

# WORLD MUSIC DRUMMING

## Transforming Lives . . . Building Community

### Tips for Working with Stakeholders

By Dawn Ashton

Drumming is powerful. Research shows that drumming helps students become smarter academically while building life skills of focus, teamwork, and respect. Yet, drumming is powerful beyond the benefits for the individual student or your ensemble as a whole.

Including parents, co-workers, local administration, community members, and state level administration within your drumming classroom is increasing in importance. You know your students are improving and growing beyond the notes. It is vital you share this with your stakeholders. This is not accomplished overnight but you can make changes that will make it possible.

1. Long before anyone is interested in what happens within your classroom you must prepare your students. Ask them who they might like to come visit. Discuss what they think is most important when a visitor comes and then clearly state your expectations. Consider having guests join the ensemble. Discuss what happens if someone messes up and a visitor is present. Remind students that it is your job to help them succeed.
2. **“You’re welcome in my classroom anytime!”** is the phrase I often say to teachers, parents, administration, community members, and most recently to the Superintendent of Public Education for my state. I say this in the school hallways, grocery aisles, and in the stands at a basketball game. An open door policy is important albeit a slightly scary one.
3. You are the authority in your classroom. Whatever you are teaching is the most important thing that needs to be taught in that moment. Do not panic when someone enters your room. Your students will follow you and do their best to create a positive visitor experience.
4. Invite guests to play with your ensemble. It is okay if they “just watch.” If they choose to play, allow the student to teach the guests. No matter the child’s age, you have given them the tools they need to successfully share their knowledge. Then, either sit quietly or address the remaining visitors. Don’t wait too long. Start as normal. It might sound great or it resemble a disaster. Either way this moment is for making memories.
5. Thank visitors for joining your group. Congratulate them on their efforts. Even if they barely played the part, recognize that they were bold enough to try. Trying is half the battle. Usually they are grinning from ear to ear and stuttering about the fun and challenge of their experience. Often I hear, “Did you know how **hard** that is!?”
6. Invite visitors to return. Will they be bold enough to play next time? Maybe. Will your group have learned something more challenging? Maybe. Will you impact the lives of your visitors **and** students? Definitely.
7. Always chat with your students afterwards. Be excited about the visit. Appreciate their focus and willingness to teach someone.

8. Purposely plan informal events where parents are invited to experience their child's drumming. Invite school faculty for similar reasons. Have children deliver the invitations if possible. It is much harder to say no to a child than for a parent or co-worker to say no to "one more thing" at the end of a long day.
9. If you receive an invitation to perform outside your classroom, the suggestions above still apply. Community interaction with your students and drumming creates the essential bonds you need between your stakeholders and the increased success of your drumming program.

In eleven years, parents, teachers, support staff, principals, school superintendents, fellow music teachers, news reporters, Rotarians, city volunteers, and members of retirement communities have drummed with my students. I am never disappointed by my students. Instead, I am amazed at their willingness to share the drumming they enjoy with anyone. Student enthusiasm, and their inherent "cute factor," are some of your biggest assets. Invite the world into your classroom and let them experience the power of World Music Drumming.

**You're welcome in my classroom anytime!**

Dawn Ashton teaches general music to grades PreK-6 at Hawthorne Elementary School in Elkhart, Indiana where she also directs her growing drumming program called Drum2Change. Dawn has a BME from Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana. She returned to Oconomowoc in 2016 to participate in WMD Level 3 for the 6<sup>th</sup> time.

Here are the links to 3 news articles/coverage:

ABC57 Cool Schools

<http://www.abc57.com/story/31243710/cool-schools-music-program-helping-students-succeed-academically>

IDOE Promising Practices

<http://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/outreach/20160601-hawthorneelementaryschool.pdf>

Superintendent Glenda Ritz visits Hawthorne

[https://www.facebook.com/ElkhartCommunitySchools/photos/?tab=album&album\\_id=1162264107153579](https://www.facebook.com/ElkhartCommunitySchools/photos/?tab=album&album_id=1162264107153579)

