



CLAIRE LEATH & BECKY STEWART

EMPOWERING MELODIES

Innovating Instrumental Music Education for Underserved Students





Becky Stewart

Becky Stewart is in her ninth year of teaching music at Yuba Gardens Intermediate in Olivehurst, CA. She graduated from honors from Sacramento State with a bachelor's degree in music performance and music education and holds a masters degree in music education from American Band College.

Becky has won numerous awards in her tenure including CMEA Middle School Specialist and Title I Music Educator of the Year.

Becky serves on the CMEA Capitol Section Board as the Advocacy Representative.




Claire Leath

Claire is in her eighth year of teaching music, and second year at Vassal Lane Upper School in Cambridge, MA. She graduated with honors from the University of Rhode Island with a Bachelor of Music in Music Education, and holds a Masters in Music Education from American Band College.


Claire has been published in the Massachusetts Music Educators Journal, and has presented professional development sessions in Cambridge.

Claire has taught K-12 music in Title 1 schools, including competitive marching band, high school band, and middle school band. She is currently the Manager for the Eastern District Junior Honor Band.



OUR MISSION

We strive to empower music teachers with knowledge to help all students access instrumental music education equally and successfully, especially in underserved communities and Title I schools.





WHY?



Everybody wants to *be successful and feel good about their education-* the tools needed to succeed differ greatly for underserved student communities.

Despite the differences in needs, the teaching strategies used are often the same between communities, and even student to student.

By providing instruction that meets all of our students needs, we can *help all students feel successful and welcome in instrumental music spaces, while still producing high-quality performances.*

WHAT DOES A TITLE I SCHOOL LOOK LIKE?

- Mostly located in urban and rural areas with a high poverty index
- Often low parent involvement in school (lack of car, work schedule, bad experiences with school in the past)
- Students often are responsible for childcare or income for their families
- Many families experience food and housing insecurities, with only 35% owning a home
- Many cultures, languages, and identities represented
- Students are more likely to live with one parent, and to have a high mobility rate

RESOURCE CONTINUUM

UNDER- RESOURCED

RESOURCED

Instability/Crisis.....Stability
Isolation.....Community
Dysfunction.....Functionality
Concrete reality.....Abstract, representational reality
Casual, oral language.....Formal, written language
Thought polarization.....Option seeking
Survival.....Abundance
Poverty.....Wealth
No work/intermittent work.....Work/Careers/Larger Cause
Less educated.....More educated

YUBA GARDENS DATA

ENGLISH LEARNERS

30%

FOSTER YOUTH

0.8%

HOMELESS

2.3%

MIGRANT

0.3%

SOCIOECONOMICALLY
DISADVANTAGED

85.3%

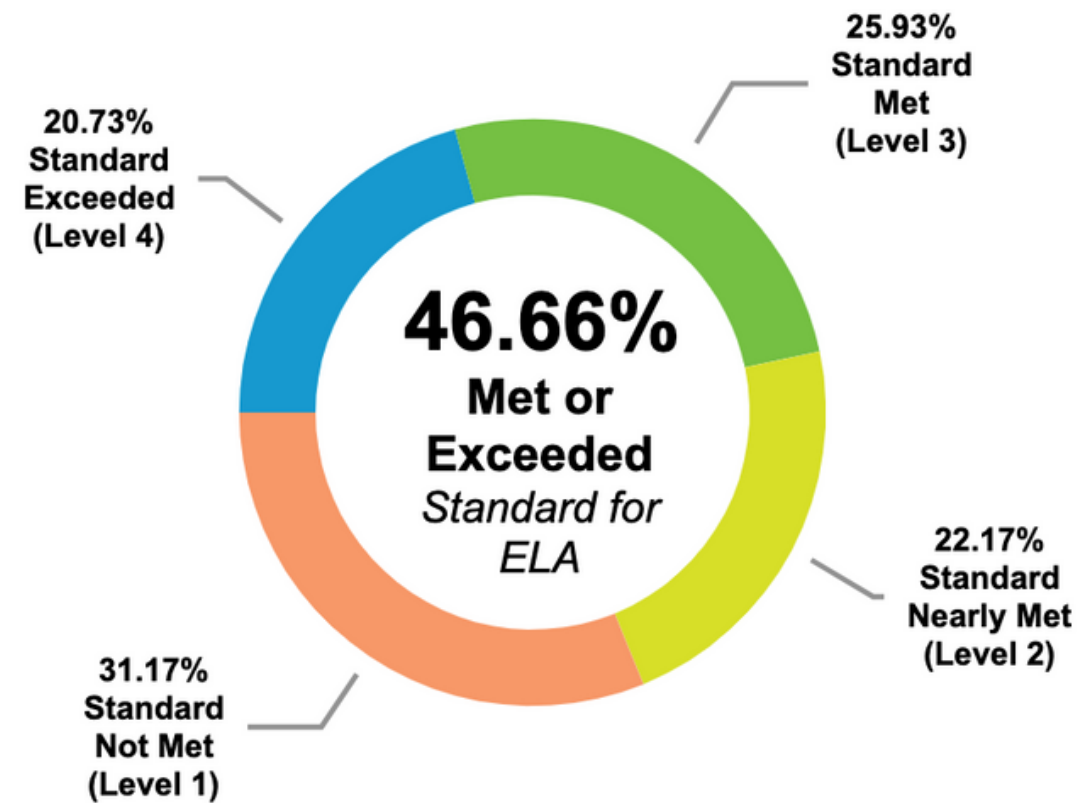
STUDENT WITH
DISABILITIES

14.5%

YUBA GARDENS DATA

ELA

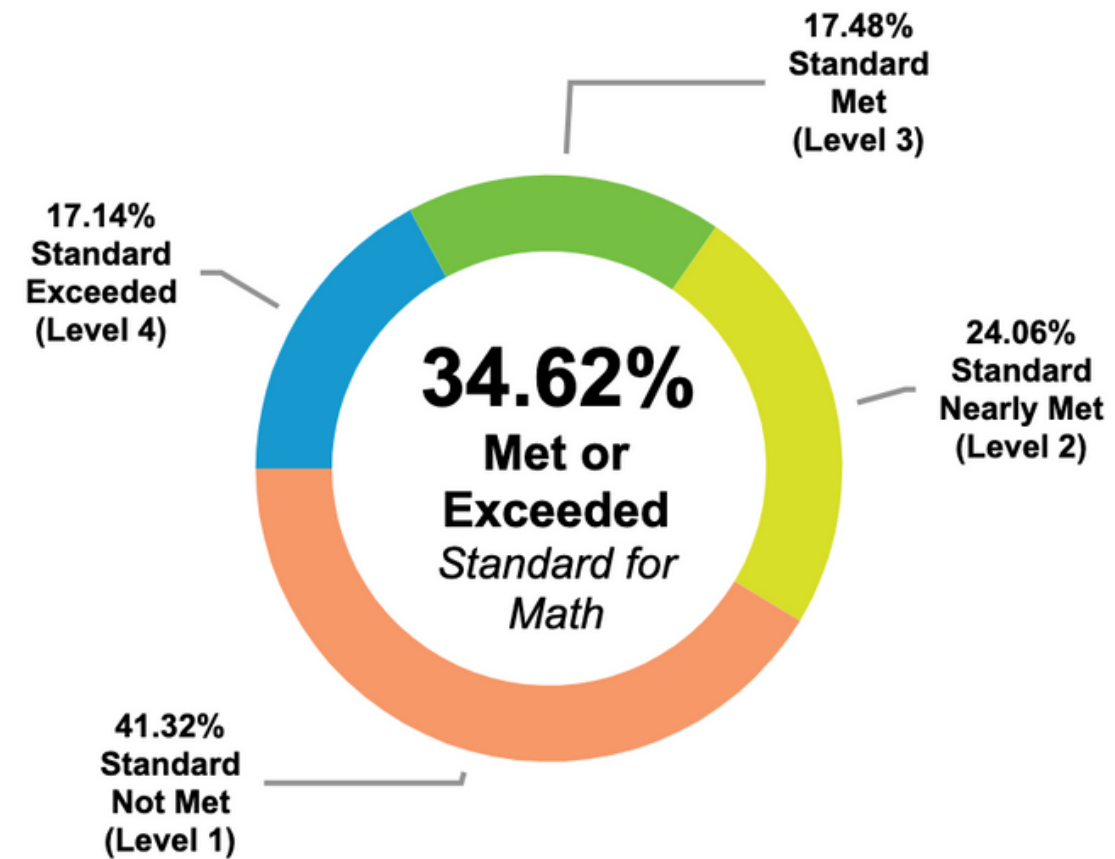
Percent of students within each achievement level



[VIEW ELA DETAILED TEST RESULTS](#)

Mathematics

Percent of students within each achievement level




[VIEW MATH DETAILED TEST RESULTS](#)


CPSD DATA

Race/Ethnicity	District	State
Total # of Classes	3,848	469,247
Average Class Size	14.5	17.2
Number of Students	6,664	926,254
African American %	23.1	9.4
Asian %	12.9	7.3
Hispanic %	14.4	23.8
White %	39.1	54.9
Native American %	0.2	0.2
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander %	0.1	0.1
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic %	10.3	4.3

Student Group	2022-2023
First Language not English	32.4%
English Language Learner (EL)	8.2%
Low Income/Economically Disadvantaged¹	35.3%
Students with Disabilities	22.9%
High Needs²	51.5%



**Factors that
could change
a students
ability to
engage in the
classroom...**



- FINANCIAL
- EMOTIONAL
- MENTAL/COGNITIVE
- SPIRITUAL
- PHYSICAL
- SUPPORT SYSTEM
- RELATIONSHIPS/ROLE MODELS
- KNOWLEDGE OF HIDDEN RULES
- LANGUAGE/FORMAL REGISTER

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Instrumental music is the only class in which students are still expected to sit, listen, and comply silently- why is it a surprise when they struggle to meet these expectations?

The traditional, military-style instrumental music curriculum does not take into account anything about the students in the ensemble, and strongly caters to affluent, neurotypical, well-supported individuals.

Most teachers are expected to use strategies from teaching methodologies such as UDL and SEI to ensure ways for all students to access the curriculum equitably- why is this not the case for instrumental music?

Why are we as a community so resistant to updating these practices?

A PEDAGOGICAL CRISIS



-DR. CYNTHIA JOHNSON TURNER,
AMERICAN BAND COLLEGE 2021



“Conductor on the Podium” Model



“A CHILD IN A (LOW INCOME) HOME RECEIVES TWO NEGATIVE COMMENTS TO ONE POSITIVE WHILE A CHILD IN A (AFFLUENT) HOUSEHOLD RECEIVES SIX POSITIVES TO ONE NEGATIVE”

-B. HART & T.R. RISLEY, MEANINGFUL DIFFERENCES IN THE EVERYDAY EXPERIENCE OF YOUNG AMERICAN CHILDREN

Alternative Practices



Student voice during full ensemble rehearsal

“The person doing the talking is
the person doing the learning”



Be in the rehearsal with your students

Don't be afraid to get off the
podium!



Consider your negotiables



Practice & Testing Expectations

Alternative Practices



Band Karate & Flexible Testing

Why do we have kids test by themselves in front of everyone?




Structured Practicing in Class

Tell them how and what to practice. "Practice that for 1 minute and we'll do it again!"



1 at home, 1 at school

Great use for "Amazon instruments"

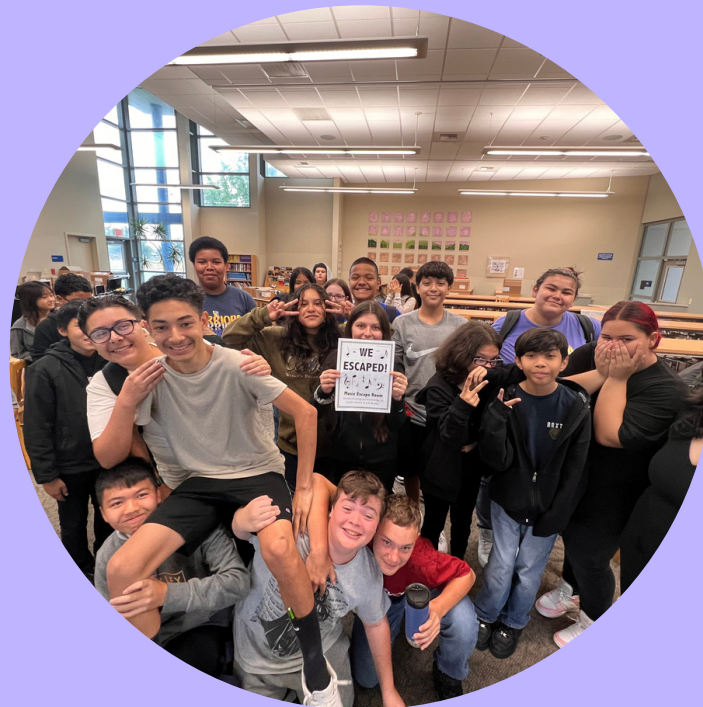


Music Literacy

**Source: “Meaningful Differences in the
Everyday Experience of Young American
Children” by B. Hart & T.R. Risley**

# of Words Exposed to	Economic Group
13 million words	Low Income
26 million words	Middle Class
45 million words	Affluent

Alternative Practices



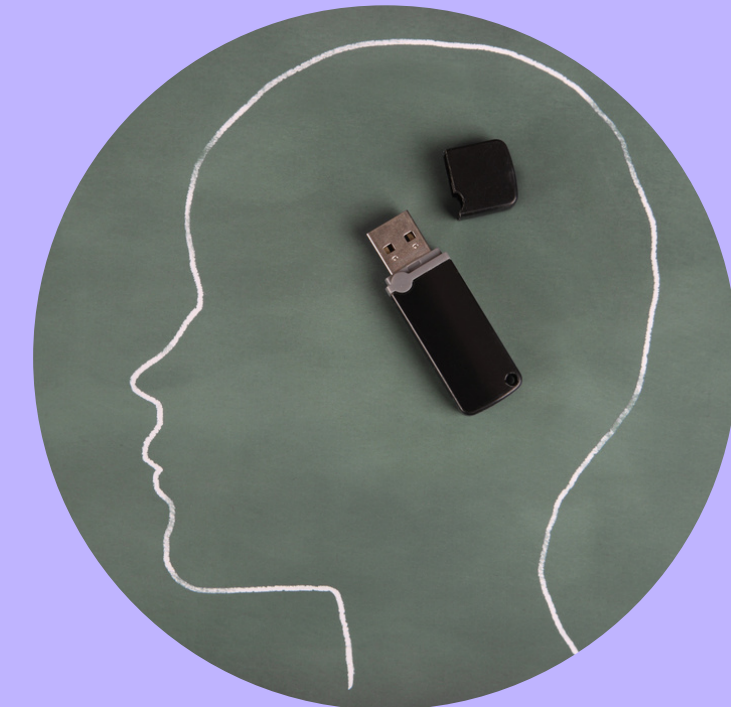
Meet Them Where They Are

Go slow - be picky.



Music Notation Accommodations

Know which students need accommodations and have music ready for them.



Trauma & Long Term Memory

They have a more difficult time committing information to long-term memory.

Alternative Practices



Alternative Forms of Music Making

Ostinato patterns & melody, rote, improv with a track.



Unison Sightreading

Melody and rhythm



SmartMusic

It helps immensely with tracking!

Repertoire Selection

Who are you
programming the
piece for?





Seating Placement

Alternative Practices



Rotate Parts

Everyone can improve on every part.



Mixed Instrumentation Seating

Melody and rhythm

Other Things To Consider

All students can benefit from consistency, structure, and routine

If you were out for a week, could your students tell a sub what the routine is?

Maintain high expectations for ALL students

Class trackers

Consider equity of after school commitments

Mutual respect goes a long way

- Ask questions!
- Pronouns & Name Pronunciation
- Cultural Norms

Scenario: A student walks in with a blue clarinet... what do you do?

SUGGESTED READING

- *A Framework for Understanding Poverty: A Cognitive Approach* by Ruby K. Payne, Ph. D
- *Choosing Help Over Hurt: Successful Habits for Teaching Band in Underserved Communities* by Linard McCloud and Scott Rush
- *Inclusion in Band and Orchestra: Effectively Supporting Students with Exceptionalities* by Emily Kelley
- National Literacy Institute
- WIDA
- *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children* by B. Hart & T.R. Risley
- *High Needs, Monumental Successes: Teaching Music to Low-Income and Underserved Students* by Don Stinson
- **Article:** *Low Income And First Generation Students' Engagement Of Authority Figures*
- **Article:** *Cultivating a Pedagogy of Student Voice*