

Thomas N. Gellert – The School Music News Editor



What's next?

"Tomorrow is the most important thing in life. Comes into us at midnight very clean. It's perfect when it arrives and it puts itself in our hands. It hopes we've learned something from yesterday."

— John Wayne (1907-1979), American actor and filmmaker.

Oh, how I remember those waning days of the school year moving along at warp speed — the last days of school, checklist in hand! Getting all the final duties of the year accomplished and signed off. Summer beckons and, yet, for many there is still a lingering question of what will come after this summer.

For many, this past school year was somewhat unpredictable. The attempt to get back to normalcy was tough all over. It's been especially difficult to try to stay optimistic when this great obstacle is still with us. If there is a takeaway from the past two years plus, it's that we will never take anything for granted again. One day things are looking good, and then suddenly on another day, not so good. Such is life in the time of the pandemic.

The joy of music returns

It is heartening to have watched how resilient our profession has been through these most challenging of times. It's encouraging to see programs rebounding and kids in our programs play an especially important part in this moment of renewal. There is no doubt in any of our minds that our students have missed music in their lives. Two seemingly lost years of interacting in music class and/or in a school performing group has been tough on our music program participants. The return to social interaction through school music instruction is a huge plus. Never, ever underestimate the important role music plays in the lives of your students.

I keep hearing this refrain from music educators: "I'll never take my job for granted, again!" That's an understatement and should be the unified refrain from the entire education profession. If you don't truly have a renewed passion for teaching (in person) post-Covid, you need to think seriously about changing careers now. There are still many challenges that lie ahead, but there is also a new "reset button" to ponder.

Now, more than ever, we need to work together

There is little doubt that we will ever revert back to life pre-pandemic. The pressure on our profession has been enormous during this ordeal in ways none of us could have ever foretold. Yet, our creative problem-solving instincts have enabled us to find both short- and long-term solutions to getting our programs back up and running. We have no choice but to move forward with the times. There will be more difficult days ahead but we'll have contingency plans in place should we need to adopt them quickly the next time around. It's all a part of our new world.

Strength in numbers

Now, more than ever, we need to work together as we shape the future of music education. The music education profession needs to reconnect, and we need to enlist all of our colleagues because there truly is strength in numbers. Today, those among us who distance themselves (for whatever reason) from joining their local, state and national music education associations will miss out on the opportunity to be a part of the resurgence of music education in our schools. We need their participation and you play an important role in bringing them along. Please encourage them to join their professional associations.

Last month I spoke about success and how failure leads us toward being successful. We did not cause our programs to fall off during the pandemic. We were victims of a system-wide loss. But now it's time to be optimistic about what's to come! You can have an impact and, you can choose to join the movement to make a renewed positive impact on the future of music education in our schools. Again, please carry this message to your colleagues!

Have a totally safe, happy, wonderfully fulfilling and healthy summer! Remember, what's next is also (to an extent) very much in your hands. See you in September! ||

"The vast possibilities of our great future will become realities only if we make ourselves responsible for that future." — Gifford Pinchot (1865-1946), American forester and politician.