

# **The Norwalk High School/Morrison Elementary School Steel Pan Band: Reflections on a Learning/Teaching Experimental Music Partnership Project**

**By Karen Calhoun**

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## **I. HISTORY OF THE LLSN PARTNERSHIP AT NORWALK HIGH SCHOOL AND MORRISON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

We all should be willing to take risks and to challenge ourselves with innovative and “outside the box” thinking; in fact, I feel innovative thinking should be a course for teachers in all subject areas. Innovative thinking not only helps us to grow as people and teachers, but also needs to be part of the invaluable lessons that we teach our students. When I started the Norwalk High School Steel Pan Band seven years ago, and began the partnership of working with the Morrison Elementary students three years ago, I had no idea that this class/partnership would actually alter the way that I reflected on the process of learning and teaching music. I was slowly trying to take risks and to think of ways to bring about change in a high school music department that needed transformation; I was also hoping that this partnership would spark new ways of thinking in the Norwalk-La Mirada Unified School District, which at the time did not employ any type of music teachers at the elementary level. However, through this partnership, innovation was about to happen “big time” at Norwalk High and for the entire District.

### **The Norwalk High School Steel Pan Band**

In 2000, after hearing a performance by a Southern California school’s steel pan band at a conference she was attending, the Norwalk-La Mirada USD Superintendent decided she wanted to bring that musical excitement to the Norwalk-La Mirada District. She offered to buy steel pans for every middle school and high school in the District, but out of the ten music teachers within the District, I was the only one who said yes. I was intrigued by the concept of starting a new multi-cultural music course that would appeal to a diverse student population, where students could study and perform on Caribbean instruments. A steel pan class was certainly the kind of “outside the box thinking” and “risks for change” that were needed in the Norwalk High Music Department. However, I knew the course was going to be a stretch for me. Though my background was in instrumental music, I had never attempted anything like this before.

It so happened that before the offer by the district superintendent, I had sat in on a “World Music Drumming for the Classroom” session led by Anne Fennell at a California Music Educators Association Convention. I remember saying to a colleague sitting next to me, “This is way too cool!” So when I returned to my classroom, I spoke with my Area Superintendent about adding world percussion instruments to some of the classes. Fortunately he liked the idea, and I soon had many types of African and Caribbean percussion instruments sitting in my classroom.

So now I was expanding my world music percussion ensemble even more. After much research I ordered the steel pans from Trinidad. Now it was time to get serious—I had approximately eight months until I would be teaching this new course. That spring I visited other programs with steel pans and learned what I could, and that summer I studied world percussion drumming and rhythms. I spent a month thinking about how to put the steel pans and world percussion together, so that I could include more students in the class.

Finally September arrived, and so did the challenges! The first challenge was to get the students to play a groove together. As this was the first time many of these students had ever taken a music class, most could not follow the groove or even keep a steady beat. We spent many classroom hours working on those grooves as well as learning to focus and listen. It seemed some of the students had trouble playing certain instruments and parts, so I started rotating them on different instruments until I found one that they could be successful with. At first, I had to work with the pan players and percussion players separately, but after about a month and a half, I was able to put the two groups together and begin the music-making process. When I started that first tune with the two groups playing together, I saw the smiles on the student’s faces. I remember thinking, “This is going to work.”

I began writing arrangements for steel pans and world percussion, since there wasn’t really a lot of music, if any, published for that type of instrumental group. The group worked hard to put together the grooves and tunes that were arranged for them to play. I also noticed that students were beginning to be able to move back and forth between different percussion instruments and could now play the different parts very easily. It was astonishing to see what a little ear-training and focusing could do, and how quickly.

We were soon ready to take our music out to the community. The Norwalk High Steel Pan Band was an instant hit! The first time they performed in public (the NHS Holiday Concert); they received an instant standing ovation. Since the steel pan band was a very different type of high school music ensemble, people were naturally excited about the music, but most of the entire band was successful because the students really enjoyed making music together and sounded great. As the Norwalk High Steel Pan Band’s reputation grew, they began to perform for more and more events including the California State PTA Convention and the California Music Educators Association Conference. Each year the new students in the group learned more quickly, as there were now returning students to help teach parts.

## **The Partnership with Morrison Elementary School**

In May of 2005, Marsha Guerrero, the Principal at Morrison Elementary School, approached me at a District function regarding a partnership between Morrison Elementary and Norwalk High. She asked if I would come to Boston with others from Morrison Elementary and the Music Center of Los Angeles County to the first MIENC-LLSN Conference. I wasn't sure at the time what type of partnership we could come up with between the high school and the elementary school. I already had a full schedule, teaching two extra classes a day at the high school. However, while I was sitting at that first MIENC-LLSN, my mind went into overdrive. Morrison's inquiry question involved the linking of "steady beat" to literacy, so I asked Marsha, "What about walking the Morrison students to the high school one day a week to study world percussion with the Steel Pan Band? The high school students could help teach the elementary students." Marsha jumped on the idea immediately. By the end of the conference, we had agreed to begin this partnership journey the next school year.

## **II. THE NORWALK HIGH SCHOOL/MORRISON ELEMENTARY LEARNING LABORATORY SCHOOL ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT**

### **YEAR ONE**

#### **Music and Mentorship: The Creation of the Norwalk High/Morrison Elementary Steel Pan Band**

I had decided to work with the Morrison students using the same curriculum as I had with the Norwalk students. I did not know exactly what to expect with regard to how this particular elementary age group (4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade) would learn this type of music, but I was eager to try things out and find out. I was fairly certain that working with these particular rhythm grooves would be a challenge for the Morrison students. When I first started teaching the World Percussion course at the High School in the fall of 2000, I found that learning rhythm and steady beat were the most difficult for the students to accomplish. Also, I had noticed over my years of teaching instrumental music, that the students who struggled the most in music were those that were having trouble with steady beat and rhythm. Thus, I felt that if the Morrison students could learn rhythm and steady beat in elementary school, perhaps it would open up an entirely new path to success in their future studies. I also thought it would be interesting to see how the high school students would work with the elementary students as mentors and what effect this relationship would have on their own progress as musicians. Perhaps in order to help the younger students become more proficient, the high school students would come to a more thorough understanding of what they were doing.

When school began in fall 2005, I told the high school students about our upcoming project, helping to teach world percussion and our band's percussion grooves to a group of elementary students from Morrison Elementary. I worked with the high school students on playing techniques, blend and balance, ear-training, and learning several percussion grooves. We had already put together several of the tunes that we were going

to play that year with the pan players. I also worked with the high school students on how to help teach the elementary students. When teaching the percussion grooves, I put students in a large circle facing each other (drumming circle). This way not only can they hear the beat, but they can also *see* the beat. I instructed the students in demonstration technique, posture, and a review of playing and drumming techniques. We also added more chairs to the drumming circle, so that the Morrison students could be strategically placed between the high school students to make it easier for them to reach over and help an elementary student.

By the last week of September, we were ready for the Morrison students. Marsha had worked out and taken care of all details at Morrison. The elementary students were chosen and ready to come. For consistency, Marsha and I had agreed that the elementary students would walk over to Norwalk every Wednesday morning. Since Norwalk High is on a 4x4 schedule, the classes were 90 minutes long. That meant that I would have almost as much time with the elementary students once each week.

Despite all our planning and practice, I was not prepared for what happened the first time the 22 Morrison students entered the world percussion room. I placed each elementary student next to a high school student within the drum circle, and we spent time on learning the names of each instrument, correct hand-placement, and playing technique. We worked on different parts and repetition of the parts. I walked around the drum circle helping different students while watching the high school student's work with the elementary students. The high school students were obviously enjoying teaching the elementary students, and were very patient with the learning process. They were doing a great job of demonstrating parts and helping the students to coordinate the repeated patterns.

Then toward the end of class I tried to put our first very easy groove together. I had the high school students begin the groove and then I added the elementary students part by part. It was a total mess! After all our work, I realized that the elementary students had no concept of steady beat. They also lacked basic focus and listening skills, along with coordination skills. They were trying, but what we were asking them to do was way over their heads. After that first class with the Morrison students, I thought "What have I gotten myself into?"

I knew I needed to rethink how I was going to teach the Morrison students. The elementary students were very excited to be learning to play percussion, but the high school students were a bit discouraged; they said that the elementary students were very cute, but were uncoordinated and couldn't keep a beat. I reminded my students that many of them had had similar challenges when they first started on percussion.

That whole week after the first visit with the Morrison students, I mapped out my revised plan for the second visit by the elementary students. I changed the groove that they would work on to one with more interaction between all the parts, so that the piece would hopefully flow easier for them.

First things first, however, we needed to learn and work on keeping a steady beat, which included learning about tempo and time. I worked with the high school students, before the Morrison students returned for the second week, on how to better teach and work out the coordination problems of the groove. “Let them watch you,” I said, “Demonstrate very slowly. Be patient. If the student still does not catch on, physically help them. Gently take their hands and play with them.”

When the Morrison students arrived for their percussion experience on week two, I felt that my high school students were better prepared to help teach. The Norwalk students were doing everything that we had worked on and were now more patient in mentoring the Morrison students. We also used verbal syllables to teach individual parts. I had the students say the syllables as they were playing their parts. Once again, just as I had done with the high school students, I moved students around on different parts if they were having trouble. I tried to match students with instruments and parts that they could be successful with. When students got off the beat, I stopped them and had them watch and listen to a high school student until they were comfortable with the beat and could rejoin with their part. I knew these techniques were also going to help to improve both their focusing skills and their listening skills.

By the end of the second class, most of the students were able to keep a steady beat and were actually playing the simple groove that we had worked on that day. I felt like we were finally on the right track. I took the students next door and had them listen to the steel pans for the very first time. You could see the excitement and amazement in their eyes. This was the first time that most of the Morrison students had ever heard or seen steel pans.

During the next few weeks, the Morrison students continued to grow musically and learn a few more percussion grooves. Their focusing and listening skills had also greatly improved. I would review the grooves the students had learned each week at the beginning of class, and then start teaching a new groove. The last part of class was spent with the percussion and steel pans putting the tunes together. I noticed that the Morrison students began to learn and pick up on the new grooves more quickly and were memorizing their parts extremely well (See Sidebar, Student Reflections)

I was proud of my Norwalk High “teaching students”; they were the key to the Morrison students’ success. I also noticed that not only did many of my high school students really enjoy teaching the elementary students, but also their own musicianship skills were also greatly improving! It seemed that my high school students were now able to learn new tunes more quickly and were also helping each other out with the music. (See Sidebar, Student Reflections).

It was now time to show what this group could do together. The Norwalk High Steel Pan Band all of a sudden became the Norwalk High/Morrison Elementary Steel Pan Band, and the group began performing in public. Together they were even more of a hit! As the word spread about the group, educators, administrators, and teaching artists from all over Southern California began visiting and documenting the teaching and learning that

was going on in the classroom. (see Sidebar, Tracy Garcia, “Pounding it into their Brain from *The San Gabriel Valley News*).

The Morrison students had done so well with the percussion grooves that it made me wonder if the same success could be had on pans. One week I surprised the Morrison students by assigning some of them to a high school student and a pan. I went over mallet technique and how to strike the pans, and then let the high school students start teaching. I picked out a very simple song from the Caribbean for the Morrison students to learn, and at the end of each class the Morrison students spent time with their assigned mentors working on learning their music on the steel pans. Once the Morrison students had learned their individual parts, we put the song together. They did well, but had trouble keeping the song going; they tended to lose their place when the song went back to the beginning. So then I put one of the high school players back on a melody pan in the middle of the group, and this was the confidence that the elementary students needed to stay on track with the song. All of a sudden the elementary students were playing the pans together, with all of the individual parts being played, and it was grooving. The Morrison students not only had to learn their individual independent parts, but also to begin and end the song together. This was not an easy task, but they did it!

That first year we did face some logistical challenges which, though slight on the surface, could easily have been overwhelming had the partnership not been so strong. For example, at some point during the beginning of the spring semester, I was forced to give up my temporary classroom due to modernization construction taking place at the high school. I spoke with Marsha Guerrero about the situation and asked her if she had any room for the class to meet at Morrison, and when she found us a room, we moved all the pans and percussion instruments into a portable classroom at Morrison. Now the high school students and I walked to the elementary school every morning, and then back to the high school for the rest of the day. I was just relieved that I still had a place to hold the class, but the new arrangement also worked better for Morrison, because they no longer had to find adults to make the four-block trek with the kids to Norwalk High.

The change in venue also provided a nice opportunity for community exchange. The elementary school kids had benefited from being in their high school mentors’ environment, but they and the Morrison faculty clearly enjoyed having the Steel Pan class being held on their campus, as now they got to enjoy the music every morning. Visiting the children’s school was also good for the Norwalk students. At first, they did not like having their class held at Morrison; they felt as if the high school had given away their steel pans and that Morrison was taking them away! So I tried to make the room as comfortable an environment as possible for them by hanging up as many Norwalk High posters, pictures and signs as I could find. Although it took a few weeks, they finally began to call the room at Morrison “home.”

By the end of our first year together, the Morrison students had all learned how to keep a steady beat and had memorized numerous African and Caribbean percussion grooves, and assigned students had learned to play and perform two songs on the pans. I was so impressed with what these elementary students had accomplished with just one music

lesson per week, especially since most of those students had never had any formal musical training. Many others were impressed with what they could do also. I wondered what the next year might have in store.

## **YEAR TWO**

### **The Beat Goes On: More Music and Mentorship with the Norwalk-Morrison Steel Pan Band**

During the 2006-2007 school year, the Norwalk High Steel Pan class was still being taught on the Morrison Elementary School campus. When I walked the high school students over to Morrison on the second day of school, Marsha Guerrero was at the classroom door to welcome the high school students. She then pulled me aside and said, “Karen, the fourth graders that you had playing with you last year saw the steel pan class walk onto campus. They came running into the front office very excited. What should I do?” I thought for a second and said, “Send them down!”

All of a sudden approximately 10-12 fifth graders started walking into our classroom with gleaming smiles on their faces. It was only day two of the school year, and they wanted to be in music class learning! I had just given out pan assignments and a tune assignment for the high school students who would be on pans for the year. They were very excited to get started. I then took the high school percussion players and the fifth graders next door with the percussion instruments to begin working on the grooves that we would be using for the year. I started by talking about steady beats, tempos, and correct playing techniques, and then began teaching an easy groove. What happened next was really amazing. The fifth graders remembered most of their parts and were actually helping some of the new high school students learn their parts. The elementary students were actually helping me teach!

The learning and grooving of the percussion parts came fairly easy within the first three weeks of school. I now attribute that to the fact that the elementary students who had been with the project the previous year got to come in beginning the very first Wednesday of the school year. This not only allowed the returning fifth graders to review everything that they had learned their first year, but also to help the new high school students learn their parts. The percussion players were not only memorizing their parts and the grooves, but were beginning to keep a good steady beat with the grooves. The new high school students had picked up the parts, and we were actually working on blend and balance within the first three weeks of school. However, I knew that this was all going to change when the new group of fourth graders would be assigned to the project the next week.

I had talked with both the high school and fifth grade students about helping out to teach the incoming fourth grade students the percussion parts; however, the first class with the fourth graders was as difficult as I expected. Once again, most of them could not keep a steady beat, so for a while we worked on just that, clapping a steady beat. I had the students stepping to a steady beat, while the older students played a percussion groove. I was trying to step with them to get their entire body feeling the beat, but some of these

students had absolutely no coordination. Once again, a huge challenge lay ahead of us. After class, apparently all the fifth graders went running to Marsha's office to tell her that none of the fourth graders could keep time, that they were just awful, and that I was very upset! Marsha quickly reminded them about what they were like the previous year, and how it took them a few weeks to catch on to keeping a steady beat and to coordinate the percussion. She told the fifth graders that it was their responsibility to help the fourth graders learn.

Well, what happened next absolutely astonished me. Apparently, the fifth graders began working with the fourth graders that very week during recess and breaks! The next Wednesday when the Morrison students came in, the fifth graders were actually sitting next to a fourth grader helping them. The students who were having the most difficulty I still had to stop, so they could focus and listen until they felt comfortable enough to try again, but overall there was great improvement that second week. The fifth graders continued to work with the fourth graders outside of class time. The NHS pan players also were making great progress learning their parts, so it was easy for me to begin putting a lot of tunes together. Even with just the one rehearsal per week with the Morrison students, the group rapidly came together.

This was fortunate, as during this time I received a letter from the California Music Educators Association informing us that the Norwalk/Morrison Steel Pan Band had been chosen to perform for the State Music Educators Convention. The students were all very excited to hear this and began to work even harder. I assigned pans to the fifth graders who had played pans the previous year, then added some fourth graders, selecting the students who were able to keep a steady beat and pick-up parts rather easily. The Norwalk High students worked with the Morrison students on pans, helping them to read the music as well as to learn the pan parts. We began putting together the tunes that the Morrison students would play on pans, and it seemed as though they were learning the tunes very quickly. I could tell some of the students were beginning to develop a talent for music, as well as playing percussion and pans. My goal was to challenge the students musically as much as possible while still maintaining a high standard of excellence for performance quality. (See Sidebar, Student Reflections)

When the new year (2007) came, the students were polished and ready to begin performing. I was glad that we had a performance scheduled at Disneyland for the Community Arts Showcase so that the kids could shake any nerves before the presentation at the CMEA Convention. Both performances went off flawlessly; the Morrison students performed like pros that had played pans forever. Audience members were not only impressed with what the group as a whole could do musically, but with what the Morrison students had accomplished. The students from both schools were very proud of their performance and what they had accomplished. They were extra thrilled with the time that they got to spend in the Exhibit Hall, as they were able to play on and with a variety of instruments.

The students gave impressive performances for the rest of the school year; I grew more and more amazed at what these high school and elementary students could do. I was also

very impressed with the patience and the teaching skills that the high school students had developed. In their reflections at the end of the three-year project, many of them said they not only considered themselves musicians but teachers too. They were well-prepared and eager to pursue both roles further. (See Sidebar, Student Reflections)

### **YEAR THREE**

#### **...and On and On and On: More Music and Mentorship with the Norwalk-Morrison Steel Pan Band**

One interesting development in 2007-2008 was that the district was beginning efforts to put the “Arts” back into the classrooms, and I was selected by the Superintendent to coordinate this effort for the district. My position was housed at the District Office, which meant that I would no longer direct the Instrumental Music Program at Norwalk High. Fortunately, I was still able to direct the Steel Pan Band as an extra assignment, so I could continue my work with the NHS/Morrison Music Project.

However, since a large number of seniors graduated from the Norwalk/Morrison Steel Pan Band in 2007, I was a little concerned about what I would be able to accomplish with the group this school year. After selecting who would play the pans, I realized that the students left to play the percussion parts were mostly freshmen who had no musical experience at all. After going over parts and tunes with the pan students, I took the percussion players outside and began working on teaching parts and grooves. I had to rotate instruments once again to find a good fit for each student. We would work on keeping a steady beat, but it seemed some of the students had a hard time keeping the patterns going and needed some extra one-on-one help.

I knew Marsha was keeping a pilot class of sixth graders at Morrison that year, some of whom had been percussion/pan players since fourth grade. Although I knew that these sixth graders would be a big help to me when it came to teaching the incoming fourth grade students, I did not realize at the time just how big that help was going to be with the high school students. One morning that first week of school I called Marsha and asked if she could send the sixth graders over, and soon I had about ten sixth graders helping to teach the high school students. The Morrison students not only remembered the grooves, but also worked with the high school students to help them learn the percussion parts. If someone had told me three years before that something like this would happen, I would have said, “Not possible!” I brought the sixth graders down to help teach a few times, which helped the high school students learn the grooves and parts much faster and gave me more time to work with the pan players, who were new to the pans and so required a little more help than usual. It seemed that the grooves were beginning to flow by the second week of school when we were joined by the fifth graders—who, to my amazement, also remembered their parts and the grooves from the previous school year!

October saw the usual challenge when the new fourth graders joined the group, and once again, most of them could not keep a steady beat. I placed them in between a fifth or sixth grader and a high school student, and rotated them on instruments to find a good fit.

The elementary students were great with peer coaching. I had only one melody pan that I needed to fill this year for the elementary players, and I chose a little fifth grader named David for the challenge. It seemed that the rest of the Morrison pan players were back for a second or third year, and after a quick review, they were once again playing tunes on the pans; inspired by his peers' confidence on the instrument, the new player David caught on very quickly. I told Marsha that the students were so accomplished on percussion and pans that Morrison really could have its own steel pan band!

At this writing (January 2008) the performance season is about ready to begin again for this year. I am sure that this group will once again astound audiences with their talent. I feel great about what they have accomplished thus far. This has been a fascinating journey with the Norwalk/Morrison Music Partnership. It has not only given the Morrison Elementary students an opportunity to study on different percussion instruments (including pans), but also to perform in public in a multicultural music ensemble. It has given high school students the opportunity to mentor elementary students in music, while at the same time improving their own musicianship skills. It has influenced graduating seniors to consider careers in education. This project has allowed me the opportunity to refine my teaching skills for all levels. It has made me think about the process of learning, the value of music in education, and about taking chances. It has taught each and everyone involved about patience.

### **Teaching Skills To Keep In Mind With Music Groups**

- When first starting a class learning rhythms and grooves, put the class in a learning formation that will allow for both the hearing and seeing of the beat (circle).
- Work first on focusing and listening skills.
- Slow things down—don't try and teach everything at once.
- Get the students focusing on a steady beat.
- Teach parts in phrases.
- Place students with instruments/parts on which they can be successful. (Try the students out on several different instruments and parts until an instrument/part is found with which the students are comfortable).
- Don't be afraid to rotate parts to challenge students.
- Take time to listen to what is happening with the music.
- If a student is having trouble with their part in the groove or the beat, have the student stop playing until they are refocused and are able find the beat and their place in the groove. Then allow the student to restart.
- Repetition, Repetition, Repetition.
- Assign vocal syllables to help learn correct rhythms.
- HAVE FUN, HAVE PATIENCE!

## **Student Reflections: Norwalk High/Morrison Elementary Students Speak About their Partnership**

*In April of 2008, I sat down with the 6<sup>th</sup> grade students whom I had started working with three years ago at the beginning of the Norwalk High/Morrison Elementary School Partnership and engaged them in a conversation about their thoughts on the “3-year musical journey” they had participated in. The following is a report on that conversation.*

*Karen:* I want you to think back three years (when you were in 4<sup>th</sup> grade) to the very first time that you walked over to Norwalk High School to begin studying music and world percussion. What were your thoughts after that first class?

*Student Responses:*

- “I wanted to go back again for more music.”
- “I was confused by all the rhythms.”
- “It was very hard to learn all the rhythms and music.”
- “It was hard to memorize all the parts of the music.”
- “It was fun learning the music. It was something new.”

*Karen:* Talk a little about your thoughts when you were first assigned to learn to play the steel pans.

*Student Responses:*

- The whole group exclaimed “oooooh” together and smiled. All said that they had “really accomplished a lot in three years. It has been fun learning all the tunes on the pans.”
- “I really liked working with the high school students on pans.”
- “The pans were very hard—I didn’t think that I would be able to do it.”
- “I had to practice a lot to make it sound good.”
- “You really had to work and concentrate on the music.”

*Karen:* Do you think that this experience of studying and performing music has helped you with your other school studies?

*Student Responses:*

- “Yes. It really helped me to learn to focus and concentrate on what I am doing in other subjects.”
- “I felt like I had to keep up in my other subjects or Mrs. Guerrero would not let me be in percussion class anymore. I didn’t want to get kicked out!”
- “I concentrate now on what I am doing in other subjects.”
- “We had expectations to keep up our work that we missed in our regular class when we were in percussion and steel pans.”
- All said that they were “going to hold high expectations for themselves in middle school.”

*Karen:* Are there any other thoughts that you would like to add?

*Student Responses:*

- “I think it has been a good experience.”
- “I feel really lucky that I got picked as a 4<sup>th</sup> grader to be in this class.”
- “I’m glad that I got to be in the class. I learned to read music.”
- “I feel like my listening skills have improved.” (Many agreed to that comment).
- “I feel like when I leave Morrison that I will still be with the Norwalk High Steel Pans because there will be pans at the middle school.”

*Note:* The principals at both middle schools that Morrison students feed into have ordered steel pans and will incorporate a World Percussion course into the middle school curriculum. Morrison students will now have the opportunity to further their musical studies in world percussion and pans, and perhaps will be able to mentor their peers in this style of music.

*I also gathered a group of high school students who had been with the partnership for two years to add their thoughts about working with the Morrison students. (There were no high school students in the program who had been with the Morrison students all three years). I did not ask any direct questions of the high school students, as I wanted them to speak freely about their thoughts on the partnership. The following are some excerpts from this conversation.*

*Norwalk Student Responses:*

- “It was cool that we had the opportunity to help the elementary students learn music. It’s been fun watching them develop their musicianship skills over three years. Not many people get to do what we got to do.”
- “By me getting to teach the Morrison students music, I became a better musician. I knew that I had to stay on the top of my game musicianship-wise.”
- “It was fun teaching the elementary students, and stressful at the same time. What if they didn’t get it? It was also fun seeing them grow because they were so small.”
- “It really helped me to improve my musicianship skills. I really had to focus on learning the music. I have decided after this experience that I want to be a teacher. I had fun teaching in the class. It made me happy when they finally could play the music and they got happy.”
- “It was fun. I really didn’t know how to play pans very well. It forced me to learn in order to teach them. It has made me a better musician. It has helped with developing my patience. Now I really have patience. I didn’t even realize that I could teach. Next year for my senior project, I want to teach music to a group of younger students.”
- “At first, it was a learning experience just for me. I really didn’t know much about playing music. It has helped me to really improve my musicianship skills. Now, I want to be a musician. It was cool teaching the elementary students.”
- “It was fun teaching the elementary students. I started with them their second year in the group. They were already developing a talent for music.”

- “When I first started, I didn’t know anything about world percussion. The class is a lot of hard work and commitment. It has been fun teaching kids with no experience in music. It is fun watching their musicianship skills grow.”