



News and Notes

July 2012

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From Our President

Greetings from Montana, dear colleagues and friends,

It is my hope that you are immersing yourselves in the warmth and freedom of summer. I remember fondly the days of my childhood which held a dreamlike quality of endless time and play. I remember having hours in which to wander and discover. Many of us try to re-create that experience with vacations and retreats, especially this time of year. I do hope that you are successful in having some time that feels like it is truly "time off." It is so important for us to renew ourselves.



Judy Fjell
Helena, MT

One of the treasures of our way of teaching is that we routinely create play experiences for our students. Although adults often project that children's lives are carefree, it is probably more accurate to say that their lives are as emotionally full and demanding as ours. When we bring song games to their school experience, we open their lives to the imagination and play and freedom of a summer's day. We give them just a bit of a vacation, a retreat, in the middle of a school day. And, of course, WE know that during play we learn about music and life in a deep, unforgettable way.

While you are engaged in renewal this summer, your Music EdVentures Presidential Team, which now includes our new President-Elect Apprentice Leah Steffen, is quietly and busily doing important work which will support, sustain, and inspire you in your calling as a music teacher, classroom teacher, early childhood teacher, volunteer or free lance teacher. Many of us continue on our journey to become better teachers in the Music EdVentures organization because we know truly that play is an exciting and passionate way to learn. And how we **love** spending time with colleagues whose hearts are in the same place! Our annual conference is a highlight of the year.

President-Elect Terolle Turnham has already put in many hours of planning for your 2013 Music EdVentures Conference in Minnesota. She and Anne Mendenhall, now joined by Leah Steffen, are putting

together the basic structure for another exciting experience next April. In this spirit, they have entitled the conference "Refresh, Rethink, Renew." We are already looking forward to the energy burst that this conference will provide, especially when the forthcoming school year draws to a close.

Please continue to enjoy your summer. Take time to lie on your back on a warm patch of grass or sand. Connect with the earth. Watch the clouds change shapes. In the meantime, somewhere in Montana or Minnesota or Arizona, some dutiful presidential elves are happily engaged in cooking up a full-bodied, refreshing taste of summer for the first weekend of April in 2013.

Judy

Song Works



"Refresh
Rethink
Renew"

**MUSIC EDVENTURES ANNUAL CONFERENCE
APRIL 4-6, 2013 MINNEAPOLIS**

From the MEI Presidential Team

Recently, the MEI Presidential Team, in order to move the leadership of our organization into the next generation, decided to create the new role of President-Elect Apprentice. With this position a person will be eased into MEI leadership roles rather than face abrupt assumption of responsibility. Thus, in the June Newsletter we sought applications from our membership for that position.

As a result of this process, the Presidential Team is proud to announce that Leah Steffen has been appointed by the Presidential Team to be President-Elect Apprentice for 2012. Leah teaches Music and Art, K-5 at Taylors Falls, MN. She holds a BS degree in Music Education and Music Therapy from Augsburg College, MN and a Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of MN. Leah has been Chisago Lakes Music Department Chair for five years and is a 2012 recipient of a Fleurette Sweeney Fellowship for Emerging Pioneers in Education. Leah, David and their son Jacob live in Shafer, MN.



Leah Steffen
Shafer, MN

Leah stated in her application,

Ten years ago I was transformed by the strategies and philosophies of Music EdVentures. It has directed my path as a teacher in so many wonderful ways and taught me valuable life lessons as well. I believe in the vision of MEI and want to see it grow. With open heart and mind I would like to assist in the growth and development of MEI for future generations.

Leah, thank you so very much for your interest in a leadership role in Music EdVentures. We very much look forward to seeing you in action.

Judy, Terolle and Marilyn
The Music EdVentures Presidential Team

*Listening is not only about waiting,
but it's also learning how better to ask questions.*
Jacqueline Novogratz,
founder and CEO of Acumen Fund

*What we really yearn for
as human beings
is to be visible to each other.*
Jacqueline Novogratz,
author "The Blue Sweater"

*At the end of the day,
dignity
is more important to the human spirit
than wealth.*
Jacqueline Novogratz,
2010 Rensselaer Entrepreneur of the Year



Peggy D. Bennett
Professor of Music
Education,
Oberlin College
Conservatory of Music

Sweet Girls: Teaching Students How to Treat Us

Peggy D. Bennett and Meghan Meloy

What Peggy Says:

As I look back on my two years in urban classrooms as a young music teacher, my goals were fairly simple: for the kids to have fun, love music, and like me. Yes, I know that these goals may seem short-sighted and way too “fluffy,” but that’s why I’m telling you about them. Needless to say, the “fun” that those kids had in my music classes was not the fun I had in mind. And, they loved music all right, but it was because they could act outrageous as I stood there thinking that if I just chose the right game and played it long enough, the game itself would “fix and focus” their behaviors. Liking me? Well, clearly my likability factor was as mercurial as the temperature swings in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

If I had it to do over again (and thank goodness I don’t!), I would approach my first days with elementary students very differently. I would take the wisdom that I first recall hearing from MEI Past-President Marilyn Winter many years ago. I would *teach* the students how to treat me and how to treat everything in the music room.

Now, my first days of school would be lessons on how to enter the classroom, where to sit, how to ask a question, how to participate in a game, how to respond when they didn’t get a turn, how to address me, what they were allowed to do, what they were not allowed to do, how to treat the instruments, how to treat the books, when “speaking out” was okay and when it wasn’t, how I would handle their behavior challenges, what my goals for their behaviors were, what the consequences were for minor and major problems in the classroom, what my goals were for them: intellectually, socially, physically, and musically. I’m sure you can think of more “classroom protocol” items to add to this list.

Doesn’t that seem like a long, boring list of classroom rules? Well, that’s because it is! Marilyn told me many years ago that she wrote lesson plans for the first few days of school and the content of those lessons was these expectations. Students would “practice” the behaviors she expected of them, and she would find playful yet serious ways to have children “learn” what to do in her classroom. Can you envision writing creative, playful lesson plans to accomplish that? That’s how I would begin my classes if I were to do it again . . . with clear, organized, structured, caring, and playful lessons that taught students how to treat me . . . and how I would be treating them. BUT, the lessons themselves would be taught with eagerness, energy, playful puzzles, and a “we’re all in this together” attitude.

Many of our young teachers are facing classroom challenges that we have not experienced. And, for them, the “sweet girl” personality that may have worked well for our teaching persona can be a detriment to their successful launching of their school year. Children coming to school with backgrounds and lifestyles far different from our own deserve to be *taught* how to succeed in our classes. And, we can do that: we are teachers.

What Meghan Says:

“Sometimes you just have to take the leap and build your wings on the way down.” This statement is a perfect framework for understanding my first year of teaching. This past September, I plunged into my first job teaching K-3rd grade music at a catholic school in Philadelphia with about a week of notice. Accepting the job was easy—after all, I was ecstatic that I got *some* sort of teaching job after months of searching! But my first day of working with my new students served as a reminder that I still had much to learn about the art of teaching.

A class of thirty-three third grade students entered the music room on that first day. Although I had diligently prepared a thorough lesson for these students, I had neglected to carve out space and time to practice some of the routines and expectations that—I know now—are critical to managing a class of elementary school students. I left procedures such as raising your hand to speak or leave your seat, keeping your

hands and feet to yourself, and lining up quietly at the end of class unrehearsed. Teaching high school students during my semester of student teaching had induced a kind of amnesia regarding the structure that elementary school students craved and needed during the school day.

My lesson for these thirty-three third grade students quickly disintegrated. Students consistently got up out of their chairs to ask me to go to the bathroom. (I learned later that going to the bathroom was not allowed during specials, according to school policy.) Conversations and yelling were plentiful. The focus of my students quickly waned because I did not sufficiently manage their disruptive behaviors, and I soon felt powerless to instill any order in the class.

As many of you are well aware, I am normally an incredibly sweet person. I am intentionally kind to most everyone I meet and know, and many people have even told me that they have never seen me anything but happy. I had every intention of acting exactly the same way with my students. But after that first day of teaching, I became well aware that I needed to do something (or a lot of things!) differently.

Speaking with my principal at the end of that first day of teaching helped me understand what the students needed from me as a teacher. In a very clear voice, she advised, "Meghan, these students are different. You must be *firm* with them!" My first instinct as a recent graduate was to initiate my own research project on classroom management. I decided to consult resources and observe other teachers so that I could learn to be like Mary Poppins: kind but *extremely* firm.

But after several months of working on my research project, I still struggled to show my students that I could be firm and assertive in my own classroom. I recognize now that I was still defining my expectations for my students as an elementary school general music teacher and that being a disciplinarian did not come naturally to me as a person. Students frequently disrupted lessons to seek attention or tattle on other students, and I felt hesitant about firmly insisting that this disruptive behavior was unacceptable during music class.

A first grade teacher graciously volunteered to observe me teach and provide me with feedback afterward. I invited her to observe the third grade class that I had been struggling to manage since the beginning of the year. She gave me candid feedback after I finished my lesson for these students. With the delivery of a sports coach, she directed, "Meghan, project your voice! Hold the students accountable! Give them detentions! And most importantly, if you respect yourself, the students will respect you."

Have respect for myself? A light bulb went off in my head.

It occurred to me that by being sweet to everyone, I did not always express what I truly thought or felt to others. I masked my own feelings to preserve the feelings of others. This habit of mine did not serve me well as a teacher because it signaled to the students that I would remain sweet and kind even if they acted like hooligans in my classroom.

I made it my mission to be more aware of what I was truly thinking and feeling on a daily basis and mirror those thoughts and feelings with my words and body language. I decided to first practice being more clear and direct around my family members and my friends. At the beginning of my practice, it felt mean or unnatural to express what I truly thought or felt when I would have suppressed my thoughts or feelings in the past. But the more I practiced saying exactly what I meant, the less mean or depleted I felt.

I learned that becoming a strong advocate for myself helped me hold students accountable for their behavior in my classroom. I challenged myself to address off-task behavior early before it became a major disruption to the lesson. I redirected student behaviors by providing nonverbal cues; delivering behavioral reminders in a calm, low-pitched voice; changing a student's seating arrangement; or directing students to



Meghan Meloy
Swarthmore, PA

Meghan graduated from Oberlin College with degrees in Music Education and Environment Studies. She currently teaches music and works as an accompanist in the Philadelphia area. Meghan is an MEI 2011 Emerging Pioneer.

take time to regroup apart from the rest of the class. I insisted that my students respect and listen to each other during class. And the intention that pervaded my actions was having the best interests of my students at heart.

At the beginning of this year, I was unaware of the degree to which I would have to develop my behavioral vocabulary as a teacher so that my students would respond productively to my lessons. I was exhausted, discouraged, and frustrated at times, but I am glad that I persevered. I know now that I can learn to become a more direct and assertive teacher with consistent practice. Through solid experience, I can become a better teacher for my students. §

Emerging Pioneers in Education

Sixteen educators were recipients of the 2012 Fleurette Sweeney Fellowship for Emerging Pioneers in Education. In return for this recognition and financial assistance we requested feedback from our Emerging Pioneers about the 2012 Conference. In this issue and future issues, EPs will tell of the insights they gained from experiencing the principles and practices of the SongWorks approach at the conference and in their classrooms. We hear from Emerging Pioneers Rebecca James and Natalie Neugent in this issue.

I hadn't been to a Music EdVentures Conference since 2008 and I asked myself, "Why did you stop attending?" I know that life happens and that all of us at one time or another have been unable to attend. For me, this year confirmed my beliefs in SongWorks and the mission of MEI. This year has been a tough one in designing a new curriculum at a new school, and making sure that I am able to account for every action in my classroom. This has been a difficult task for me, and I was in desperate need of a refresher course that would not only provide me with a network of similar-minded colleagues, but also inspire the very nature of my soul.

Attending this year's conference was the answer to my prayers. Every moment of the conference provided me with the confirmation that what I have been teaching is truly valid in providing children with a holistic education. Each session, in its own unique way, brought me new ideas of how to justify my methods with others who are not familiar with the SongWorks approach. It was amazing to see in the presentations how, through SongWorks, one can teach composition, storytelling, and incorporate movement. Dr. Peggy Bennett and Dr. Doug Bartholomew's presentation on why we teach SongWorks, once again reaffirmed my faith in feeling confident teaching the way I do. Dr. Anna Langness also provided such wonderful ideas in teaching the literacy of melody and rhythm in playful ways.

Talking with the other Emerging Pioneers was uplifting, because we are all passionate about what we do. The EP presentation really seemed to solidify why MEI has been around and what the future has to offer. It was inspiring to see MEI investing so much in the future of music educators. Now, I see the different generations coming together, and I see a bright future for MEI as well as the future of teaching SongWorks. This year more than ever before, I feel honored to be a part of such an innovative, passionate, and energetic group. I truly feel that it has become a second home for me and that I teach the way I do because my students are taught not only music, but through the power of music, how to be better individuals. Thank you to all for making this year's conference such an uplifting experience. §



Rebecca James
Seaside, CA

After attending Interlochen Arts Academy, Rebecca earned a BM in Music Education and Trumpet Performance from Oberlin Conservatory of Music. She now teaches K-8 general music and is director of ensembles and liturgical music at Sacred Heart Catholic School in Salinas, CA. She has begun writing an instrumental workbook utilizing SongWorks practices. Rebecca resides in California with her husband, Alan, and their dog Mossy.



Natalie Neugent
Hurst, TX

Natalie begins her seventh year of teaching music to grades 1-6 and directing an after-school fifth and sixth grade choir at Sherrod Elementary in Arlington, TX. Previously, she has taught elementary music in the Hurst-Euless-Bedford ISD. Natalie cherishes free time spent gardening and playing bassoon and hand bells. She and her husband, Brian Brown, a freelance musician in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, enjoy playtime with their three dogs.

After taking Dr. Peggy Bennett's Perspectives in Music Education course at the University of Texas at Arlington in the fall of 1993 and also her Essentials of Elementary Music I and II from 1993-1994, I was quite familiar with the principles and practices of SongWorks. In the Spring of 1996, I served as Vicki Suarez's student teacher, observing SongWorks in action when these ideas were known as Education Through Music (ETM). But, after I finished student teaching, I spent the next three years as a junior high band director. When I made the switch to elementary music, I pulled out *Let's Do It Again* (by Mary Helen Richards), the SongWorks books (by Bennett & Bartholomew), and every elementary music lesson I had saved. At that time, I was not provided with a rigid district curriculum and was free to use my favorite songs as well as explore the music textbooks and get ideas from other music teachers in the area through attending various workshops. Making the switch to elementary music was difficult because I had always felt like a "band person," having no choral experiences and a band director father. There were some ideas from SongWorks that I either was not comfortable with or had not completely "bought into."

However, at the conference I gleaned so much information in such a short amount of time that it has almost completely changed my approach and definitely changed my attitude. Teaching music in a Title I school in Texas is difficult, especially with such a mobile population, the focus on the new STAAR test, and the numerous budget cuts. Attending and participating in the MEI conference has given me the perspective I needed to continue to enjoy teaching music to young children and the insight into how to best reach the children and make learning music fun and playful all the time.

For some reason, I had gotten it into my head that song games were only for younger children. I have always used many games in grades K-3. Why did I limit myself by this way of thinking? Since the conference, I have successfully taught "Mad Man" to the fourth graders at my school and will continue to utilize song games to engage the older students.

Another area that had not received my focus (because I only see the students on average of once a week and our population is very mobile) was reading music notation. I now understand how to take students from song dotting (which I had been doing maybe once a year in just the lower grades) to a melody graph to placing the notes on the staff. At the same time, I also realized that learning songs in order to play songs by ear is okay, too. I am now challenging my students to figure out how to play "Hot Cross Buns" on the recorder instead of just teaching them to read the notes on the staff. Of course, many of them were unfamiliar with the song, so I had to teach it to them first. This leads to another change in my approach. Although I have always taught some folk songs in my classroom, I had forgotten the value of teaching many folk songs, reviewing some of them from year to year, and using these songs to teach music concepts on various levels.

Becoming an Emerging Pioneer and attending the MEI Conference was the best choice I could have made for my students and myself. I am enjoying planning lessons and listening to a composition while I think up fun new ways to teach it so that the students are involved and engaged in the listening. I know that my brain will need a short break, but I have told many friends and colleagues that, after attending the conference in Canada, I now want to rethink everything I teach, reconsider how I approach it, and get organized over the summer, so that I can incorporate all I have learned (or relearned) into my music lessons for the future. §

2013 MEI CONFERENCE MINNESOTA April 4, 5, 6

Plan now to attend!
Apply for your leave!



MARK your 2013 calendars!
SCHEDULE your 2013 spring concerts!
Invite your colleagues and friends!



Anne Mendenhall, MN

Know this!
2013 Conference will be
another BEST EVER!



Terolle Turnham, MN
President-Elect

Conference Co-Chairs



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[Check out our new YouTube Video...](#)

The Purpose of Music EdVentures, Inc. is to search for and practice ways of making music and interacting with people that preserve and celebrate the dignity of both. As a guiding principle, this purpose will focus our work on:

1. Practices that foster interactive, facilitative learning environments.
2. Strategies that empower the learner within the context of music experience and study.
3. Networks that encourage collaboration between diverse disciplines, professionals, and interest groups.

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NEW DATES

2013 MEI CONFERENCE

April 4, 5, 6

Bloomington, MN

Visit the MEI Website

www.musicedventures.org

Read articles, get ideas, and learn more about Music EdVentures, Inc. -- a great way to teach and a fun way to learn!

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News and Notes is the monthly communication of Music EdVentures, Inc. (MEI). Regular features will keep members and friends up to date on coming events and the latest teaching techniques, tips and strategies. Submissions are due on the 15th of the month prior to publication and may be submitted months in advance, indicating the month in which they are to be published. The committee reserves the right to select material to be published according to length and appropriateness. Articles should be 200-325 words. Visuals should be scanned and submitted as PDF or jpeg files. Submissions may be sent to alangness@comcast.net and may be edited to accommodate space limitations.