



This cover is left blank in honor of all of Arkansas' educators who have gone above and beyond in this time of crisis.

# Music Standards Update from Department of Elementary and Secondary Education



Lana Hallmark  
Fine Arts Program Advisor  
Arkansas Department of Education  
Division of Elementary and Secondary Education

In the summer of 2019, a group of about fifty fine arts educators from around the state convened in North Little Rock to revise the fine arts academic standards in music, visual art, theater, and dance. Fifteen of these were music educators, and many were members of ArkMEA. The fifteen music educators worked in three groups: elementary music, choral music, and instrumental music. They revised courses in General Music K-8, Vocal Ensemble 6-12 (choir and other ensembles), Instrumental Ensemble 6-12 (band and orchestra), Jazz Band 6-12, Music Appreciation, Music Lab I-IV, Music Technology, and Music Theory.

The new academic standards went through a long editing process at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) this winter. Following graphic design and layout work by a Little Rock advertising agency, DESE leadership will review them. The final phase will be submission to the State Board of Education. The current global health crisis has slowed down the standards work somewhat and there is no definite timeline at this point for the completion of the work. However, when new fine arts standards are in place, school districts will have a transition year to choose whether to implement the new standards or continue to use the 2014 standards while preparing for implementation of the new ones.

The goal of the new standards is to provide very user-friendly directions for teachers, students, parents, and administrators. They will provide more explanation, resources, and guidance than in the past. Professional development supporting the new standards will be available after their approval. ArkMEA members should watch their local educational service cooperative's postings and the ArkMEA Facebook page for professional development opportunities.

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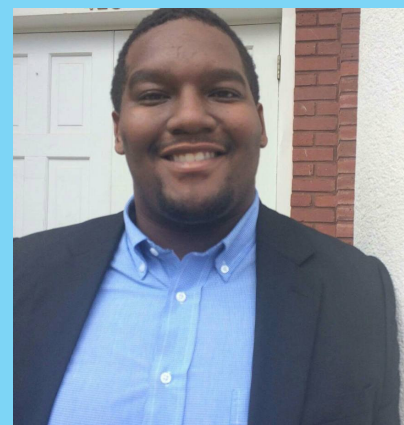
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## Welcome to the board!

We would like to introduce and welcome Jordan Murdock as the new ArkMEA Choir Chair! Jordan is currently the Choir Director at Bryant Junior High School. He graduated from Henderson State University with a Bachelors in Vocal Music Education in 2015 and from the University of Arkansas at Monticello with a Masters in Educational Leadership in 2019. We are so glad to welcome you to the team!



## ArkMEA Board Members

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# President's Note



Greetings from ArkMEA,

I would be remiss not to mention that we're ending the most unique Spring semester any of us has ever experienced! The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 definitely changed our lives, and will continue to do so for the unforeseeable future. In January, the news, social media, and local gossip started mentioning this fast-spreading virus from Wuhan, China and we felt far-removed from it here in Arkansas, especially Small Town. One thing is for certain, though: life came to a surreal, screeching halt on March 13. We all were forced into varying situations as school districts decided how to serve students outside of the school walls, and we have different stories to tell regarding what was required of us as music teachers. We were thrown into the unknown!

Life became a blur of questions, maybes, texts, calls, emails, letters, packets, cancellations, refunds, webinars, Zooms, Hangouts, SeeSaw, GoTo Meetings - et cetera! To say it was/is overwhelming would be an understatement. And that was just our professional lives. I know that personal lives changed just as drastically, and once we complete the final day of AMI packets, I hope the lighter stress load will enable us to gather bits of mental and emotional strength to relax and be with our families in what will undoubtedly be a very different summer.

Speaking of summer! ArkMEA has planned a day with Russell Nader (see article). Please mark your calendars for July 9. Check our website and FaceBook page often for updates regarding how that workshop will be conducted. The planning for our annual Honors Chorus and Orchestra/Conference in November has been put on hold. We will release information in due time.

ArkMEA always welcomes new members, and is eager to hear from people who are interested in serving on the board. Contact any board member if you'd like to be included in future meetings.

Returning to school in August is very contingent on the decisions we Arkansans make over the next couple of months. I encourage you to continue careful social distancing, masking, hand-washing, and isolation when possible.

Sincerely,

*Haley Greer*



# Summer PD with Russell Nader!

## *“Improvisation and Composition in the Elementary General Music Class”*

**When:** July 9th, 2020. 9:00am-4:00pm.

**Where:** Onsite location-Mosaic Templars, Little Rock, AR

Live stream available through Educational Co-Ops

“Improvisation and composition activities in the elementary General Music classroom are some of the deepest and most fun learning opportunities music students can have! In this workshop, participants will learn a variety of strategies to “pull back the curtain” on composition and improvisation, and will learn and practice many straightforward techniques for helping guide students in creating their own original music and movement. Using the processes and ideas of Orff Schulwerk, participants will experience improvising and composing alone and with others, on instruments and with their voices, in words and in movement, and will come away with a toolbox of ideas and lessons to bring back to their students. For teachers to have an optimal experience, they are encouraged to bring at least one of each of the following: a barred instrument, soprano recorder, tubano, and any unpitched percussion as well as a laptop or tablet. Presenter Russell Nadel is an award-winning composer and middle school music specialist at the Potomac School in Virginia. We plan for this workshop to be livestreamed to educational service co-operative locations, but that may have to change due to COVID-19 restrictions. See Arkansas Music Educators website ([arkmea.org](http://arkmea.org)) for information.

Russell Nadel holds Master's and Bachelor's degrees in Music Composition and a Bachelor's degree in Music Education from the Peabody Conservatory of Music. Performers, ensembles, and educational organizations from around the United States and Canada have commissioned and premiered his original works, and recordings of his compositions can be found on four commercial CDs. Some of his vocal and choral works are published by Hal Leonard and Transcontinental Music Publications. He has also received numerous composition awards, including the Ben Steinberg Guild of Temple Musicians Young Composer's Award (twice), prizes from the Mu Phi Epsilon Fraternity, and the Ruth Boshkoff Composition Prize.

Mr. Nadel is a certified Orff Schulwerk educator and an AOSA-approved Teacher Educator, and is in demand as a workshop clinician and teacher trainer around the United States. He is the Middle School Music Specialist at The Potomac School in McLean, Virginia.





Stephanie Williams is a Music Teacher and Band Director at Benton Middle School. She graduated from Arkansas Tech University with a Bachelor's Degree in Music Education, Arkansas State University with a Master's Degree in Special Education and became a National Board Certified Teacher in 2018. She has presented multiple times at Arkansas Band Association Conferences, All State Clinics, various Co-ops, and once at National Music Education Association Conference. She loves using technology in the music classroom to enhance music education and uses experiences as a way to motivate and support student learning. You might find her singing and dancing outside her classroom in-between classes to put a smile on her student's faces

# Practical Uses for Technology in Band & Music Classes

What if I was to tell you technology CAN be integrated into lessons to help our students reach musical success? What comes to mind when you think technology? Some of us are probably picturing students with their faces in Chromebooks or iPads. Some of us are probably rolling our eyes and saying “my priority is concert assessment” or “our elementary musical is on top of the list right now.” But, I’m here to tell you, it doesn’t have to be that way! Technology can be a gift to you in so many ways that you don’t even see yet! How about less work and more playing music? How about helping parents support their students on a new level? How about collaborating with other subjects that will help enhance your students’ ability to create music?

## Technology in Paperwork Overload

It’s hard when you are juggling multiple roles as a teacher, especially administrative tasks. I’m here to tell you that you don’t have to make it stressful. For my school, it was extremely stressful getting information back from parents regarding recruitment. However, once I set up a Google Form for parents to sign-in it helped IMMENSELY with paperwork. And don’t forget about QR CODES! Having QR code stations around the band room for students and parents to access is a great way to communicate. You can set up the QR Code to immediately download your school contact info using the V-Card feature, have a short video of you talking about your program, or even have the Google Form for them to sign-in with on their phone instead of school devices. Don’t make it more work on you, when you can duplicate the process and be efficient with your time and resources.

One of my favorite sources to bypass monotonous paperwork is For All Rubrics ([forallrubrics.com](http://forallrubrics.com)). Now, before you think it’s just another “rubric” website...it’s on a whole other level. You can see students’ weaknesses and strengths through your rubric; Bobby is struggling in your class and you need to figure out why he is struggling, so you look up his overall average scores and For All Rubrics puts



it in a nice bar graph for rhythm, tone, note accuracy, tempo, etc. So, if a parent comes to you upset about a score, you can easily pull this up to help them understand (and yourself) how to better help their child. Not to mention, you can put everyone in order based on their score... HELLO, EASY CHAIR TEST CONFIGURATION!

## Digital Interaction with Students

When having students use technology, I've learned that they don't actually know how to work technology. Ironical, huh? Don't count on them knowing how to upload a video to Google Classroom, if they have never done it before. Don't expect them to know how to even send an email. You have to navigate and help them through the process - and sometimes make light of it!

Explaining the process to use certain softwares or websites can be a challenge, which is why I like to use Screencastify, a Chrome Extension. It's great because you simultaneously record yourself and your computer screen explaining how to navigate a website, show a slideshow lesson, or how to find the Facebook page that you've sent handouts to parents about back in August. Distance learning? Screencastify has your back! I have recorded myself presenting a Music History lesson with the slideshow and myself on the screen (I'm VERY gesticular). The kids get to see your face and they learn something new.

Another thing that I have used is Clips, a very simple and easy video editing app in ISO. I've used it for quick edits, fun backgrounds (you can look like a hologram from Star Wars!), and "How to Practice" tutorials. But the biggest hit in using Clips was addressing students on the proper etiquette to use when submitting a video of them playing their instrument. I once watched a video in which the student made a three minute middle school confession, you know... like you would see on Big Brother. It was then that I made a light hearted video demonstrating all the "don'ts" in video submissions. They laughed their faces off when they saw me recreating some of their videos and realizing that it wasn't ideal and needed to be fixed. What better way to help students retain information than to act like a fool!

Another fun activity I have done with my art teacher friend was to create an interactive art gallery. Essentially, students would compose their music in Garageband, BandLab, or record themselves playing a personally composed song that reminded them of art pieces created by art students. The art would be hung in the hallways and people could scan the QR codes to listen to what the art sounded like if it was a piece of music. This is a lot of fun to post in the hallways before Parent Teacher Conferences, or when students need to spend time getting out of their chairs and exploring the school (you could totally make this a scavenger hunt). It is one of my favorite projects to do in collaboration with another subject area.

## Parent Involvement

Parent involvement can be created in many ways; volunteering for concession stands, Parent Teacher Conferences, and personal contact through phone class with them. But my ALL TIME FAVORITE thing I utilize for parent involvement is creating a live stream of comments for parents during a middle school concert. We set up a projector in the auditorium (although not necessary) and parents were able to make comments such as how proud they were of their kid, what their favorite song was, and how they enjoyed seeing their child grow as a musician. For this, we used Padlet, a commenting platform where YOU have control over what is posted and not posted. The parents can see all the comments from their phones, and then the students can see all the comments after their concert is over. They feel like rockstars - which makes my heart happy. What's even better, there is no login needed! The parents just need the link - so we put the link on the physical







programs with a QR code.

Another parent involvement tactic that I love is creating digital programs for concerts! What's great about these is that you can give ALL KINDS of information in digital programs - not just student names and your songs. You can post live links, videos, band booster information, shoutouts to admin, etc. It's wonderful, and you save the trees! We would post the digital program QR Code on posters spread out in the lobby, and parents would just scan and have it on their device. Pretty neat! The best program I've found is LucidPress - free version, syncs with Google Drive, and you have the freedom to create whatever you want. You can also use Google Docs, if you just don't want to deal with design - just make sure it's not in EDIT mode when you share it. It should be in VIEW mode.

## Distance Learning - Our New Temporary Normal

This new concept of teaching has hit everyone hard. Full band rehearsals are now stopped, fun music classes filled with recorder sounds are nonexistent, and the joy of seeing our students everyday has been postponed. But I want to help you feel better about what you are doing for your students during this time of isolation. You can still make a difference and you can still teach, it's just going to look different. Please do not get caught up in making fancy lessons, feeling like you have to do live video conferences, or even teach a full 45 minutes. These kids need a healthy distraction, and what's great about what we do is that music can be a

release of stress. Music can give these students a sense of comfort.

So, let's take this time to teach things that we have wanted to teach, but were unable to because of the sizes of our classes or the busy schedule of getting ready for a concert. One thing I absolutely love about the community is that so many companies are seeing our need as teachers and giving free software for us to utilize and help our students. Flat.io is my ALL TIME FAVORITE notation software and I know Noteflight is also free during this time of quarantine. It's easy to use, fun to create, and is organized in such a way that you don't feel like you are losing your mind. I'm using this software to give my students ways to CREATE music, instead of playing what's on a piece of paper. Have them create ensembles, simple 8 measure melody lines, or utilize their theory and make a full band score. My 7th grade music classes are creating their very own film score using four instruments of their choice to use with selected scenes from movies (muted on youtube), and we replace the original music with their music. They DON'T have to have extensive music knowledge to compose! Of course there are rules, but it's amazing that the students can hear what sounds good. My 6th grade music classes are making their own rap song nursery rhymes using BandLab (edu.bandlab.com). It's easy to use and super fun for creating looped music! Another composition software that is free and easy is Beepbox.co. It is a 8-bit composition website, PERFECT for video game composition. I have my class do an entire presentation on their personally created video games and how the music they composed fits with their product. It's amazing how imaginative and involved they get when it's very relatable.

"You are changing lives every day, even if it's from a distance."

Flipgrid has been around for a while, but can be used as a great way to interact with students through video. Students can add funny emojis, stickers, and it's easy editing. You can set it where everyone can see the videos or keep them private for just you. Using this element, other than Google Classroom or Zoom, allows your kids to have that social interaction that I'm sure they are craving, but the interaction is not needed immediately or on a schedule (like live conferences). Give them simple tasks to do that day, like "play your Bb Major Scale somewhere unusual!" or "play Mary had a Little Lamb in a minor mode." Remember, these assignments need to be fun and captivating - we want our kids to interact and play - and of course, make it relevant and educational.

If you are needing more ideas for technology, here is a list with brief descriptions:

\***SmartMusic** - Free during Distance Learning Timelines

\***Google Form** - Practice Journals, quick quizzes, student self evaluations

\***Edpuzzle** - Insert videos and place questions in the video to be answered. Forces students to watch the whole video and grades questions automatically. Great for Distance Learning!

\***TabResize** - Chrome Extension. Great for multitasking using multiple tabs in the browser. Allows for easy access to all pages.

\***WheelDecide** - Have students spin the wheel to determine what part of a piece they are playing for a test. My kids call it the "Wheel of Misfortune" and they LOVE IT! Adds excitement to a not so exciting test.

\***Adobe Spark** - Great for images to post on Social Media. Free content!

\***Force Copy Google** - On Google you can force another person to copy an item to their folder, so they can edit it however they want. All you have to do is delete the word "edit" and anything after that and replace it with the word "copy" in the URL.

\***Timify.me** - Google Form add-on for timing Google Form quizzes.

\***Flat for Docs** - Google Docs add-on for music notation in a document. Very simple and easy to use.

\***Kami** - Students can fill out PDF versions of handouts with text, drawing, and shape features.

Remember, kids enjoying music is so important during this time of isolation. Make it fun! Make it educational! You are changing lives every day, even if it's from a distance.

**"YOU CAN  
STILL MAKE A  
DIFFERENCE  
AND YOU CAN  
STILL TEACH,  
IT'S JUST  
GOING  
TO LOOK  
DIFFERENT."**







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by: Dominic Talanca

# Providing Musical Nourishment through Fundamental Training and Our Programming Decisions



Dominic Talanca is assistant professor of music, and director of bands, music education and conducting at UNC – Wilmington

Teaching is a lot of things. For many of us, it is a labor of love that follows us home at the end of a long day. We often give our teaching more time and thought than many other aspects of our life. Sometimes it is a source of anxiety. How can something we love so much bring about this inner turmoil?

Setting aside all of the factors beyond our control, at our core, our feeling of stress likely stems from the fact that we care deeply for our subject matter and for our students, and we want to do right by both. The fact that we teach music adds another complex dynamic that blends craft and skill with art. As music educators, our focus must be on the delicate blend of skill building and music making in a way that allows them to coexist without having a hyper focus on one and not the other. This brief article will address one of our most important jobs as music educators: programming for our ensembles... and the way it highlights our priorities as musicians and educators.

More than anything, I hope this commentary will serve as a reminder of things we already know but may lose sight of when focusing on the daily onslaught of emails, assessments, and administrative work. If the ideas discussed are new, then that's great; I hope they can be of use to you. If they resemble notions you have heard before but never fully applied, or ones that have fallen out of habit, then I hope this may bring new life to these concepts in your teaching and programming.

## Context and Lead In

I have been doing CrossFit for a little over two years. Over that time, I have come across some quotes and online content that resonated with me and the musical/educational aspects of my life. One tidbit is from Unity Gym in Sydney, Australia. At Unity, they do not focus on diet and exercise; they focus on nourishment and movement. Sounds simple enough, but I think the nuance in the difference is significant as it relates to how we approach teaching and how we apply that teaching to music-making and performance. I came across a quote that made me laugh at first and then made me think: "Exercise is a celebration of what your body can do – not a punishment for what you ate."

Programming should be a celebration of goals, priorities, and the current and future achievements of our student musicians. In that way, as music educators, we are also soothsayers. We must endeavor to HEAR into the future to determine what is possible when factoring in our resources, our own efforts at planning, the current and future skills of our students, and the fundamentals we are fostering and teaching them on the regular.

"We must endeavor to HEAR into the future to determine what is possible when factoring in our resources, our own efforts at planning, the current and future skills of our students, and the fundamentals we are fostering and teaching them on the regular."

### Is It a Warm-Up or a Time for Fundamental Development?

Wait! This is supposed to be about programming – nobody said anything about “the warm-up” or scale jail, as some may refer to it. Whatever you call it – that period of time in the beginning of rehearsal is one of the most important factors in determining the direction of your music program and your ensemble’s repertoire possibilities. I would argue that this is the time to build the skills that you want to celebrate through musical expression. So, the next question is, HOW are we using that time? Are we taking time to “tune the instruments” or are we utilizing that time to teach students to use their ears and adjust? Are we progressing through a routine to get through the warm-up, or are we creating variety in a way that requires students and teacher to mentally and aurally remain on their toes?

The most creative educators can utilize 45+ minutes on skill-building/fundamentals in a 90-minute rehearsal in an engaging way. I am not saying half of every rehearsal should be used in this way, but I contend if we look at how we use that opening segment of time in our rehearsal, we can create something more developmental and less “routine-oriented.” Productive doesn’t necessarily mean short.

### Fighting the Good Fight

Have you ever thought, “I love that piece, but it was more work than it was worth, and I won’t be teaching it again?” I know I have. Being honest with myself, I think it really means I programmed something that I wanted to do, but the students did not have the current fundamental skillset with the appropriate trajectory for improvement to perform at the standard that I’d like to instill in them as musicians. It may also mean I didn’t plan well enough to foster the growth of those skills during our fundamental sequence to make it possible.

Keeping with the theme of performance

being a celebration of what our students can do, we do not want every piece to feel stressful to rehearse/teach. That’s not fun or rewarding for anyone involved. It’s not wrong to program a heavy hitter, but we should ask ourselves how many of those pieces are being programmed in one concert cycle and whether it is conducive to achieving our larger set of goals. Our repertoire/programming is our curriculum. This means that simply playing a particular piece should not be the goal – it should be the tool/vehicle used to tend to a larger agenda.

### Back to Fundamentals

We have established that the fundamental/skill-building portion of our rehearsal can be utilized in a productive or unproductive way. We may also agree we do not want to feel like it is soul crushing to learn the repertoire we program. With these ideas in mind, I would offer the thought that, in an ideal world, our fundamental sequence would be the most challenging thing we do. This is not always possible, but if we strive to challenge our students by building their fundamental skillset, then we can make learning repertoire an exercise in the application of their fundamentals and not rely solely on our ability to teach (force feed) the piece.

If students only experience the most extreme tessituras, dynamics, tempi, articulations, intervallic or tonal expectations, etc. in our chosen repertoire, there is no way the performance will be as mature as it could be if those things were a focus in the fundamental portion of rehearsal. There are too many elements in much of our repertoire to expect students to learn the necessary skills in addition to executing them at the same time.

### It’s Not One or the Other

I want to be clear, I’m not proposing only performing music that is easily achieved. I

am just suggesting we ask ourselves what the piece is doing to serve the larger set of goals we have for our students and ourselves as musicians/educators. Our fundamentals and chosen compositions can build musical muscle, but I am also suggesting we include pieces that are not back breakers – those pieces that allow for heightened focus and work on the non-technical aspects of music making. More clearly put: we should pair repertoire that builds musical muscle with those pieces that allow for the most mature and sophisticated musical expression and nuance possible. The easy pieces are only easy if we do not use the available brainpower to focus on more sophisticated ideas. Can we, as educators, identify special musical opportunities in our repertoire?

### **What's on the Menu and Don't Skip Leg Day**

We have all heard the analogies relating programming and repertoire selection to a buffet or even a balanced diet. We should all feel obligated to ask, how are we nourishing our musicians? Have we fallen into certain programming ruts by neglecting or favoring music that is comprised of similar characteristics or challenges? The qualities are too countless to list in this setting, but diversity in all regards is a necessity for the musical nourishment of our students and of our own musicianship. When programming, we have all selected music to highlight the strengths and hide the weaknesses of our ensemble, but how often do we take good risks to grow and nourish the things that need attention? Are you skipping leg day?

### **Musicianship First**

Most of us were musicians before we decided to be educators. I think it is worthwhile to frequently remind ourselves of that. I am a musician. I am a musician. I am a musician. I noticed that as my skills in rehearsing, cleaning, fixing, etc. improved, I became more focused on the craft of being a band director, and I lost sight of the need to imbue my own musicianship into the ensemble I was teaching. As teachers, we become good at eliminating unsavory moments (i.e. fixing stuff that's wrong), but does the music we select have opportunities to create special musical moments that make us say "YES!"? What do those special moments look like? I don't know; they are unique to each individual and unique to each composition. Every piece in a concert should be different, and the compositions should reveal to us, the teachers, the things that deserve special musical attention.

### **Final Stretch**

Developing musical muscle through skill building is imperative. However, it is more important to look for ways to use that muscle to support our musical endeavors through the performance of a varied repertoire, in turn providing nourishment to our students and ourselves. Yes, pick pieces that challenge students not only technically, but also choose pieces that look easy so time can be spent celebrating and expanding upon their musical



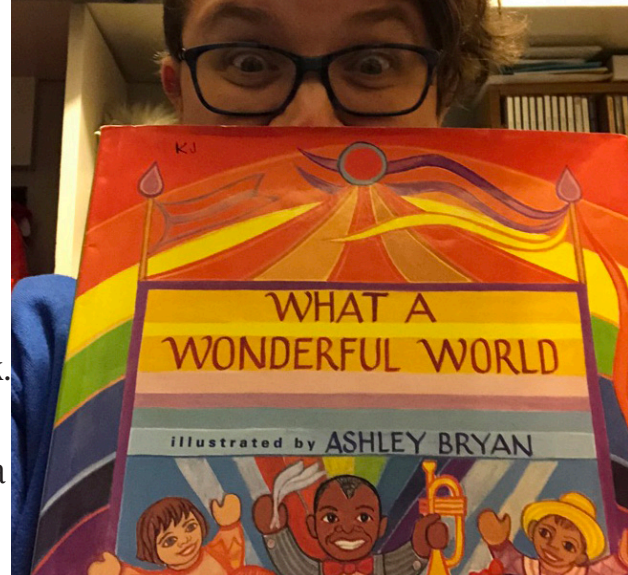
\*This article has been reprinted with permission from North Carolina MEA and Dominic Talanca



# From the ArkMEA Board:

Karyna Johnson  
General Music Chair

My students are learning during this time on a program called “itslearning”. The district provided the materials they wanted students to use. Since I was not making my normal lesson plans I teamed up with the media clerk and helped create a video of staff members sending encouraging words to the students. I also uploaded welcome videos for each grade level featuring their favorite songs from class. I have been assigned to fifth grade and have a group of about fifteen students that I have regular contact and meetings with. I also have two school age children at home. My son is in middle school and my daughter is in first grade. I spend much of my time helping them stay engaged in their learning and enjoying their antics and style of learning from home. My favorite way to relax is to woodwork and yard work. As a result, I have several new pieces of furniture and playground type equipment on my deck and in my yard. My garden is also enjoying the extra attention it is receiving this year!







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# Both Sides Now: An Interview with Joe Trusty

*Joe Trusty retired as Director of Bands at Cabot High School in June of 2017 after a distinguished 33-year career and was elected to a school board position in the Cabot School District in October of 2017.*



## ***What steps are involved in becoming school board member?***

The first step is to notify the school superintendent that you are running for a position in your local school district. The central office will then typically do most of the work for you by notifying the county clerk's office and making sure you know what to expect. You must be a resident in the district in which you are running. You must also make sure you are eligible. For example, if your school board members are elected from specific zones, make sure you live in that zone. Most school boards in Arkansas are not based on zone representation. This typically only happens in a larger city or under other special circumstances such as certain percentages of minority populations.

## ***How did the election process actually work?***

I had to get signatures of twenty registered voters from my district turned in by a certain date, then wait for the end of the filing period to see if anyone else was running as well. If you are uncontested like I was, you have nothing else to do except wait on the election. You must have at least one vote. Ironically, my own wife didn't vote for me. She thought she didn't have to since I was unopposed. If someone else is running, it is then up to you to decide if you will put up yard signs, buy ads in the paper, speak to civic groups, etc. If you win the election, the county judge will swear you in at your first meeting. Also, there is a financial history document you have to fill out to make sure you haven't violated any election laws during the election process and to make sure you legal in your financial dealings..

## ***Are you provided with any training?***

A new school board member must receive 9 training hours by December 31 of the calendar year following their initial election year. Every year after that, school board members must obtain 6 training hours each year. The Arkansas School Board Association hosts most of the in-service opportunities in Arkansas. There are other opportunities on a regional and national level to get your hours. If you fail to get the required hours, you will be notified that you have 6 months to resolve the problem. If you fail to do that then you will, by law, be removed from the school board.

## ***What made you decide to run for a school board position?***

I invested all but one year of my 34-year career in my current school district. I saw the band program grow from just over 200 students when I started to almost 900 when I retired. My primary motivation, to be honest, was to protect what I spent my life building. However, now that I am entering the third year of my five-year term, I realize being on the school board is so much more. There are many opportunities to help teachers,

\*Article reprint with permission from Trey Reely and *The Instrumentalist*

students, and district employees. My heart has always been about helping my kids. Now every kid in the district is my kid! I also have a unique perspective as a 34-year classroom teacher to help make sure teachers are supported and given the resources they need to be able to teach and be successful.

***What were some of the reactions you received when you informed family, friends, and colleagues that you were running for a position on the school board?***

Actually, the craziest reaction was from myself. When the idea was first introduced to me by a friend, the thought of running for the school board had never entered my mind as something to do after I retired. After much deliberation and discussion with my wife, I decided to begin the process. Everyone I told about the decision thought I was crazy, but they also thought that it was a good idea. I actually received a lot of encouragement from my teacher friends and others in the education arena.

***Did your former teaching colleagues treat you a little differently after being elected?***

In all honesty, yes, they did. All educators have, for whatever reason, a little bit of built-in fear of school board members and upper administration. So the first big difference I noticed was how a few of my fellow teachers would interact with me until they realized that nothing had really changed except my title and my role. I have worked hard to keep myself available to teachers and employees of the district since I already knew so many of them and the role they play in our district. After a few months, most of my relationships have returned to normal, but there is still an undercurrent of “you know he’s on the board now.”

***What is the most enjoyable aspect of being a school board member?***

To me, the most enjoyable aspect of being a school board member is seeing the success of our district, students and staff. I’m very fortunate to serve in an outstanding school district and see improvement in almost all aspects of our district. We start almost every board meeting during the school year with some sort of student/teacher recognition. From spelling bee winners to National Merit Finalists to Backpacks for Kids, there are many successes to celebrate. Obviously, time does not allow for every program to be recognized, but it amazes me how much the board members know about what is happening in our district. Our superintendent does an incredible job of keeping us informed of both the good and not-so-good dealings that happen on almost a daily basis.

***What is the most unpleasant aspect of being a school board member?***

There are a couple of things that are unpleasant. The first is having to deal with personnel issues, especially when the employee involved has done something that violates a district policy. You must be very careful when dealing with these issues due to the Fair Dismissal Act for teachers. Thankfully, this doesn’t happen very often, but it does happen.

Secondly, I don’t enjoy it when a student discipline issue makes it to the board. By the time it makes it to the board, it has become very serious and many times involves expulsion or placement in alternative programs. Some of those decisions are extremely difficult. One of the things I’m most proud of is the fact our board takes these issues very seriously and is truly concerned about the students involved and how our decisions will impact them. Many times, school policy dictates what must happen, but that doesn’t make it any easier.

***Explain the basic dynamic between a school board and the superintendent. How can understanding this help band directors?***

The local school board has the right to hire or fire a superintendent. This really shapes the dynamic because ultimately, the school board is sort of the boss to the superintendent. However, the board places a lot of trust in the superintendent since that person oversees the entire district. Everything from overseeing personnel, finance, upholding local, state and federal policies, buildings and grounds, and buses and bus routes fall under the job description of the superintendent. In most districts, there are multiple levels of administrators that take care of those issues, but it is ultimately the superintendent’s responsibility.

One of the best things you can do as a band director is develop the best possible program you can, so your program, school and district look good. Developing good community relationships, handling financial and disciplinary matters well, and keeping your administration informed about what is going on can really help you stay on the “good” side of your superintendent. Also, developing an open line of communication with your parents will help. Unfortunately, when things are not clear or not going well, many parents just go straight to the superintendent without checking with the director first. While you can’t prevent that, you can help if you keep parents informed.

When you look at board responsibilities you have to realize the sheer volume of information that comes to a well-informed board. The superintendent



is the key to this important line of communication. The more information he/she shares with the board, the better they can make the correct decision. By keeping your superintendent informed about your program, the board has a better chance of being informed as well. In many districts, there are board members that don't really understand what the purpose of a music program is. If they see events supported by musical groups, they assume everything is fine. They often do not comprehend the amount of money it takes to properly fund a music program or the amount of time and personnel that must be allotted to have a successful program.

Ironically, band directors assume many of the same type duties as a superintendent. Obviously, band directors don't hire other teachers, but from an organizational and financial perspective, you do a lot of the same things on a much smaller scale. Once you start realizing that, it can give you a little better perspective of how difficult a superintendent's job really is.

***Are there any things you believed about school boards before you became a member that were completely misguided?***

For some reason, I was always nervous when I was asked to go to a school board meeting to make a presentation. I thought if I didn't present myself well, they wouldn't support my program. In my district, nothing could be further from the truth. The board members I serve with are truly interested in making sure every program and every student has the opportunity to reach their maximum potential. Unfortunately, that may not be true everywhere.

I also wrongly believed the school board could just vote to fire someone. When it comes to firing teachers, state law dictates how that must be done, and band directors are teachers. There are several items that must be completed in this process, then the superintendent must make a termination recommendation, and the board will vote as to approve or deny the recommendation.

***Is there anything you would like to change in how school boards operate?***

Arkansas law dictates how school boards function so I'm not sure this is possible. Frankly, I don't think there is anything that really needs to change.

***What can band directors do to have a positive impact on school board members and their decisions that affect the band?***

Again, it all starts with the superintendent. I would suggest presenting a "state of the band" document to the superintendent each year, or maybe even twice a year. This could be done in a one-on-one visit or maybe even handled by an email. Make sure to list successes, include number of students participating, how facilities affect your program, and how your budget impacts your program. If done in a positive manner, the majority of superintendents will at least become more aware of your program. There will always be a few who say they don't want that information. If that is your district, maybe it's time to find somewhere else to work.

Once your superintendent is aware of your program, he/she should start reporting to the board what they know. If you know one of the board members really well, you might share this information with them as well. It is interesting that when a board member brings up something to the superintendent, that subject suddenly becomes more of a priority to the superintendent.

I also caution you to not contact your board anytime things don't go the way you think they should. You don't want to be the boy that cries wolf. Board members are bombarded by district patrons that are unhappy with things going on, so use that sort of contact carefully. Obviously, if there is something serious that they need to be aware of, let them know, but using the board to get something you want is a dangerous game to play. The board can put a lot of pressure on the superintendent to make things happen, but that ploy can really impact your relationship with the superintendent. That may come back to bite you at some point in the future. In my 34-year career, I only had to contact board members one time and it concerned significant schedule changes and would have decimated my program. After visiting with several board members and sharing data that showed how the program would be negatively impacted, the issue was defeated.

***What topics seem to arise the most in board discussions?***

I would say the most common topic that is discussed has to do with personnel. Of course, law protects those discussions and rightfully so. There are so many district employees that it obviously has to be the most discussed. Retirements, resignations, extended sick leaves, and the like must be addressed.

***Is there a "division of labor" on the school board? Are any members paid?***

There is not really a division of labor, but there have to be a few leadership positions in a school board. There must be a president, vice president and secretary. All of our board members are assigned to multiple committees dealing with curriculum, building and grounds, transportation, and other matters; they meet and bring information to the full board when needed. We are also assigned to several of the campuses in the district and

encouraged to visit them as much as possible during the school year. None of the positions are paid.

***What do you see as important qualities for a school board member to have?***

Probably the most important quality is a passion for students and teachers to be the best they can be. I know that sounds corny, but it really helps drive everything we do. If you truly want the best for all shareholders in the education process, most of the decisions become very easy. Board members must also be willing to make themselves available. You have to be ready for the discussions in the aisle at Walmart and for the phone calls that you will receive. But you must also be mindful that as a board member, it is not your job to micromanage the district or its employees. One of the things I admire most about our superintendent is that if we hear from a shareholder with a concern or problem, he wants to be notified as soon as possible and then he reaches out to that person to see if he can help resolve the issue.

***What seems to be the biggest challenge school districts (and school boards) face each year?***

There are so many issues that are critical in school districts. Funding is almost always one of the primary concerns. There is not, unfortunately, an unlimited source of funds for education. Unfunded or underfunded state and federal mandates make things difficult. Our state does a lot of good things for education, but many times a mandate is passed without the funding to put it in place. Then it must become a priority of the local district to figure out where that money is going to come from.

There are an increasing number of students each year that seem to come to school with serious needs that often have nothing to do with education. Yet we must do all we can to meet those needs so we can educate them. I am extremely proud that our board voted this year to provide free breakfast to all students regardless of income level. At least we know the students can start the day with a full belly if they want. Finding great teachers and employees is another issue. In order to find great teachers and staff, you must be willing to support them. That involves salary, equipment, building support and so much more. Trying to provide a safe learning and work environment is one of the critical areas that we must focus on as a school board.

***Do you plan on running for a school board position again? Why or why not?***

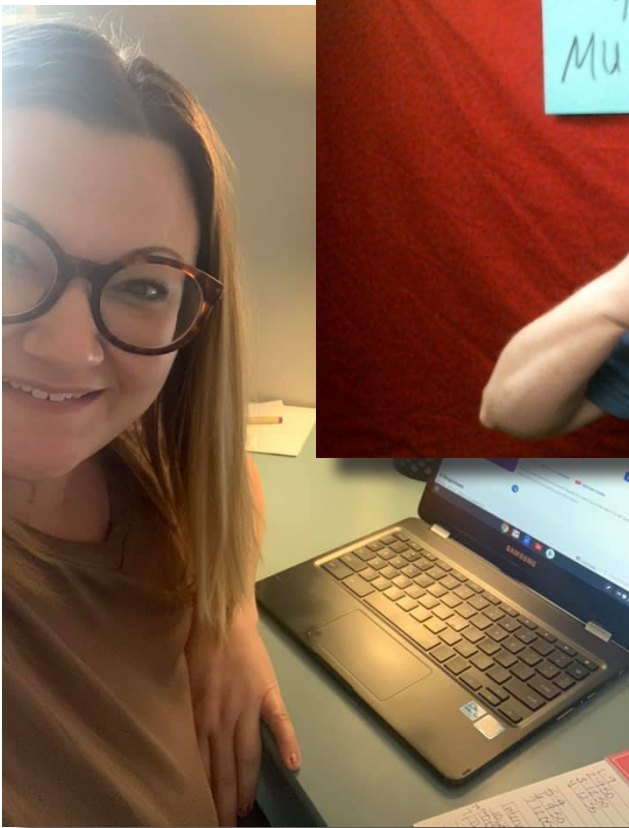
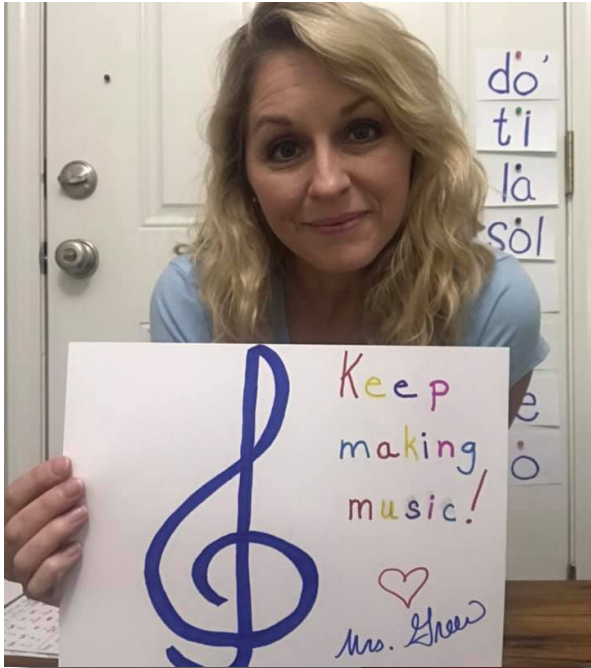
I have not made up my mind about running again. If you had asked me this question during my first year it would have been a big old nope! But now, I'm really starting to see how the board, with the leadership of a strong superintendent, can make huge impacts on students, student achievement and certified/non-certified employees across the district.



Trey Reely is a graduate of Harding University. He retired in 2019 after a 34-year teaching career in the Paragould and Riverview School Districts. He is a contributing editor to *The Instrumentalist* and has authored over 275 articles and seven books. He is currently the Executive Secretary of the Arkansas Small Band Association and an adjunct professor of music at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro.



# Then



# Thank you!

ArkMEA wants to thank each and every one of you all you have done for the students of Arkansas during this time of crisis.







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# Lead a Legacy

## Patty Oeste



### ***Could you tell us a little about your background as a music teacher?***

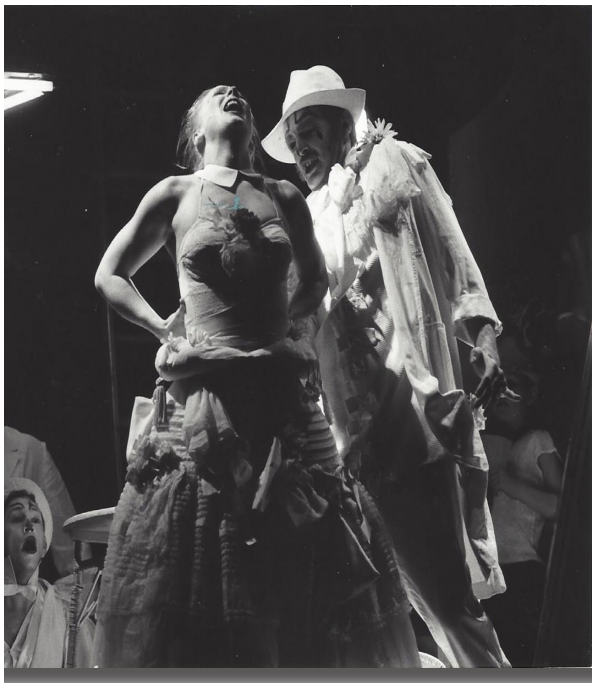
I was able to complete two undergraduate degrees from the University of Illinois; one in performance and one in education. At that point my interest in teaching was on the very back burner and I headed off to Europe to sing professionally in many opera houses in Germany. Upon my return to the U.S. (my daughter was now ready for first grade and I wanted her to have an American education) I got my Masters from Northwestern in Evanston, IL and being able to complete this in one year, searched for a job. My husband got a vocal instructor/opera job at UCA in Conway and we moved here, at which time I had my second child. Going from Chicago to Conway was quite a shock and I needed something to do. That's when I saw an opening posted for a music teacher at St. Joe's Catholic School in Conway and decided to give it a try. Luckily, I had a teaching license although I probably caused some laughter upon calling the State of Illinois and asking if I had a license to teach. I just never had thought I would, so I was informed that "yes" I had a license, though severely lapsed! I began teaching at St. Joe's and taught K-10. What a shock that was!!! I don't easily cry about things, but I went home for two weeks straight and just wept. I had no clue what I was doing! No mentor, no supplies and so much of an age range to teach. This was the very best way to learn - every minute of every day was a challenge. Little did I realize that it never gets much easier! I moved on to Ida Burns Elementary School, where I taught K-5 for 10 years, then moved over to Ruth Doyle Middle School when that brand new school opened up. Creating this new position in a new school with all new faculty was exciting and I stayed there another 15 years. When it was time to retire (my husband was ready to retire from UCA, me - not so much) I was able to step away from a very strong music program, having done just about everything I could imagine to keep things fresh. I was subsequently hired at Arkansas Tech to teach Elementary Music Methods which is one of the things I am doing now. I absolutely love working with the college students and I think they truly enjoy my hands-on approach and down to earth, pragmatic advice.

***You've held so many positions in Music Education, what is a favorite memory for you?***

You know, sometimes you have really good years... I had applied for a Fellowship at the Kennedy Center in 2009. The Washington National Orchestra was in residency in Arkansas and they could pick one music educator to receive a fellowship for the summer after their residency. I applied and received that! That was the same year that I received the Yale Distinguished Music Educator Award. Like I said, sometimes you have good years... Anyway, the point of the residency was to stay in Washington DC (they gave me an apartment right next to the Kennedy Center) and with the use of their connections and facilities, fulfill any wishes I had for Professional Development. I had 5 items on my list, the most important of which was using the Library of Congress to research any information I could find on Petit Jean and then subsequently write an opera based on this legend that my students would perform. After researching, I was able to build the story into 3 acts and bring it back to school in the fall. Trying to include as many students and teachers as possible, an English teacher colleague had her students write the dialogue for each act, I wrote the music, students sang the roles and chorus, made the props, helped with costumes, worked with a choreographer. The high school drama department did the make-up. I hired a high school string quartet to play in the pit when I conducted, made the playbill, got out the advertising, and used the stage at the Reynolds Center for the Performing Arts in Conway. We bused over all 800 students from our school for the afternoon performance. Many of our district administration also attended the event. That moment when the curtain went up and the overture began and the action sprang to life on the stage (with incredible backdrops and scenery) had to be a high point. It almost killed me, but it was worth it. We followed it up with a trip up to Petit Jean Mountain. It was a truly great experience for all of us.



***In education we frequently discuss success, what would you say your greatest success has been as a music educator?***



Ha! Success. To me it is not in awards received, or good evaluations from administrators, or articles written, or adulation from colleagues and parents. To me, it is winning over my students' hearts and minds and seeing them open the doors of possibilities. For instance, imagine a class of 28 boys and 2 girls. All 7th grade. End of the day. All the boys are football buddies. No grades to hold over them. Now, I like a good challenge - and this it was. Beginning with "Why do we even have to do this class? There's no grade". And then, showing them why and seeing them evolve from defiant to reluctant to enthused to brilliant. This was the greatest success. To see them leave my class reluctantly and to show up occasionally on my doorstep and tell me they missed my class. Talking the football team into performing a World Drumming Ensemble at the Football Assembly. Watching them "Foley" up a movie clip. Listening to them create a piece of music from a box of garbage. Hearing them layer their digital code (ASCII) names into a real piece of dynamic and creative sound. Watching them work through my Escape Room - as a team, competitive, involved, and thoroughly engrossed! Success looks like that to me.



***To have a career as exciting as your career, who have been some of your biggest supporters and mentors? Who are your biggest influences/ mentors?***

A long time ago, before I got on the plane to go to Europe and audition for a contract in a German opera house, I was working at Dean Witter Reynolds Financial in San Francisco. My boss, Andy Sargeant, was a Vice President and I was his assistant. He was not the average businessman. He was an artist at heart and his office was adorned with beautiful paintings he had created. He knew my dream was to get on the plane and go sing. One day he sat me down and told me the best bit of advice ever. After asking when I was going to go to Europe, I mentioned trying to get enough money together. I spoke of my doubts and “what if I fail?”. He said “Sitting here is failure, getting on the plane, regardless of the outcome is success”. So, I have lived with that motto. Try things. Not trying is failing. Allow yourself imperfections and learn from them - that is success. In regards to education, we really have to stretch our thinking - not focusing on failing, but on the success of trying. That mind set has driven me to create and explore, challenge myself and my students, taken away the fear of failure.

***How many years have you been in education and what do you think contributed to the longevity of your career?***

This fall will be my 30th year to teach. I have taught K-12, college, teachers, and administrators. I think the main thing that keeps me going is my love of education itself. I find the way people think and learn to be fascinating and I love the challenge of trying to reach all students where they are. I am curious and keep that curiosity alive. Thinking of new ways to expand my own knowledge (I finished my degree in Special Education 3 years ago after being disgusted about our lack of training in this area) and how to teach music in various ways keeps me challenged. I have taken as many workshops and trainings as possible, changing up how I do things in my classroom constantly. Repetition is deadly to me. I spend an immense amount of time in the land of “I wonder if...” So, keeping things fresh, trying new things, learning and extending myself have been ways that have kept me in the classroom all these years, always coming back for more. That never happened on the stage. After about 5 years, I found myself bored and wondering what else was out there for me! Boy, did I find it!

***Finally, what advice do you have for young and developing music educators?***

I love lists. Do you?

\*Top 10 reminders\*

1. Keep things fresh!
2. Always be open to learning new things.
3. Never step on someone's dreams.
4. Learn how to go home and “turn off”.
5. Look at each student as the individual they are.
6. Ask questions and take help that is offered.
7. Love your custodians and front office secretary.
8. Reflect, reflect, reflect.
9. Delegate - and if it isn't done the way you want, accept it, be thankful, and move on.
10. Always err on the side of grace.

P.S. One last thing I would like to share is a short note from an 11 year old student upon my retirement “I love how you have always stayed like a child inside. Your joy and creativity is contagious to all who know you. We will all miss you dearly.”

Love your students, love yourself, and keep in touch with that inner-child!



National Association  
for Music Education

## Virtual Learning Resources for Music Educators

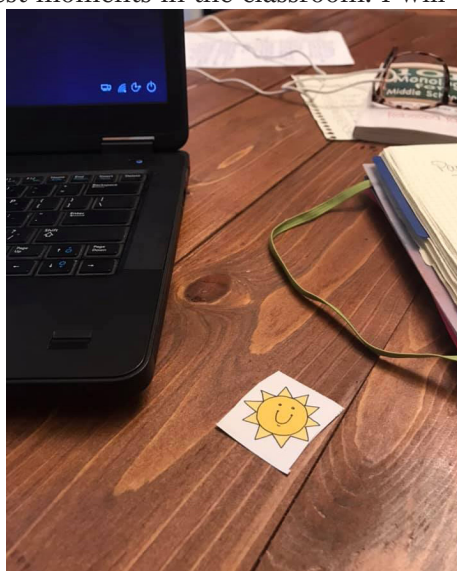
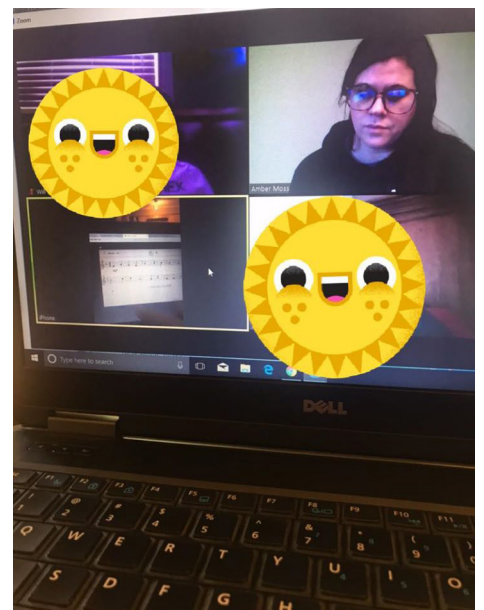
NAfME Societies and Councils have compiled distance learning and professional development resources from their own original teaching experiences, music educators in their school districts, universities, communities, peers, or other trusted sources. Available to NAfME members at no cost to help you keep teaching, learning, and making music through coronavirus disruptions.

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# From the ArkMEA Board Amber Moss Past-President

March 13th will most likely be the most memorable Friday the 13th for many music educators in Arkansas. A quote circulating around social media has been, “We are all in the same storm, but all in different boats.” I find this quote to be true during this historic pandemic. Before the school closure was announced, I found myself staying at home with a sick child. I reported to school for half a day on Thursday morning, and was told in an emergency meeting to get everything together to be able to go online the following Monday. I’m not sure about you all, but transitioning to an online platform was one of the most stressful moments in my career. The following Monday, my entire district K-12 was online. We were zooming, placing assignments in Google classrooms, and I found my new favorite online platform, Flipgrid. My family is adjusting to a new way of life, we are currently hosting and attending about 10 zooms a day between my husband (band director), fourth grader, and preschooler. I have learned that grace, patience, and walking (a lot of walking) are essential in the life of this music/theater teacher. I have also learned to cherish even the smallest moments in the classroom. I will never again take advantage of the face to face interactions I have in school, as well as outside of school. I hope you are well, and have adjusted as best you can to this new way of normal (hopefully just for a little longer).





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| Guitar                 | Women's Chorus                        |
| Jazz Band              | Woodwind                              |
| Jazz Catz (vocal jazz) |                                       |
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