



## World Music Drumming Transforming Lives . . . Building Community

### Make Yourself Essential / Indispensable

by Will Schmid, Ph.D.

These are tough economic times, and I wouldn't be surprised if you are thinking about job security. Whether we like it or not, federal, state, and local governments will be tightening budgets for some time to come. Given this scenario, what happens to your music program and your job will depend on your actions now.

Even in the toughest budgetary times, some areas of education grow while others shrink. When creating budgets, priority always goes to those programs that are *essential* to the future health and needs of the school community. The budget losers are those programs that appear unessential or frivolous. Although we all strongly believe that music is essential, there are many, even in school communities, who think of music as extra-curricular — the dessert on the menu.

So the question is: How can you position yourself and your music program as *essential* and even *indispensable*?

World Music Drumming has a motto that may be a clue to the direction you could take. Our motto, *Transforming Lives . . . Building Community*, comes directly from the key words built into the curriculum — words like *respect, community, focus, listening, teamwork*. We believe that learning World Music Drumming is much more than just learning music — it is a transformational experience that creates a new sense of community as witnessed in these reports by World Music Drumming teachers like you:

“. . . these [profoundly disabled] kids are responding to the drumming, to the spirit of it all, to the community, to the sounds and rhythms, to the success building on success, to the physical movement, to the aural/oral teaching methods, to everything!” – Mary Dietz, MT

“Several of my 8th grade students served as mentors when we took the drums to a senior citizens' holiday party last week. We had about 42 participants in the drum circle (mostly in their late 70s and 80s). We taught them to play Ensemble 1. Throughout the event, the students moved around the circle, offering assistance and support where needed. Everyone had a great time! They earned community service credit for their participation too.” – Andie Kay, CA

“A curious thing is happening here since the advent of the WMDrum curriculum this year. My native Alaskan students, especially the older boys, are suddenly participating, even emerging as leaders of our ensemble. Last year I never heard any of them sing. They often just sat, silently and respectfully, until class was over. Now they sing, they play, they participate! They even come up to me after class to share ideas based on things they learned in their village. It is so exciting. We are planning an Alaskan native drumming unit, and I have some Yupik elders coming to help the students make their own hoop drum.” – Linda Mason, AK

“My World Music Drumming course for 7th and 8th graders has been a huge success. It has built a fire under the whole middle school. I have kids running into my room between classes saying, “I can’t WAIT to take this class!” We used Ensemble 1 with the choir in the Holiday concert and will use it again in the Spring concert. The administration is very happy with me! – Linda Lanier-Keosaian, NY

“Many good things are happening in little Oxford, Michigan. Kids are fired up! The *Thunder Drummers* were asked to play for the Welcome Back Breakfast for the entire district — all faculty, staff — administrative types were there. And the kids played beautifully! We played "Bobobo" and the kids nailed it! (I think!!! :-) There's a tangible sense of pride when they master a piece — they sound good, look good, and get LOTS of kudos from adults and kids. Man, how do you put a value on that? – Jan Flynn, MI

“My classes are going wonderfully well. The students (and faculty and staff) are so into the drumming. We have a very multicultural population, and it has had an amazing effect on the school! I was so apprehensive about my ability to remember everything from this summer, but after a few classes I no longer needed the book, and I have also taught students to be the leader. And of course that opens them up with greater self-esteem and self-confidence. The "behaviorally challenged" students are stepping up to the plate to be leaders. — the change is amazing. I am so appreciative of your vision with this program. My students are truly becoming better students and even more importantly better young people in general! – Trudie Myers, MD

“So this young man was playing his drum part (kind of) and getting faster and faster. (Ensemble 7, Waters of Babylon) Finally I had him stop and listen to the bell part. And he said, "Oh, I get it! I don't play always at the same time as her (the bell player), but the pieces fit together like a puzzle." I got all excited and jumped up and down in my chair. I then told him that life was like that. When you're listening and doing your part, your part (in life) will mesh with other people's parts and make the whole more interesting. Hopefully this won't be the only time in his life where he is a part of something greater than himself in a positive way. (Those opportunities have been few and far between for him, with very limited success this entire year.) Only time will tell. But I could tell that he was excited to finally "get it." – Julie Schramke, MN

“One parent told me that his child is IMPOSSIBLE to get up in the morning, but on the days he has drum club he "bounces" out of bed and hustles everyone else in the house. We're slowly changing the climate of our school, and we are both very happy with the results.” –Carrie Staub, MD

“We were awarded a \$3,300 grant. The person who fought for us said he was so touched to see the heart and spirit in middle school students and they were pleased to support our innovative effort!” – Monica Loebel-Ward, CA

“By choice, every classroom teacher is playing with their class and several district administrators are coming to play also.” – Mari Schay, OR

“...it's neat how this program reaches some of the quietest kids...the ones who might otherwise be invisible...and gives them a chance to shine. It brings you into touch with your students at a deeper level. How sad I feel for teachers who have never looked into the eyes of a student who is right "on" with the music... who looks at you and smiles that smile that says ‘Look what I can do! This is cool!’ I am so lucky to be a music teacher!” – Lynne Carlstein, WI

“I am thrilled by the responses from my students, parents and community when we share our drumming. Our Sixth Grade did a short presentation for the School Board. Many questions were asked about World Music Drumming, Professional Development for our teachers and impact on student achievement.” – Katie Hofmann, OH

“Thanksgiving Day weekend, my D.R.U.M.S. ensemble was invited to perform in the Naperville Hometown Holiday Parade. My kids all have behavioral disorders or autism spectrum disorders. We started off the parade with "Ensemble 2," passing sticks around for improvisatory solos. Then we did a rhythm round with drumsticks. The crowd was so enthusiastic about our boys. I did not know that the parade was being judged – afterwards I found out that we placed third out of thirty entries. No consideration was made or given to us because of our "special education" status. We participated in a normal activity and won on our own merit. We had something tangible to prove that "hard work pays off." The boys are so proud of themselves.” – Scott Houlne Iseminger, IL

“I slipped into the back of the room to find about 10 kids jamming together — a young boy just entering 3rd grade, a tiny little girl, a junior counselor (graduate from the program), and others of various ages, who were all working together to find complementary parts. As soon as they saw me, they got so excited about sharing their composition! That moment, when I saw their pride in their collaboration will stick in my mind for a long time. This was what I was hoping would come from drumming together, building a sense of community. That sense of "belonging to a community" is something we have been working so hard to build within our organization. I am excited to see how drumming together will help foster that.” – Ann Deckert, SD

“In the summer of 2005 the music teacher at my school asked if I would be interested in attending the World Music Drumming workshop in Bothel, WA with her. Since I was a percussionist from 5th grade through high school I accepted. Being the P.E. teacher at my school I wondered how the workshop could benefit me and my teaching. I wondered if it would be a waste of time and money. My questions were immediately answered by the time school started that fall. Our school bought a complete set of drums and scheduled drumming classes each week for all 20 classrooms. It was a big hit immediately! We started an afterschool drum club that, over the next three years, performed at community events, school functions, school board meetings, multicultural assemblies at other schools and the Western Washington Fair in Puyallup. Local newspapers ran stories on our program too. We set up a web page to promote and provide information about our program. It was a great success.

Fast forward to today. I was contacted by the director of the Idaho Arts Charter School in Nampa, ID asking if I would be interested in starting a WMD program at their school. After discussions with my wife and son we decided to make the move.” – Brent Wheeler

So what do these wonderful stories have in common? They all talk about the *benefits* of World Music Drumming for students, for families, for the improved culture of schools, and for the value to the life of the communities. Notice how often these accounts reference how their stakeholders (parents, administrators, school boards, other teachers, businesses) respond in a positive way to what they witness. Notice the importance of public sharing of what goes on. Building a base of parental and community support is key to being *indispensable*. That support structure must be in place before budget cutting starts.

Please don't wait. Share the joy of *Transforming Lives . . . Building Community* now. Catch the high tide and ride it with all your energy so as not to be left in the mud flats of budget slicing. The schools and communities you serve will bless you for what you have given them. Become *essential*, and therefore, *indispensable*.