

Russ Faunce – NYSSMA® President



## In New York State, We Do It BEDR!

**M**uch of my work as NYSSMA® president for the past 18 months has been building on the vision of NYSSMA® Immediate Past President Dr. David Brown, who created the NYSSMA® Belonging, Equity, Diversity and Representation (BEDR) Committee. David's initial thoughts focused on giving every child the opportunity and an invitation to create and experience music education at its finest.

During our consecutive presidencies, both David and I aimed to foster the understanding that music education in New York State needs to reflect the diverse and eclectic student population embodying and personifying the more than two million students served in the Empire State.

Almost two years later, after months of work led by our BEDR committee, we are at the crossroad where we must turn our words and ideas into measurable actions visible in every music classroom across New York State. NYSSMA® has done a good job of making some BEDR headway, but we have more work to do. As we begin the 2023-2024 school year, I encourage you to give the following questions some thought:

- Are you modeling belonging, equity, and inclusivity in your classroom?
- Are you creating an equitable classroom environment inclusive of a variety of learning styles?

- Is your lesson material filled with multicultural materials and resources?
- Is the vocabulary that you are using in your classroom free of discrimination and appropriate for learners from a variety of cultures, religions and traditions?
- Are your teaching methods fresh and contemporary and do they enable you to meet every child's individual needs?

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- Are your teaching resources accessible to all?
- Do you give students a voice?
- How do you address discrimination and intolerance in your classroom?
- Are you using music to explore aspects of personal identity, social challenges and societal issues?
- Are you exploring music by musicians from different backgrounds and traditions?

### **Advocacy is needed, too**

My good friend and colleague, NAfME President Scott Sheehan, prepared an at-a-glance flyer this past June titled The ABCs of Advocacy. In that document, President Sheehan uses the entire alphabet A-Z to highlight a series of descriptors that music education advocates and believers in a well-rounded music education for all children bring to the table.

My personal favorites were B, G, H, and J.

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#### **Bravery**

*Advocates must be brave and willing to stand up for what is right, even when it is uncomfortable.*

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As I look around New York State, I can easily find the bravest music educators on the planet. We're up for just about anything and will stop at nothing to achieve success.

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#### **Growth**

*Advocates must see the possibilities and be open to new ideas; every situation is an opportunity to grow.*

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Attention to promoting and enhancing your own personal growth and development allows you to reach your full potential, be your best self and live your happiest, most successful life. The 2023-2024 school year will be filled with

growth opportunities for you and your students. Allow yourself to embrace discomfort, identify things that may hold you back, and think outside the box.

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### **Heart**

*Advocates must make the message personal and know that to change minds we must first change hearts.*

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That big red heart in the “I Love NY” logo is just a small reminder that kindness, compassion and caring are what we are all about. The children that will be in your classrooms this fall have open hearts and open minds. Make 2023-2024 the year that the music you share in your classrooms and rehearsals fill those impressionable minds and hearts with future musical passion that has limitless potential. What greater gift can you give?

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### **Journey**

*Advocates focus on the process as well as the outcome; we're in it for the long haul.*

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If you're reading this article, you're already on the NYSSMA® journey. Allow our professional organization the opportunity to serve you and allow yourself to become part of the NYSSMA® family. NYSSMA® is a family that supports music education by promoting and producing appropriate activities and programs for its membership and students in member school music programs.

The biggest takeaway from Scott's article is the idea that your work as a music educator gives you the opportunity to build relationships. His ideas are innovative, creative, and a great inspiration to anyone who will be standing in front of a classroom full of children this September and throughout the school year. It is a reminder of the many ideals every good music educator takes into his or her daily routine. It is as a source of encouragement and motivation that I ask you to embrace as you begin a new school year.

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### **Please take the time to take a glimpse at Scott Sheehan's remarkably inspiring work.**

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YYY-qF1tz7mcfExo5yCMu9Giq3J9hGvFz/view>

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The importance of music education can never be understated. This school year is your opportunity to provide a musical experience for ALL children in which they feel welcome, accepted, and appreciated. I have chosen

“Building a BEDR Music Education for EVERY child in New York State” is the NYSSMA® winter conference theme. Whether you are planning to attend the conference or not, I would hope that you can find the grit to take the theme of this article into your rehearsals and classrooms and allow the students of New York State the opportunity to realize that you

are willing to make a difference in each of their lives this coming academic year.

### **Excitement awaits**

Welcome back, colleagues and friends, for what promises to be another exciting school year filled with magical musical opportunities that embody and surround a New York State talent pool of students who range from grade school students who are just mastering pitch matching to the 5,721 all-state applicants who auditioned to be part of a winter conference all-state ensemble.

Ludwig van Beethoven said, “Music can change the world.” Surely, he would have been a prominent NYSSMA® supporter (and I hope a member) had he known what an amazingly talented, and dedicated group of music educators there are in New York. May the joy you find in making music be evident each day with the students who are sitting in your chairs and standing on your risers. They want to make you proud! ||