

Where Do We Go from Here?



by Amy M. Burns

Teaching during a global pandemic requires patience, time, effort, boundless energy, and, most likely, an adoption of technologies not previously utilized in our instructional practices. The ever-changing scenario from remote, to concurrent, to in-person with restrictions can make us feel as if we're new to the profession again.

Having learned new teaching techniques, acquired new tech tools, and found ourselves even further outside the proverbial box for so long, where do we go now? How do we take our new best practices and implement them in our music classes to help us connect with all students in the best way possible? Many tools and practices implemented last school year remain valuable for helping our young students learn and make music.

Technology Integrated into Popular Music Approaches

Many elementary music educators have explored and adopted various approaches to successfully teach music in their classrooms—Kodály, Orff Schulwerk, Dr. Feierabend's First Steps, and others. During the pandemic, we ventured into using curriculum supplements to help deliver these approaches in various scenarios, including Denise Gagne's Musicplay Online, QuaverEd, and MusicFirst Junior, to name a few.

With remote learning hopefully behind many of us, or at least with more predictable teaching scenarios, how can we continue to benefit from the tools that helped us deliver these approaches? The following are some ways to integrate technology into popular music approaches to enhance your classroom.

- **Use an intuitive website to promote improvisation and creativity:** The website *wheelofnames.com* can function as a tool for choosing students for any musical activity, and you can add pictures and emojis to increase engagement.

Take screenshots of notes from a website like Notes Image Generator (notes.bretpimentel.com) and place them into wheelofnames.com, or type emojis into the text window and use them for improvisation singing or an arioso. To see Wheel of Names at work and hear my daughter Sarah sing a short arioso based on the wheel's selection, go to www.tmea.org/wheelofnames. This site, combined with more traditional manipulatives, gives us a variety of choices when improvising music.

- **Virtual instruments:** When teaching remotely or with in-person restrictions, we found alternative ways for students to play instruments. One website that continuously improved their virtual instruments throughout the pandemic was playxylo.com. This site began with an interactive, traditionally colored xylophone recorded with acoustic sounds. As site developers listened to music educators' needs, they added Boomwhacker colors, chromatic bars, pentatonic scales,



solfege syllables, and more. The site can be accessed from a variety of devices, and it inspired me to create my Google Music Closet (screen image on previous page), with links to various virtual instruments from websites to those created with Scratch. You can create a copy of my Google Slide at www.tmea.org/musiccloset. Virtual instruments can give a 1:1 ratio of acoustic and virtual instruments so that even large classrooms can perform at any time.

- **Collaboration:** Many music educators collaborated more with other classroom teachers, as we found ourselves placed in non-music classrooms to assist. Even though we might return to our music classes or no longer be required to assist with the classroom curriculum, the integration doesn't need to end. An example is using Chrome Music Lab to collaborate with an art educator. Students begin to learn about Kandinsky from reading Barb Rosenstock's *The Noisy Paint Box*. They create artwork inspired by Kandinsky in their art class. Finally, they recreate that same artwork using

Chrome Music Lab in music class. The students begin to understand that many subjects can be experienced in music class. You can see a variation of this via my YouTube channel video at www.tmea.org/kandinsky.

Connecting with Caregivers More

Many elementary music educators adopted the popular tool Seesaw to support the various teaching scenarios. This platform is a learning engagement and digital student portfolio where students can use various tools, from video to drawing to audio, to share and reflect on their work. It also has an activity library created by educators so that students can complete assignments or assessments within the digital journal. As we returned to in-person teaching, many questioned whether we should continue using Seesaw.

One of the wonderful features of Seesaw is that parents/caregivers can connect to their child's journal. They can see their child's works that are posted and made visible by the teacher's approval. This means that our music curriculum can be accessed from the parents' mobile devices. Parents can now see that elementary music classes

are more than just the performances they attend throughout the school year. This can become a great advocacy tool for our music programs. Whether through Seesaw or a similar tool, find ways to continue utilizing its features that allow you to connect with parents/caregivers.

Play-Along Videos

Rhythm, Boomwhacker, body percussion, bucket-drumming, and other types of play-along videos became standard issue in many music classes last year. These videos usually contained a song (popular, classical, etc.) with patterns projected on a screen that students played along with on their instruments, bodies, buckets, devices, or desks. Typically, there was a conductor in the form of a pointer or flashing box.

Numerous YouTube channels offered play-along videos. However, many teachers quickly realized that by creating their own, the video could support their methodology, approach, or curriculum. Learning how to create basic play-along videos took some time and effort, but it proved to be a worthy skill.

Even in an in-person capacity, creating



Lesson Plans with Ringing Success

Handbells • Choirchime® Instruments • Ringing Accessories

New • Pre-owned • Rental


Malmark
 BELLCRAFTSMEN

800-HANDBEL
www.malmark.com

TMEA Special

16 Note Classroom Set with Carry Roll
 (C5 – A6 Diatonic plus, F#5, A#5 & F#6)

\$775



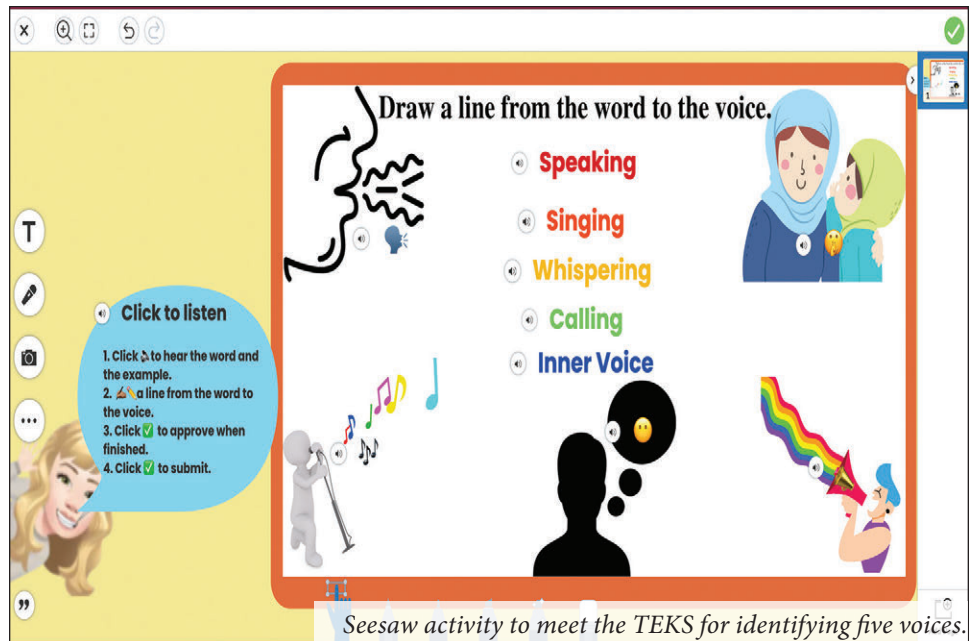
We are proud to be a TMEA EMISP Approved Vendor

play-along videos can still enhance our curriculum. Utilize tools such as Google Slides, Keynote, PowerPoint, or Canva to create images with the patterns and the conducting flashing box. Then use a screen-recording tool like Loom or Screencastify to record yourself moving the conducting tool to the beat of the music. This will give students a fun manipulative to play along with, and it will give you an assessment or retrieval practice tool to use throughout the school year. If you are interested in learning how to create one, perform a quick online search about video creation courses or play-along videos for music educators.

Assessment Tools

At the beginning of the pandemic, the lack of technology for all remote learning motivated many states to halt grades, assessments, tests, and more. As we resume in-person learning, assessments will return. The technology tools used for assessments can assist elementary music educators with collecting data and can help save time. This data can be used to prove that Student Learning Objectives, Grade Level Objectives, the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, or the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) are achieved. Consider these TEKS examples:

- *Kindergarten TEKS: Foundations of identifying five voices.* Instead of students using paper and pencil to circle the voice when they hear it in a recording played during class, create a Seesaw activity with each recording placed on the slide, a picture representing each voice, and the word of the voice. The student can draw a line from the word to the picture (screen image above). When finished, you have data that shows they mastered the TEKS and can easily share it with an administrator.
- *Grade Two TEKS: Creative expression of singing tunefully.* Using a free Web-based recording tool like online-voice-recorder.com allows students to quickly record their singing or instrument-playing to their devices or Google drives. They can share those recordings with you through their Learning Management Systems (LMS).



Seesaw activity to meet the TEKS for identifying five voices.

- *Grade Three TEKS: Foundations of categorizing instruments.* For this TEKS, a Google form could include a link to a YouTube video showing the instruments and sounds, and the student types or records the answer. The data from Google forms can easily be collected through Google Sheets, where you can share the spreadsheet with your administration.
- *Grade Three TEKS: Foundations of composition.* Using technology such as Flat or Noteflight can assist students' multiple learning modalities so that they can compose or record directly into the program. Many of these programs also integrate directly into the LMS to make creating the assessments a natural process.
- *Grade Five TEKS: Critical evaluation and response.* Use a free version of gaming programs where students don't need email addresses, like Kahoot or Socrative. You can also use interactive assessment tools and Google Slide extensions like Nearpod or Pear Deck to quiz and assess their knowledge so that you have all the data automatically collected. This simplifies the assessment process. Plus, these assessment programs are fun, interactive, and contain many pre-made music assessments, created and tested by numerous music educators.

Where do we go from here? The musical possibilities are endless. We can uti-

lize technology as a basic tool to enhance learning or as a more in-depth tool to help create new manipulatives and provide quick and intuitive assessments.

By integrating the tools and methods we learned during the pandemic into our current teaching situations, we can help all students learn, create, make, and do music even better than before.



Amy M. Burns teaches preK–fourth grade general music at Far Hills Country Day School, in Far Hills, NJ. Her most recent book titled *Using Technology with Elementary Music Approaches* is published by Oxford University Press.

Resources

Rosenstock, B., & GrandPré Mary. (2014). *The Noisy Paint Box: The Colors And Sounds of Kandinsky's Abstract Art*. Alfred A. Knopf.

TEA. (2019, August). Chapter 117. Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Fine Arts. Chapter 117. Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Fine Arts.

www.tmea.org/burns-onlineresources: List of resources that support the content of this article, with hyperlinked URLs.