

Personal Statement, Anne M. Fennell, M.Ed.

As a creative, learner-centered educator, I believe in lifelong learning and music education for all students, as well as casting a wide educational net so that every human can find themselves in and through music. Music is a creative and rigorous academic subject, and with creativity and critical thinking it improves the human condition through a personal expression that defines our own humanity and culture, through all voices and all people. This is a profound self-expression where humans can discover, make meaning, and share ideas, thoughts, and feelings through sound.

It is my dream and desire to have everyone experience the joy of creating and sharing music and to create a learner-centered music education that teaches to the whole musician. This whole musician is a creative artist that has a deep understanding, application, and connection to the many facets of music making. Music education is fundamental to teaching self-expression and the creative thinking processes. Our collective educational system can make the greatest impact in this because it is the largest global system that is able to affect immediate change. These changes will provide the thinking skills necessary to support the unknowns of our future, expand pathways for all learners, and to meet individual needs and cultivate culture.

Having successfully chaired the National Association for Music Education Innovations Council (NAfME, USA) for four years, and now as the California Music Educators Association President Elect (USA), I see the many unique needs of music education in diverse areas. I experienced these firsthand as a 32-year public school music educator, teaching grades K-12, prior to my current role as the Music Program Manager in San Diego Unified School District in San Diego, California, the second largest school district in the state. As a result of my experiences, I am keenly aware of the immediate needs of teachers, students, and programs, in addition to understanding the larger systems view. Yet, I continue to hold on to the possibilities of expanding pathways and ensembles, while also supporting current models. As a leader, I aspire to provide the understanding and groundwork for needed change while motivating others to be a part of a larger vision that serves individuals and the greater good.

I personally experienced a traditional, teacher-centered education that fed the egos of individuals and served single outcomes, all while holding each student to a narrow definition of a musician. I believe that I can help close the gap between the assumptions of traditional programs and the needs of expanding programs to support teachers and students as they co-create a lasting change with a relevant music education.

My hope is to guide an intentional shift in instruction that inspires all music educators to develop a learner-centered environment while teaching to the whole musician. This can be accomplished while providing opportunities to create a cultural and paradigm shift through an engaging curricula and student agency. We do not know what the next need in education will be. To that end, we must support the larger and deeper skills of creativity and critical thinking to create lifelong, curious, and active learners who engage in music as patrons, learners, and/or creators, knowing that they collectively create and define our culture and develop the individual.