



By Jonathan Lauff and Lori Lauff

Amidst the many unknowns we are all experiencing right now, one fact remains the same - we are in one of the best professions ever, and the future looks bright. For the last twelve years, we have had the pleasure of serving as the coordinators for the Future Music Educators Seminar (FMES) student program from ILMEA. During this time, approximately 630 high school students with an interest in music education have come through this program. One of the great aspects of returning to Peoria each year is seeing former FMES students attending as collegiate members, and more than ever we are seeing previous FMES students as music teachers throughout Illinois.

As these past participants have moved into the field and become professional music educators, they have also become a valuable resource to the FMES program. The opportunity to speak with former FMES students and veteran music educators has become a favorite element of the program for current high school participants:

*"The panelists were intriguing and had amazing advice that helped solidify my want to go into music education."*

*"I loved how diverse the panel was. I liked learning experiences from people who are*

*only a few years older than me as well as people who are close to retiring. They all have so many different experiences and things they know that I could really use when I start teaching."*

*"The panelists were phenomenal. I really loved the variety that they brought to the table. I learned a lot about Middle School Education, the philosophy of music pedagogy, and the transition into college."*

*"It was really cool to see such a variety with the panelists, in terms of career choice, experience, and background. I definitely gained a lot from talking to these people!"*

*"I loved being able to see so many different faces of music education and get a feel for all kinds of teaching."*

*"I loved hearing different stories, but my favorite thing was how even through the many generations of educators, they all have the same goal, which is to create creative, musical minds and open doors of possibilities for their students."*

*Continued...*

We could not agree more! We feel very fortunate to have some of the best music educators who are willing to donate their time and expertise to inspire the next generation of future music educators. Thank you to this year's panelists: Lauren Antonioli (FMES alum), Beth Burger, Brent Burger, Kelly Damann, Dana Green, Bill Jastrow, Laura Miller, Lucy Rieke (FMES alum), Erin Setchell, Glenn Williams.

New for this year's FMES students was a change to digital FMES portfolios. Students received a digital folder where they received the seminar schedule, slideshows of session presentations, handouts, and could add to their folder throughout the seminar. Our hope is that students will continue to add to this resource over the years ahead as an ongoing documentation of their growth as a music educator. One student said, "The online folder is awesome! Super-amazing idea and I'm so glad to have this resource!"

Students who participate in FMES enjoy the camaraderie of the experience, sharing their learning with other high school students looking to go into the field, individuals who may someday become their colleagues!

*"This week has been phenomenal, I have not felt this whole in a long time and it has brought me so much hope and understanding to this field. I have been so inspired and motivated by all of these dedicated people around me."*

*"It was really refreshing to be surrounded by so many people that share the same passion and are also considering music education as a career."*

*"I enjoyed being in an environment with other people who share the same interests as me. These seminars foster a lot of conversation and exploration."*

*"I really enjoyed spending time with so many people who have the same passion as me. I also really loved being able to speak with music educators who have experienced fulfilling and inspiring careers."*

*"This entire trip, I've been struggling to hold back tears of happiness. I've never ever been in an environment where music is so respected and loved. I've never been looked at as an equal in a professional setting discussing something I love. I've never been surrounded by so many talented and passionate musicians. These are good people. I loved every second of it."*

Although our classrooms look a bit different these days, we know there are passionate students out there who may aspire to become music educators. Some of those students may already feel the pull towards music education as a profession, and others may need some encouragement. We are calling on all of the amazing music educators in Illinois to have conversations with your students about the FMES program and what it can offer.

A past FMES student reminds us why this is an important ILMEA program and why we volunteer to work with FMES students each year. She said, "This experience was truly life changing for me, and helped me so much with helping guide what I want to spend my life doing and how I can make a difference in the world." We know many students have the power to be incredible future music educators, and we hope to welcome them to FMES 2021.



*Jonathan and Lori Lauff have served as coordinators for the Future Music Educators Seminar since 2009. They met in graduate school at Northwestern University and married in 2002. They have a 10-year-old son, Jeremy, who plays piano and competed on American Ninja Warrior Junior. Lori teaches middle school orchestra at Gregory Middle School in Naperville where she teaches seven curricular orchestras and Pioneer Fiddlers. Jonathan is the Fine Arts Department Chair at Neuqua Valley High School in Naperville where he also teaches the Wind Ensemble, Jazz Orchestra, Neuqua Valley Symphony Orchestra, and the Marching Wildcats.*

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