

# Preparing Young Musicians for Success

with Kathleen Shulenberger

Creating a music classroom where every student feels valued, seen, and inspired is key to supporting our students' learning. Through playful, low-stress assessments, techniques to spark curiosity, and ways to integrate social-emotional learning to build unity, ownership, and expressive storytelling through music. Incorporating cross-curricular connections can boost engagement, deepen understanding, and help young musicians see their learning in a broader context.

## Create a Welcoming Environment & Boost Engagement

- Use playful, exploratory warm-ups.
- Invite student voice in goal-setting and classroom decisions.

A positive classroom climate helps students feel safe to explore, take risks, and express themselves musically.

## Getting to Know Your Students & Building Community

These activities strengthen classroom culture and establish trust.

- Name games
- "About Me" activities
- Rover, Walk and Greet, *Hello, How Are You?*

These tools help students feel seen, welcomed, and valued.

## Cross-Curricular Tie-Ins

Integrate academic connections to enrich musical understanding:

- **Literacy:** lyrics, sequencing, character analysis, rhyming, opposites, syllables
- **Science:** sound waves, instrument families
- **Math:** patterns, fractions, form
- **History & Culture:** identity, traditions, context

## Low-Stress Assessments

Help students demonstrate learning without anxiety while giving you authentic insights.

- Offer multiple ways to show understanding (performing, drawing, explaining, composing).
- Focus on growth, not comparison.
- Teach vocabulary for expressive qualities; SEL and Laban-inspired terms work well.

## Storytelling Through Music

Encourage expressive playing using imagery, character, and narrative.

- Story-based compositions
- Soundscapes
- Character-led performance choices

## Reflection & Goal-Setting

Create time to check in, celebrate improvement, and plan next steps.

Shift language from judgment to growth:

- "What did you discover today?"
- "What are you proud of?"
- "What will you try next?"

Flexible, growth-centered rubrics reinforce creativity over perfection.

**Bringing It All Together** These tools support community-building, engagement, and expressive, low-stress learning. When students feel seen and empowered, they take risks, explore, and thrive musically.