was taught through a White perspective. She reminded us, "Changing that lens, elevating stories that haven't been elevated, reaching back and getting these stories that have been obscured by time, forgotten in time, erased—intentionally or unintentionally—that is very much our goal" (as cited in Mateos, 2021).

Music educators, using children's literature and the Schulwerk, are uniquely positioned to uncover some of these stories and share history that might otherwise be uncomfortable to examine. According to Elizabeth Mulvahill (2021), contributing editor with WeAreTeachers, "These untold stories help our young students develop a global perspective, something that is essential for their future success."

Lack of Communication

Although we can cite many reasons these stories are not well known, lack of communication played—and continues to play—a key role. Consider some of the lines of communication during the Civil War: spoken word, newspapers, mail, and telegraphy, among others.

Although acceptable at the time, these forms of communication were not always reliable and were easily destroyed. In addition, the use of newspapers and print media was hampered by illiteracy. "Somewhere between 5 and 10 percent of Union soldiers could not read or write. For Confederates, the proportion was nearer 20 percent. In some remote rural areas, illiteracy reached 40 percent" (Flagel, n.d.).

This made print communication useless for many. Mail functioned as both a physical and emotional lifeline for the literate. In 1861, however, delivery was suspended for a time between the Union and Confederacy.

Stories communicated only through the spoken word might not always be accurate. For example, how many times in a classroom have we repeated instructions? Or how many times have we changed how we teach a lesson because we did not quite remember how it went the week before? A game of telephone, using names, rhythmic phrases, or melodic patterns, is an engaging way to demonstrate to students how what is originally stated can change when passed through others and is also a great exercise in prosody.

These challenges with communication during and after the Civil War were brought to light in the children's book, Juneteenth for Mazie (Cooper, 2015). The story creates a powerful scene to imagine and consider in our music rooms. It offers an opportunity to remind students of the history of discrimination as well as the power of perseverance in the face of adversity.

One of my own encounters with adversity happened when I was cast as Mrs. Claus (see Figure 1) in my fourth-grade musical over 30 years ago. My friend, also Black, was cast as Santa. In addition, the musical had a "1950s version" in which Santa and Mrs. Claus were White. At one point, the White Santa said to me, "Hey, baby, what's shakin'?" I had to faint after hearing that line. Even a year after the musical, our peers would say to my friend and me, "You're both smart and Black, y'all should date each other." We did not realize then that they said this to us because of the color of our skin. Though we never dated, we begrudgingly took a "cutest couple" photo, and I am fortunate to call him a good friend to this day. This experience is a reminder that adversity is often encountered not through physical pain, but through others attempting to control the narrative and write our story.

Sometimes people prefer to keep silent rather than share a painful experience that changed the trajectory of their lives.

Another communication disparity is the inequity of student internet access, which the recent pandemic brought to light. Even though the gap has shrunk, between 9 million and 12 million U.S. students still lack adequate internet access at home for remote learning (Lieberman, 2021), a reminder that we still have much further to go to achieve equity in education.

The Burden of Suppression and Relocation

The disruption caused by relocation and suppression exacerbates equity issues.

Suppression

To suppress is to "forcibly put an end to something or someone" (Suppress, n.d.). We can imagine, then, the trauma that occurs when one person or group is actively suppressed by another. Although these stories are important to share, traumatic events are difficult to discuss with people unfamiliar to us and our situation. What if the story gets told, and we suffer because of it? Sometimes people prefer to keep silent rather than

share a painful experience that changed the trajectory of their lives. How can we encourage dialogue to change this narrative?

Unspeakable: The Tulsa Race Massacre (Weatherford, 2021) is the story of a community of descendants of Black Indians, formerly enslaved people, and Exodusters—Blacks who were seeking the "opportunity to escape the racism and oppression of the post-war South and become owners of their own tracts of private farmland" (Arrington, 2015).

On the Sunday following the horrific events related in the story, Bishop Edwin Mouzon, dean of the theological department of Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, preached a sermon in Tulsa entitled, "Tulsa's Race Riot and the Teachings of Jesus." He introduced his sermon by speaking of how this terror would "happen in other cities, again and again, unless we get to the root of the matter and cure this social disorder at its very source" (Mouzon, 1921).

Getting to the root included open dialogue and teaching future generations how to avoid the mistakes of our past. The story was suppressed for 75 years, however, before these events began to emerge from the shadows.

According to Oklahoma State Superintendent Joy Hofmeister, the Tulsa Race Massacre has been part of the Oklahoma academic standards since 2002 but became more detailed in 2019 to include specifics on what to cover and how the standards varied at different grade levels (as cited in Silva, 2021). Even then, two Orff colleagues who graduated from Oklahoma schools attested to never learning about the massacre in their coursework, not even in an Oklahoma history class (M. Stensrud, personal communication, January 18, 2022; T. Arenas, personal communication, January 18, 2022).

I grew up 30 miles from Tulsa, in one of 13 still incorporated all-Black towns (O'Dell, n.d.), and my mother taught special education in Gilcrease Hills, near

Greenwood in North Tulsa. Some of her colleagues at the time told her they did not travel to or shop "south of 21st street." She was stunned to learn her own colleagues were contributing to the economic suppression of others by not patronizing businesses in certain parts of Tulsa. My husband, who is White, grew up in Central Oklahoma in the late 1980s and heard about the Tulsa Race Riot from a very different perspective. He was incorrectly taught that the Black residents of Greenwood started the violence and destruction. Even then he asked himself, "Why would a group of people burn down their own community?" (B. Julian, personal communication, January 18, 2022). Is there a Tulsa in your area's history that should be brought to light? An option might be for Orff Schulwerk educators to collaborate with classroom teachers as students research discriminatory practices in their state or local history and explore the music of the same era. Or, while reading *Unspeakable: The Tulsa*

Race Massacre, students might compose speech pieces, with melody or movement choreographies, about lessons learned from this painful and troubling history.

Relocation

Some people encounter such systemic and traumatic suppression that relocation is the only option. In another often-untold story, Jake Makes a World (Rhodes-Pitts, 2015), readers meet real-life artist Jacob Lawrence who, as a child, moved from Philadelphia to Harlem. The story evokes questions that can be used as springboards for students to analyze their own surroundings.

Perseverance Through Travel

Despite limited communication and continuing suppression, Black Americans prevailed. Travel was not always an option and, when it was, people of color had to monitor their surroundings at all times. Packing their own food, sleeping in cars, and having a full tank of gas to get from city to city was a requirement for safe travel. Dr. I. J. Routen, my fine arts supervisor, recalled a time she rode the train to Chicago from Little Rock, Arkansas (I. J. Routen, personal communication, January 3, 2022).

Let us make a concerted effort to uncover these stories that have for too long been hidden in our own neighborhoods, cities, and states.

She was accompanied by her grandmother, a fair-skinned Black woman. The conductor assumed her grandmother was White and asked if she would be more comfortable riding up front with the White passengers. She simply responded, "What would I do with my grandbabies?" referring to the fact that, as Black children, Dr. Routen and her siblings had to ride in the segregated car. This is also where they ate their lunch—fried chicken, potato

salad, apple, and peanut butter sandwich, packed in a shoebox. Only when they changed trains in Poplar Bluff, Missouri, were they allowed to sit anywhere on the train and eat in the dining car like other patrons.

To help ensure safe travel, publisher Victor Green created a path for Black people to follow. His 1936 travel guide started as a list of hotels, restaurants, gas stations, and businesses that would serve Black people in New York City. Demand was so great that he included other states and cities in later editions. By 1949, the Green Book covered all of the United States, and even included Bermuda, Mexico, and Canada (Andrews, 2019).

In the untold story, Ruth and the Green Book (Ramsey, 2010), we learn of the discrimination and obstacles a Black family encountered on an automobile trip to Alabama. The story is perfect for showcasing windows into discrimination or providing a mirror to students who have felt othered: When have you felt you did not belong? What feelings might you have if you were Ruth? What would you do if you saw this happening to someone else? These questions stimulate opportunities to create powerful music and movement demonstrating community, justice, resilience, and more.

When I was 8 years old, my family took a road trip from Oklahoma to Florida. We played games, read the

map, and created songs about the cities we passed (Hattiesburg, what a name!). My mother loved taking side trips, and on one of those excursions, we needed gas. She pulled over to the nearest station, went in to pay, and returned to the car. Instead of getting gas, though, she drove onward. The owners had turned off the pumps and told her to get gas "on the main road." She was a Black woman, driving a Mercedes-Benz, in 1986—just 36 years ago.

Finding Untold Stories

These are just a few of the countless untold stories Black Americans have experienced. How do we find more of these stories to explore and unpack in our music rooms? For those captured in writing, simply searching "how to find untold stories" on Google yields over 30 million hits. Look for groups like Diverse and Inclusive Books for Elementary Music Teachers on Facebook, or follow someone like ihaveabook4that on Instagram. Listen to people who look different than you do or whose beliefs differ from yours; empathize when they tell you their life experiences. Do not rely on others to do the work for you. Take time to research and learn the hard truths that many have lived through their entire lives. Only then can these stories become commonplace in our American vernacular.

Conclusion

Let us make a concerted effort to uncover these stories that have for too long been hidden in our own neighborhoods, cities, and states. In the words of Isabel McNeill Carley (2011):

> Make your own collection of … stories that are particularly meaningful to you, and worth teaching to your students. Not just for today, but to remember all their lives and teach to their own children. Nothing less is worth either your time, or theirs. (p. 64)

As Orff Schulwerk educators, it is up to us to ensure our students encounter quality material, in song and in story. The choices we make—the untold stories we bring to light—can change the narrative, impact our students' future, and alter the course of history.

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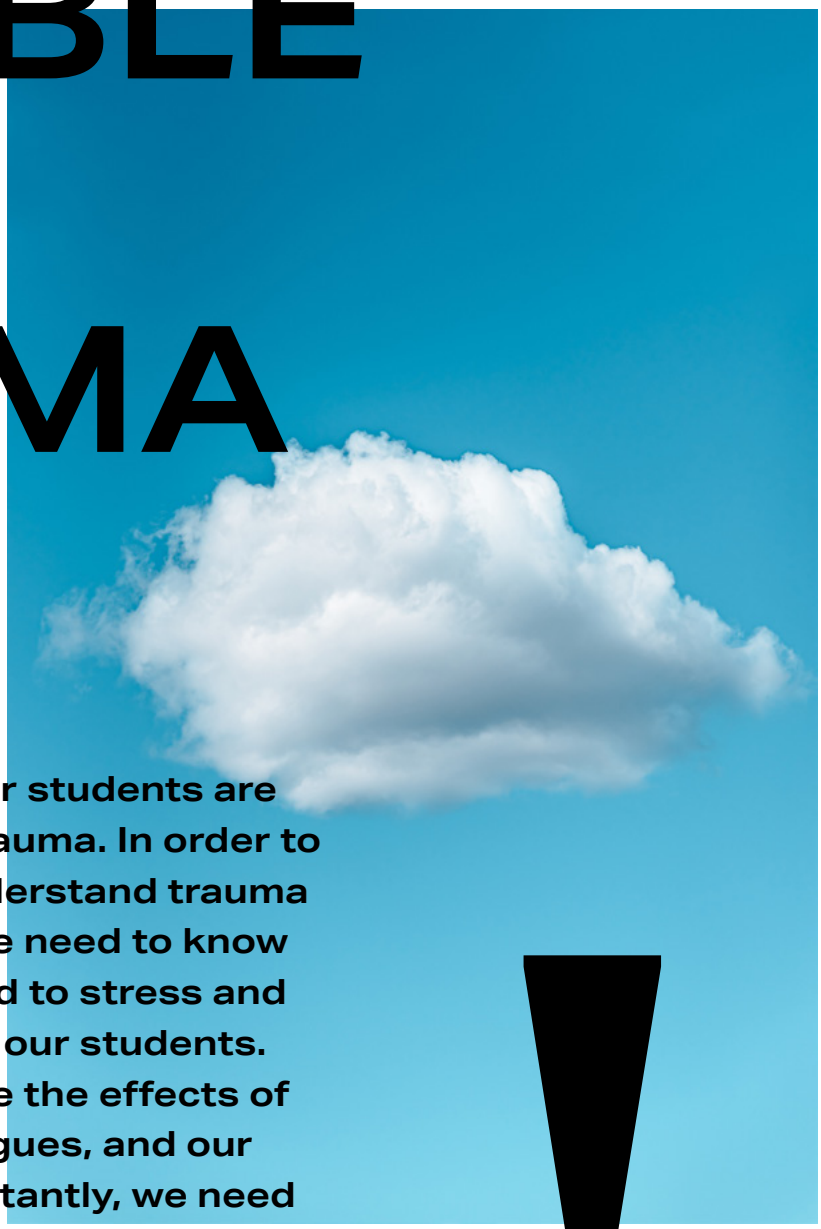
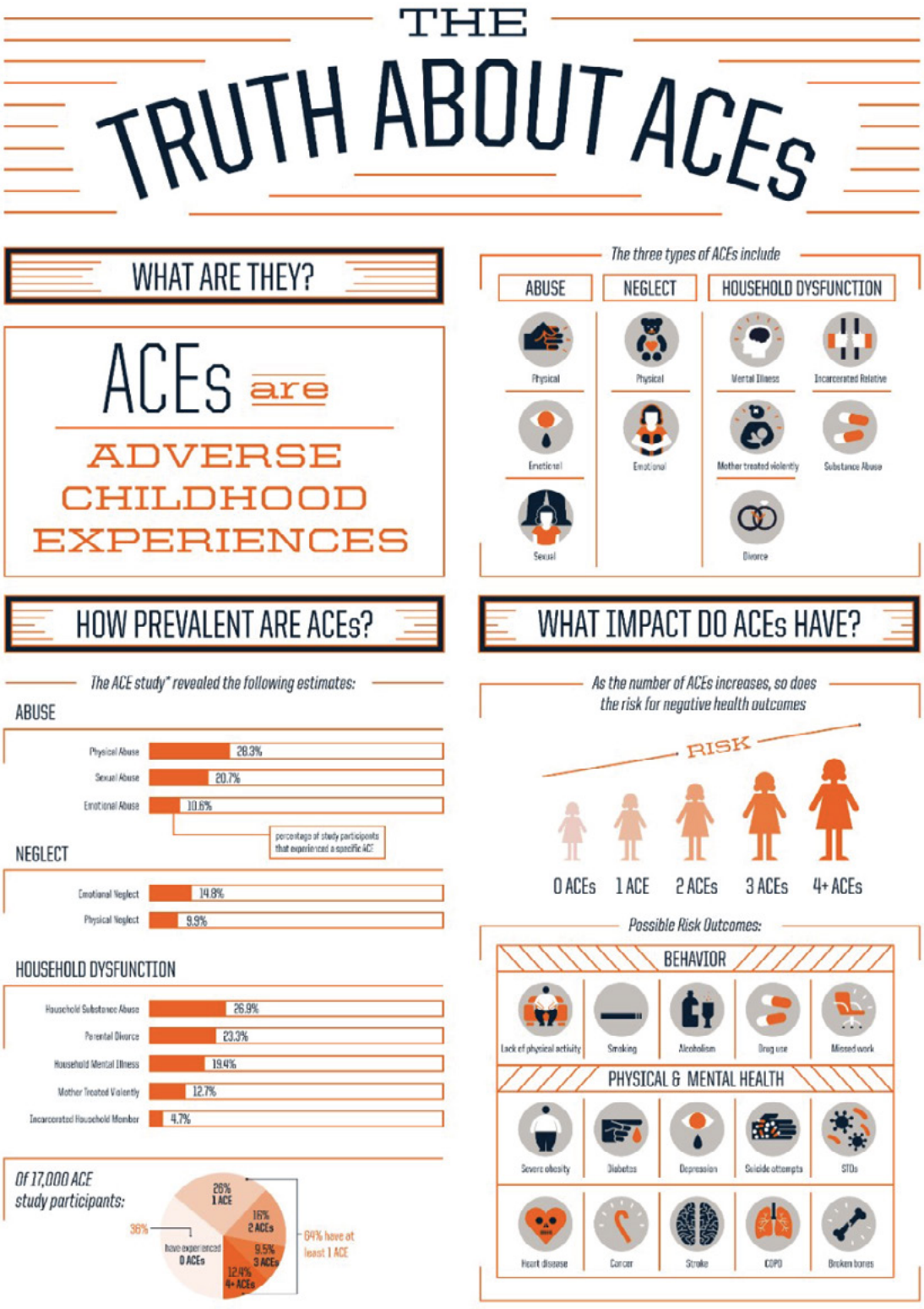
THE TROUBLE WITH TRAUMA

By Karyna Johnson



An overwhelming number of our students are burdened with the effects of trauma. In order to help our students, we must understand trauma in a broad and inclusive way. We need to know how the brain and body respond to stress and trauma, so we can better guide our students. We need to be able to recognize the effects of trauma on students, our colleagues, and our schools as a whole. Most importantly, we need to know how to apply this knowledge of trauma to our classrooms to better support students academically, emotionally, and musically.



Graphics are available from the CDC ACEs Resources website https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/resources.html#anchor_1626996630 and are public domain.

What is Trauma?

At its root, trauma is our brain's reaction to intense experiences like loss, physical harm or illness, and emotional pain. Trauma experiences overwhelm a person's coping skills. These experiences can lead people to employ negative coping strategies that work in the short run but cause harm in the long run. Lastly, trauma is always defined by the individual. Two people having the same experience do not necessarily experience the same trauma or trauma response.

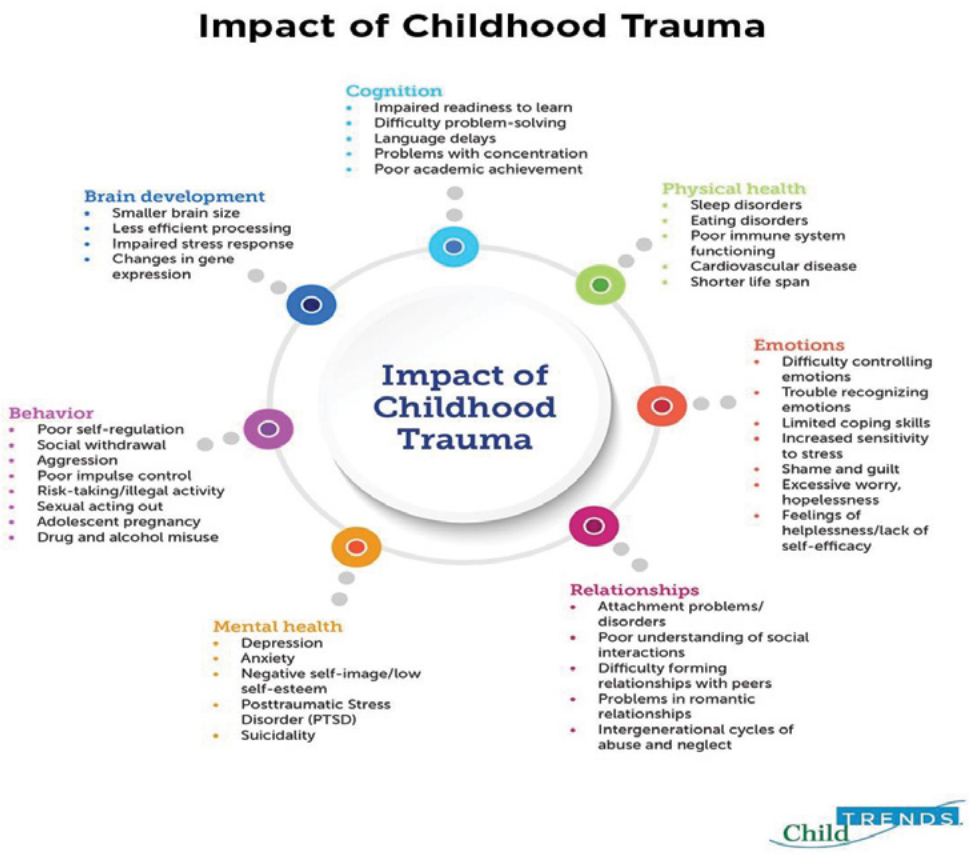
There are multiple types of trauma. We can categorize them as follows: natural disasters, human-caused disasters, community violence, school violence, family trauma, refugee and immigrant trauma, medical trauma, and poverty (SAMHSA, 2014).

The common terminology when talking about trauma in children is Adverse Childhood Experiences or ACEs. ACEs are potentially traumatic experiences and events, ranging from abuse and neglect to living with an adult with a mental illness (Felitti, 1998). They can have negative, lasting effects on health and well-being during childhood or later in life. There are three categories of ACEs: Abuse, Neglect, Household Dysfunction. Exposure to any particular category is not as important as the compounding effect of multiple exposures throughout childhood (Sameroff, Gutman, Peck, 2003). As of 2020, Arkansas is still the state most impacted by prevalence of ACEs with 24.5% of our children having two or more ACEs. In Arkansas, as many as one in seven children have experienced three or more ACEs (Annual Report, Adverse Childhood Experiences, 2020).

These ACEs affect brain functioning and brain development, especially in young children (Dubuc, 2002). In order to understand why this is, first we need to understand a bit more about how the brain functions. The brain can be divided in many different ways, but for our purposes we will be looking at the Neocortex, the Limbic System, and the Brain Stem. The Neocortex is the gray matter and it controls cognitive functions. The Limbic System sits under the Neocortex, and it controls emotional and hormonal functions. The Brain Stem is at the base of the brain at the back of the head, and it controls involuntary functions such as heartbeat and respiration.

When the brain senses danger, the Limbic System immediately takes control. Without conscious thought, the body reacts. Let's take the example of a group of students waiting in line. One student gets unexpectedly bumped and immediately turns and punches the person behind them. The bump triggered a danger response. The amygdala in the Limbic System sent a fight signal. The punch was released before the student even consciously realized they were turning around.

If this were a neurotypical person, the Neocortex would now kick in to assess the threat. If a threat exists, the amygdala would send a message to the hypothalamus in the Limbic System, adrenaline would be released, and the Brain Stem would be impacted. If no valid threat was found, the body could relax (Harvard, 2016). The student would realize what they had done, that there was no true danger, and immediately express regret.



Impact of Childhood Trauma chart: (Bartlett & Steber, 2019). Reprinted with permission.

A student having a trauma response would not be able to access their neocortex (Dubuc, 2002). Their brain would be overwhelmed by stimulus from the amygdala. The Neocortex would never re-engage, and the hypothalamus would trigger the release of adrenaline. The student would not be able to de-escalate or calm down. Nothing the teacher would say could reach them because their Neocortex has been shut down. Only the Limbic System and Brain Stem are online, and they are tasked with surviving a life or death situation that does not actually exist.

When these types of reactions occur in a brain that is still developing (i.e. a child's brain), it creates permanent changes (Merck, 2019). The first change is seen above in the ability of the brain to completely shut down the Neocortex and go straight from sensing possible danger to adrenaline reaction. Another is the formation of more and stronger pathways between the Limbic System and the Brain Stem and weaker connections within the Neocortex. Logic and cognition are weakened and survival instincts are strengthened (Merck, 2019). Physically, increased and prolonged exposure to stress hormones can cause weakened immune systems and greater risk of lifelong illness such as diabetes, asthma, multiple sclerosis, lupus, allergies, depression, anxiety, and autoimmune disease (Merck, 2019).

What does trauma look like?

Because trauma affects each person differently, the consequences of trauma manifest differently for each person. Some common consequences of trauma are: anxiety and fears; avoiding people, places and things

that are reminders; problems with physical health, sleep, emotions, memory; and flashbacks. For children, these can manifest as issues with attention span, focus, and organization as the thinking brain shuts down. Trauma brain can interfere with effective problem solving and planning resulting in overwhelming frustration and anxiety. Students may "forget" things that have already been mastered. One example of this phenomenon is a bright child suddenly forgetting how to tie their shoes after being rushed out of the house. Another example would be a student who can identify all of the note names on the staff suddenly not being able to identify a note.

> ***When the brain senses danger, the Limbic System immediately takes control. Without conscious thought, the body reacts.***

Trauma is confusing. Triggers can come from anywhere. They are reminders of past trauma experiences, and the body reacts without insight from the thinking brain. To outsiders, trauma reactions appear out of place and over the top. Children can be guarded or overly alert which makes responding to social cues and focusing in class harder (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2014). A classroom example might be a student's over-reaction misplacing a jacket. You may not know the night the child was taken by DHS, she could not find her jacket, and she is back at that place and time in her head. Another example is a door slamming and some students falling to the floor dramatically. It may look silly, but that student has likely had gun violence exposure. Some common triggers include: loud noises, physical touch, threatening gestures, authority figures, chaos in the classroom, certain spaces, changes in routine, witnessing violence like peers fighting, emergency vehicles, smells, and certain times of year (Guarino, K & Chagnon, 2018).

Triggers result in three common responses: Fight, Flight, or Freeze. Fight responses are yelling, swearing, posturing, and other aggressive behaviors. Flight responses include running away, refusing to talk, and avoidance. Freeze responses are spacing out, appearing numb, disconnected, confused or unresponsive. Freeze responses are a kind of mental flight. For educators to combat these trigger responses, it is important to look through the behavior and find the root. Doling out consequences for undesirable behaviors is not likely to stop the behavior if it is a trauma response; since, the behavior was not a conscious choice (no access to thinking brain).

How can teachers support students with trauma?

There are many ways educators can help prevent a child from succumbing to a trauma response.

1. **Maintaining routines** is best practice for everybody, but even more so for a trauma victim. This includes the idea of a fresh start every class. If you always greet with a high-five, the day after a response should still see the child receiving a high-five. Similarly, the order of class should remain as consistent as possible. This gives the student multiple opportunities to jump back into the lesson. As unfair as it may feel to you, consider letting them jump back in even if it is just for the game at the end of the class. Any positive reinforcement from you and your class will go towards improving the outcomes for those students in music. Perhaps the following week they will participate in even more of the lesson.

2 **Give students choices** that are acceptable to you. Often traumatic events involve losing all sense of control (Guarino, K & Chagnon, 2018). Having choices can make children feel safe. Group projects can be achieved in groups of 1, 2,3, or 4. Chord progressions can be learned on multiple instruments. It is also important to let students self-regulate. Sometimes when they are asking to sit in a different spot, they are looking for the choice to feel safer, less agitated, or just left alone.

3 **Provide more support** to traumatized children. Support can be given by a particular teacher or in a particularly hard subject or situation. As music educators, we have a connection to students that can last for years, which makes us an excellent option for a support person. They can check with us daily. They can hang out before school, during lunch, after school and at our many events.

4 **Set clear, firm boundaries** for inappropriate behavior and create logical proactive consequences rather than reactive and punitive consequences. Most people find the consequence setting best practice to be very difficult. Sometimes students come up with an action we could not have seen coming. Unless it is a violent problem, we have to let that first time go. For example, a student is fiddling with the bongos in class and unscrews them from each other. Rather than causing a huge commotion, take a minute to teach the class about tightening the bongo screws and inform them you have a new rule—If you damage or take apart an instrument you will be responsible for fixing it or replacing it.

5 **Be sensitive to environmental cues.** Certain environments can send a student into a trauma reaction. This can be as small as students avoiding the bathroom closest to your classroom or as big as field trips becoming problematic. A certain space, such as a bathroom, may upset a child if they were bullied or got in trouble there. Just going into that space could be sending them into their fight or flight response. You can let them go to a different bathroom or talk to the classroom teacher about practicing using the bathroom until it is no longer associated with danger. Field trips may take students past a place where they were unsafe or into an unwelcoming atmosphere. Be aware that if some students are feeling agitated, they may need extra attention.

6 **Anticipate difficult times.** Our bodies remember trauma by calendar as well. As strange as it sounds, our bodies have memories associated with the time of year. For some this is a general moodiness around birthdays and holidays. For others there may be more severe seasonal reactions. Spotting trauma kids around holidays is eye opening. Look for the students who say they are excited for the break, but whose body language indicates they are not. When describing my own childhood around those times I explain it this way: "Holidays were not exciting. You don't eat and you get beat." I had some fantastic teachers at that point in my life who recognized my depression as breaks neared. They gave me extra things to read and play and words of encouragement. In current times we can do even more for our students. We can post things to occupy their minds and even send encouraging emails and check-ins.

7 **Develop a safety plan with your school team.** Some students with trauma need a safety plan. When the school is having a meeting about one of the students you consider "yours" to become part of the solution. Sit down with the behavior team (usually includes principal, counselors and other staff members who work with the student). Become the check-in person for students needing more support. Make it a point to play outside with them at recess on occasion or sit with them for a few minutes at lunch. In one extreme case at my school I became the runaway spot. When he had a flight response we trained him to go to my room (a space he identified as safe in the school). If he showed up at my door I opened up without question and he went to his spot behind the piano until he was ready to talk through whatever sent him running.

8 **Use distraction as a re-set.** My favorite teacher tool is distraction. Even as a best practice, I use distraction to bring a class back together. If my first graders are squirely and not listening, instead of getting frustrated I sing the "sit down, stand up song." By the time they are sitting back down, we've all had the giggles and gotten our wiggles out. The same goes for a student coming into class in a poor mood. I might ask them to organize something for me or take a note somewhere in the school to help them reset their mindset.

9 **Control your own affect.** In elementary school these students only see you in class for at best an hour a week. Their anger seemingly directed at you has nothing to do with you. Trauma children often take out their anger on an adult that feels safe. Do not take things personally. Make sure every interaction with students feels like a fresh start after an outburst. In reality, if the student has an outburst in your room (fight response) they may not even remember the rude things they said (no thinking brain).

What do I do in the moment?

We still have to teach when a student is having a trauma response. So now what? The first thing you should do

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is make sure the other students, you, and the students having a trauma response are safe. If they run, call the appropriate person. If they are self-harming, call the appropriate person. If they are being aggressive towards you and the students, first try a calming space in your classroom. Do everything you can to de-stress the situation. Engage the student or class in a breathing exercise or put a calming screensaver on the board as a distraction. Relax yourself and do not try to talk to the student about their behavior at that moment. Hopefully, you have set up your classroom culture so that other students will follow your lead and give the student in distress space. See if they will sit or stand with you or a special space in your classroom. If they are still too aggressive to teach, it might be time for an extraction. Please only have a student leave your classroom as an absolute last resort. Even if they are not following your direction perfectly, being with their class and in the music classroom is hugely important. Laying on the floor behind the piano is preferable to sitting in the office.

After the incident has passed, reflect on how the situation occurred. Did the classroom teacher bring the student to you upset and then leave? Did the problem happen in music? Did another student instigate the problem? What happened just before the trauma

response? How can you avoid that scenario in the future? Once you know the origin of the problem, you can find ways to respond. One recent example in my room was a student getting laughed at for dropping something that triggered a rage, then flight response. The friend didn't mean anything by laughing. When I caught up with my student later he said he didn't know why it made him so mad, but it made him feel stupid.

How do I take care of myself as a teacher?

As adults we are dealing daily with the effects of trauma on our students and ultimately on ourselves. Watching our students have fight, flight, and freeze responses is stressful and can trigger our own responses (Fisher, 2021). School staff may bring their own history or current experiences of trauma to their work, or experience trauma on the job. Staff experience being threatened or assaulted, witnessing violence in school, and witnessing their students' trauma responses. Staff may experience increased anxiety, reduced energy and focus, trouble regulating emotions, difficulty managing responses to students, a diminished capacity to maintain positive teacher-student relationships, poor attendance, or poor performance (Guarino, K & Chagnon, 2018). The impact of trauma on staff might even reach the level of secondary traumatic stress or vicarious trauma. Secondary traumatic stress is the presence of PTSD symptoms caused by indirect exposure to other peoples trauma. Vicarious trauma is negative changes to how the staff views themselves, others, and the world, due to the cumulative effect of working with students with trauma as well as their families (Guarino, K & Chagnon, 2018).

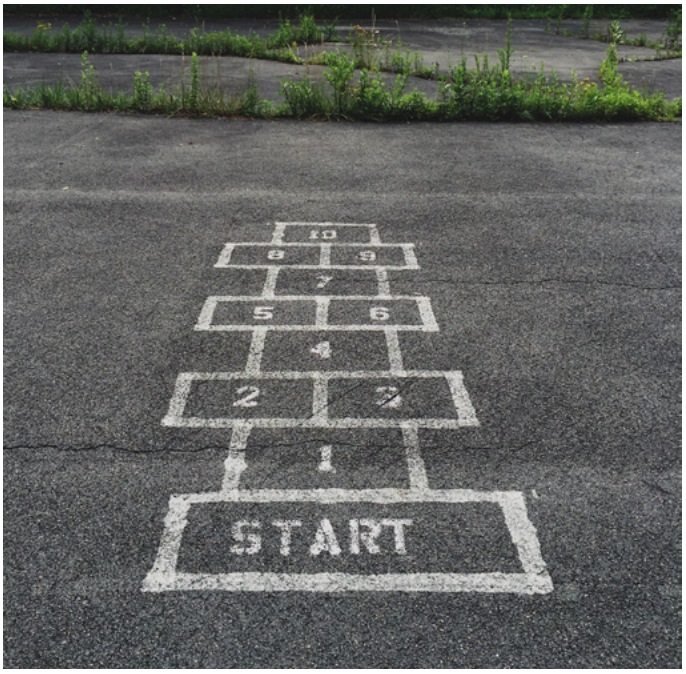
Take appropriate steps to take care of yourself. Have a person or group of people who are able to support you emotionally. Let the people who live with you know what it feels like to work in a traumatized community. As we learned, children in Arkansas are a traumatized community. Spend time with kids who are not traumatized to help you regain your perspective. Find a way to remember why you went into education in the first place. I have a tub of sweet notes and drawings I have gotten over the years. When I need a pick-me-up, I start there. Honestly, consider your own traumatic experiences and how students going through similar situations are affecting you. Increase your own self-care. What things help you recharge? Spend time with your funny friend, exercise, start that book you don't have time for, and eat well (NCTSN, 2018). If it feels like you are having a hard time, you are. It is okay to need support even though you are not directly experiencing the trauma. The burdens we carry for our students add up.

School climate is affected by the number of students with trauma backgrounds. Students are more likely to escalate, adults are more reactive, controlling, and

punitive (Guarino, K & Chagnon, 2018). When there is an increase in risk for harm there is usually a decrease in academic performance. Schools in this situation are likely to be retraumatizing the children they are trying to help. Adults in this situation fall back on threats of negative consequences, escalate with students (yelling), and use punitive discipline strategies to attempt to control students (Guarino, K & Chagnon, 2018). If you feel your school is in this situation it is time to ask for trauma training for your staff. There are multiple organizations in Arkansas and online that are willing to help with this training. One immediate online resource is the "Trauma- Sensitive Schools Training Package" put out by the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments.

Conclusion

All of this boils down to the idea that trauma reactions are involuntary. That student who just blew up in your room had a chemical response to a perceived threat that translated to a physical fight, flight, or freeze reaction. The blow-up was not fun for the student or premeditated. They did not ignore your attempts to calm them down; they could not access their neocortex. Our students in Arkansas experience these types of reactions to "benign" stimuli more frequently than students in other parts of the country through no fault of their own. Trauma happened to them; they did not choose trauma. Only by creating classrooms that are trauma informed can we help these students and ourselves cope with the impact ACEs have on all of our lives. Consistent routine, positive behavior interventions, proactively setting consequences, frequent resets, regulating your own affect, providing safe spaces, and providing student choice are some of the ways we can support our students, so they can experience success with music and hopefully also with life.



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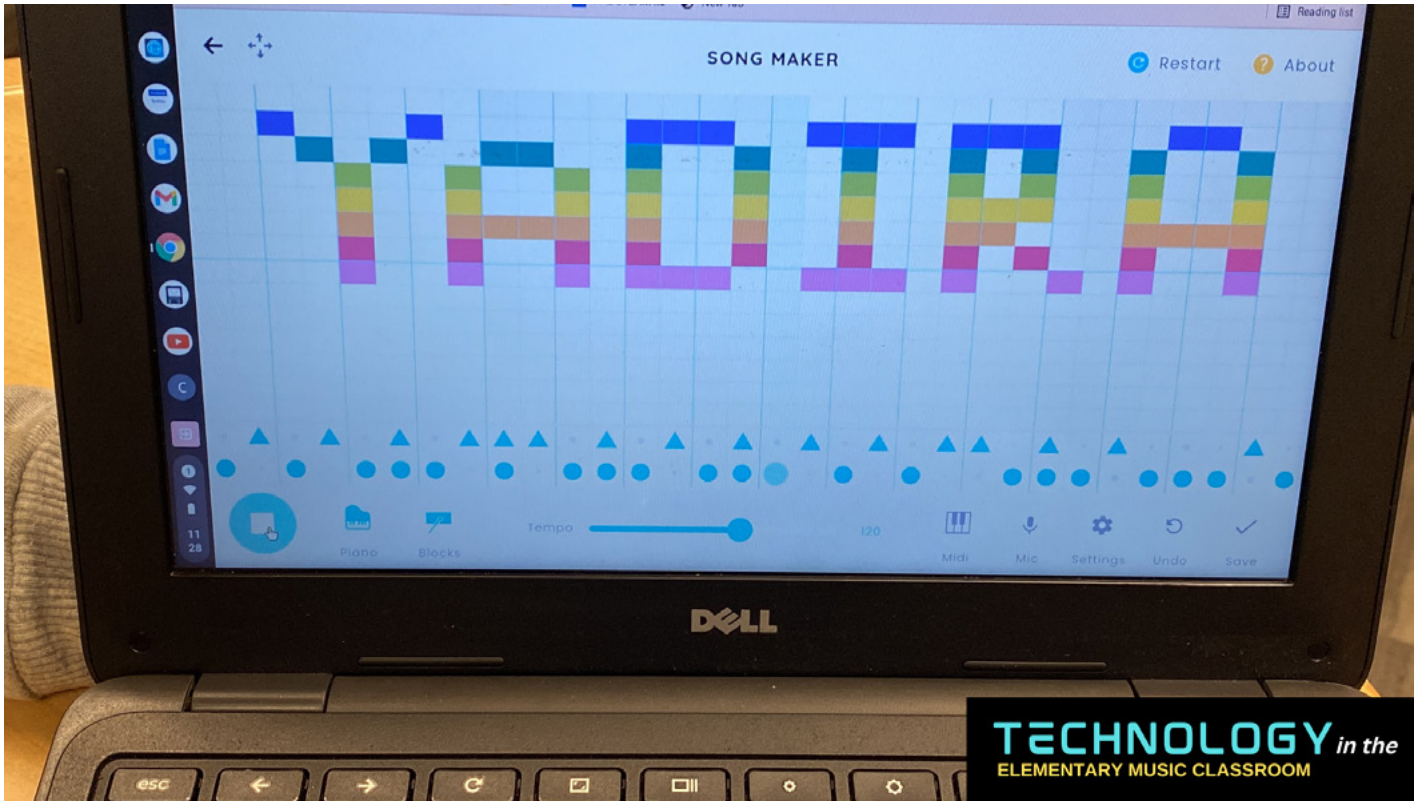
LET TECHNOLOGY CHANGE YOUR MUSIC CLASSROOM

By Phylicia Butler



The use of technology has not always been popular in music classes at the elementary or secondary level. In fact, my first experience with technology in a music class was my freshman year of college in 2007. All music majors were required to take a course called Introduction to Music Technology. As there is only so much you can get done in one semester, we only learned about the most relevant digital audio workstations at the time, midi cables, and the basic setup needed to record a decent performance. It was the bare minimum, but it did lead me to venture into learning more about music technology on my own time. Who knew that 13 years later using technology would become the norm for music classrooms everywhere during a global pandemic. Thankfully, I already had a few systems in place using technology with my high school students at the time. However, I never imagined I would end up teaching elementary students and I would have to completely shift gears.

Why do we need technology in music?

- To remain relevant and resourceful
- Cross Curricular Instruction
- Save your voice! (Nobody wants to repeat the same set of of instructions for 6 classes 5 times each week)
- Spend less time planning and making copies
- An opportunity for exploration
- Diverse learning experiences

When is technology appropriate? When…

- …it aligns with the State Standards and learning objectives
- …students know how to use it properly
- …learning apps can be monitored (ie: GoGuardian)
- …there is a change in the schedule (a change in schedule may call for less time to bring out instruments, so technology may be your go to)

How can you incorporate technology into your lessons?

- See what's already out there
- YouTube
- Google
- Focus on what your students need

Examples of How to Use Technology in the Music Classroom

- Music Class Website
- Virtual Classroom
- Class YouTube Page
- Music Class Apps
- QR Codes
- Escape Rooms
- Load up on the Free Stuff!!!
- Use what others already have

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