

# SOUND-FF

News from Education Through Music



## Partnering Through a Pandemic

To ensure our mission of pursuing equity and access for all children, ETM set up a new program of **financial assistance credits** to support our partner schools during these challenging times. This \$125,000 of aid is in addition to the support ETM already provides to partnerships (which covers about 65% of comprehensive program costs) and has allowed many partners to provide music education to their students despite decimated school budgets.

Knowing that principals were under incredible pressure and unwilling to contemplate a school year without music, ETM Director of Partnership Programs Nick LaFleur had countless conversations with NYC principals to see how ETM could help. Principals didn't always know how to fit music into their new convoluted schedules, much less how they would afford it as they juggled uncertain mandates from NYC's Department of Education (DOE), unpredictable budgets, and a fluctuating teaching force.

"As I was reaching out to partner school principals," said Nick, "my message was simple: we know things are tough this year, so whatever your situation is, talk to us, and **let's see what we can do.**" This mantra of adaptability has been vital for ETM's ability to navigate the pandemic.

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ETM Music Teacher Leah Oseghali reads a musical story to her remote students.

**Every child, at every school, deserves access to high-quality music education.**

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Shirley Torres, principal at ETM Partner School P.S. 23 in the Bronx, was determined to continue the partnership despite the financial challenges. “I can’t dance, I can’t sing, and I can’t draw, but **I was exposed to all of those arts. And I want all of my students to have the same.**” Thanks to ETM’s financial assistance credits, she can continue to provide music education to her students this year. “I thank ETM for being able to do that.”

“It’s good to preserve the music programs in schools, as well as teachers’ careers,” added Nick. “We’re solving problems here.”

As a result, **ETM is thrilled to be partnering with 51 schools this year**, four of which are new partnerships. Another milestone this year: **ETM’s first partner high school, H.S. 223, in Mott Haven in the Bronx**, where tenth-grade students will have access to Music Tech classes weekly.

We’re so proud of all of our teachers, who are teaching music tech, general music, and even a few ensembles to **an estimated 18,000 students**. Now more than ever, **ensuring equitable access to music education is paramount**, and ETM is committed to doing just that.

## eCademy: Preparing our Teachers

ETM music teachers from across the five boroughs came together in late August for five days to participate in ETM’s very own professional development boot camp, known as ETM Academy.

Every summer, **ETM Academy prepares teachers to be inspired and effective music teachers by offering practical strategies and teaching resources**. This year was no exception, but for the first time, ETM Academy was entirely virtual due to COVID-19, creating lots of unique challenges and opportunities for learning.

### Academy becomes eCademy

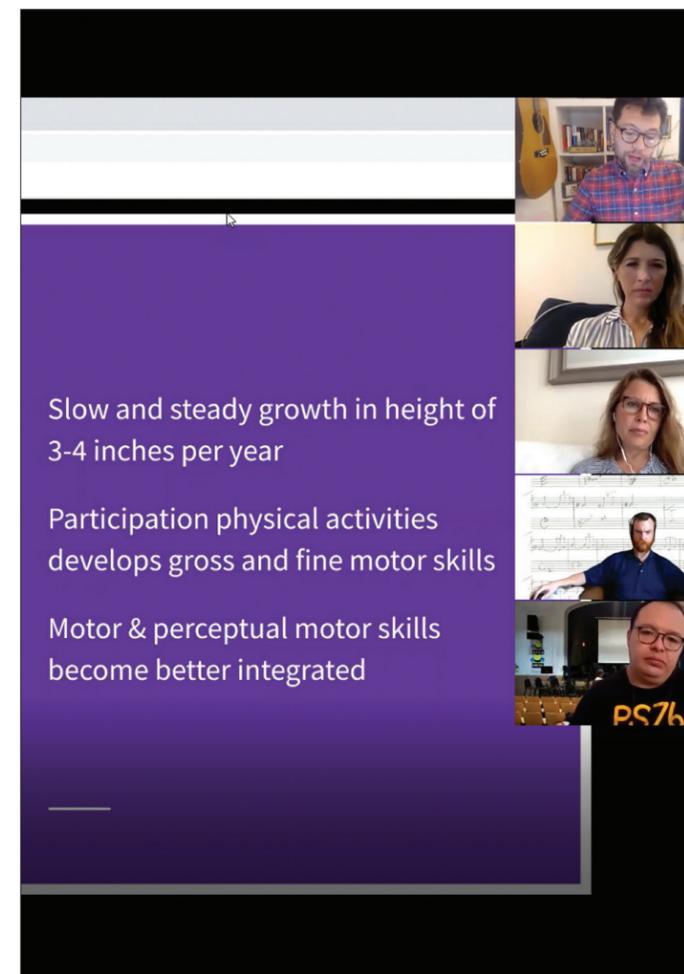
**eCademy**, as we called the 2020 program, condensed a typical two-week course into five days of comprehensive professional development. The program provided a one-of-a-kind opportunity for teachers to connect with their peers, build their professional network, and prepare for the start of a school year like no other. In that short amount of time, ETM Programs staff ensured that music teachers received subject-matter-specific professional development and additional tools to assist with distance learning.

New sessions were created to respond to our teachers’ needs

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tackling topics such as **digital citizenship, trauma-informed teaching, editing tools, and virtual ensembles**, helping our educators and students adapt to the new normal. Additionally, eCademy included important workshops that addressed **diversity, equity, and inclusion** in teaching; **social justice** through music education; and a special session taught by guest presenter Brandi Waller-Pace of “**Decolonizing the Music Room**,” an education and social justice nonprofit.



ETM music teachers ask, “Who are our students?,” during this year’s virtual professional development boot camp.

ETM was one of the dozens of recipients supported by the fund. With a generous \$122,000 grant, **we ensured music through the Spring 2020 semester** and purchased technology packages to help our teachers in school year 2020-21. Each ETM teacher received:

- Microsoft Chromebook Pro with Logitech mouse
- Blue Yeti microphone
- Jabra Elite over-the-ear headphones
- 50 masks and latex gloves
- Hand sanitizer

Each teacher also got a set of EVEN Headphones, generously donated by our partners at EVEN, an audio tech startup in Brooklyn.

“The Tech Packs are a game-changer,” said ETM music teacher Ashley D’Amico. The mic and

With all of this critical information to impart, our Programs team stepped up in all aspects of training, creating sessions from scratch and leading the sessions themselves.

“We have included **resources on social justice, social-emotional learning, and curriculum planning**, and prioritized letting teachers have **collaborative ways of engaging and learning from each other**,” said Instructional Supervisor Ulises Solano.

With our teachers facing so many variables this fall, we knew the key to success would be adaptability. This year’s eCademy was “gamified,” which **made learning more fun** for our music teachers and gave them tools to gamify lessons for their students. Gamification is using game design and game elements in learning environments and has become a popular teaching tool.

### The Right Tools to Teach

When the pandemic first hit, leading funders from around the country banded together to step up for the nonprofit community here in New York City. Organized by the New York Community Trust, they created a \$75M relief effort to support social services and cultural organizations through the pandemic.

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headphones are “so important for a pandemic teacher,” she added. Through philanthropy, ETM was able to supply our teachers with the right tools for the job.

Interested in partnering with Education Through Music? Contact us at [info@etmonline.org](mailto:info@etmonline.org) for more information. We'd love to work with you!

## Teaching Music During a Pandemic

As of printing, NYC public schools remain open for in-person learning.

When news about COVID-19 started moving closer to home in late February, ETM started preparing for citywide school closures. Our Programs team began brainstorming plans for remote distance learning, **creating systems that would ensure that teachers and students would be set up for success** despite the distance. Additionally, when NYC's Department of Education (DOE) provided emergency remote-learning-platform training, ETM teachers (who do not work for the DOE) were in attendance learning, partnering, and supporting.

Still, when NYC schools closed in March of 2020, it wasn't only NYC students that were forced out of the classroom; it was music teachers, too. Usually, our teachers teach in rooms full of instruments, songbooks, and the ever-popular “boomwhackers.”



The pandemic silenced our physical music rooms last spring.

### Schools Reopen for Some Students

This fall, however, the rules seemed to be shifting. NYC's DOE updated their fall plans several times, ultimately deciding to open public schools with a **blended learning model**: some students would be learning in-person, while others would continue to learn remotely and every combination in between. For ETM's teachers, this meant that once again, they had to re-evaluate their strategies and find creative ways to teach music in this *new* “new normal.”

For students learning in-person, strict safety protocols are required: **class sizes are smaller than ever, masks are required at all times, and students must be at least six feet apart**. When it comes to music, additional safety precautions preclude playing wind instruments, sharing drums, and, in some cases, singing together.

Suddenly, though, the teachers' toolbox looked vastly different: a screen, a microphone, and some headphones: schools—including music class—had gone virtual.

But in no time, our teachers got the hang of the new technologies available to them. **In a matter of days, our teachers were creating on-demand video lessons** that were tailor-made for their students, as well as remote sing-alongs, musical crafts, cultural explorations, music technology tutorials, and more.

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ETM Music Teacher Alfredo Hernandez is teaching in-person and can see that **music has become more important for his students because of the continued stress of the pandemic**. With this in mind, he's focusing on maintaining the sense of community music class can bring.

But, “their fatigue is so clear,” he says, especially as the day wears on. So, **to generate energy and excitement, he's dusted off his ukulele and uses it in every class, taking requests, leading group songs, and getting students up and moving**. “The ukulele helps me establish: **‘this is music time.’**”

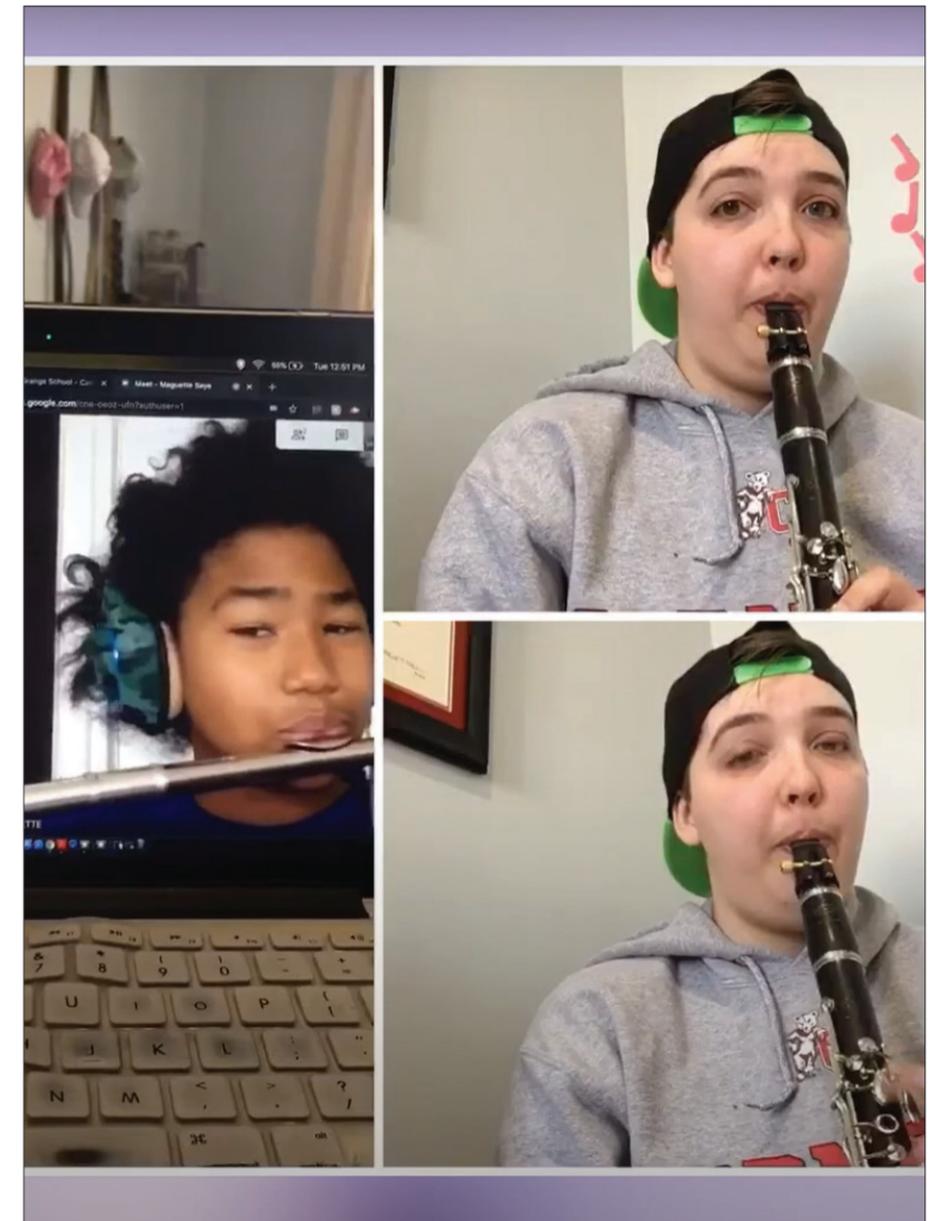
Amanda Keil, an ETM music teacher teaching in Manhattan, teaches both in-person and remotely. She collaborates with fellow ETM teacher Meghan Cornett-Mayes to create content for both her live classes and her remote classes. **“Every week is slightly different as we figure out what works.”** In some cases, even her in-person students end up tuning in remotely because of changing schedules or staffing, which means that Amanda has to **stay flexible and responsive to her students' changing needs**.

### Getting the Band Back Together

Amanda uses her limited time with the in-person students to get to know them, build relationships, and talk up her other big idea: Band Class.

Sixty students have already expressed interest in joining Amanda's band, which will rehearse and perform entirely online. “My goal is to get instruments in their hands and get them connected.” Instruments are critical for young people, in Amanda's opinion. **“It's a way of understanding yourself.”**

Alfredo summed up the pandemic teaching in this way: **“You've got to be more creative. You've got to get out of your comfort zone as much as the students are.”**



ETM Music Teacher Beckham Butler gives a flute lesson remotely.

## Social Justice in ETM's Music Rooms

This summer, while Americans across the country were coming together to protest racism, ETM was looking inwards, interrogating our practices, and investigating how **our music rooms can be anti-racist places of learning.**

As part of this work, we're partnering with **Decolonizing the Music Room**, a nonprofit organization led by educators Brandi Waller-Pace (Founder, Executive Director) and Lorelei Batislong (Deputy Director). The organization focuses on asserting and celebrating the experiences and voices of BBIA (Black, Brown, Indigenous, and Asian) people in music education and challenging the dominance of white Western European and American music, narratives, and practices.

Our partnership includes a series of dedicated professional development (PD) opportunities for our teachers, which kicked off this summer and continues throughout the year. During these workshops, **our music teachers will discuss what decolonizing and anti-racist approaches mean in music education**, learn ways to question traditional educational structures, and address systemic issues that affect their students.



### Reviewing our Music Repertoire, Note by Note

An equally important part of supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion in our music rooms is looking at the music we teach. That means reviewing every single piece of music in ETM's repertoire, which numbers in the thousands.

To do this, a task force of ETM staff created **guidelines that help determine each piece's suitability.** For example, music in the style of a specific culture by a writer outside of that culture—an "inauthentic source"—may need to be taught to students within a particular context. Music that is derived from minstrelsy is unlikely to have any place in our classrooms.

But very little of ETM's music repertoire is being erased. ETM Instructional Supervisor Dr. Kevin Johnson added, "It's good to keep [these songs] for research purposes." They can be instructive for educators and are often helpful in investigating other music's authenticity or appropriateness in classrooms.

To learn more about Brandi Waller-Pace and the nonprofit "Decolonizing the Music Room," visit [decolonizingthemusicroom.com](http://decolonizingthemusicroom.com).

### Adding New Voices

As music is being thoughtfully removed from our library, our teachers are also working on adding music, especially **music written by and for people who share the cultures, origins, and experiences of our students.**

An example of some new work that one ETM teacher, Maria Faul, has already started to incorporate: "Hijabi," by American and Muslim rapper Mona Haydon. "One of my students wears a hijab, and some of

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them have sisters who wear hijabs. They loved it!" said Maria.

### A Never-Ending Effort

As Kevin put it, part of this work is to **"validate everyone's music experience,"** not just the experiences of white, western musicians. Maria added, "We need to show our students musicians that look like them. And it's important to show them people who don't look like them, too."

Equally as important is recognizing that ETM's work decolonizing the music room will never be over. "There's no end to this pursuit," said Kevin. "And there never should be an end." At ETM, we will always be asking ourselves why we're using a specific song to teach a lesson. Does it reflect our students' experiences? Does it promote cultural biases? Does it tell an authentic story?

Perhaps Kevin said it best when he asked, "What can be better? And how can we make it better?"

## Keep Music Alive Virtual Gala

Education Through Music held our first-ever virtual gala on Thursday, October 15, to raise funds for our "Keep Music Alive" Campaign. More than 500 attendees tuned in via YouTube, helping raise over \$315,000 to keep music education alive for tens of thousands of children at our 51 partner schools.

NYC announced hundreds of millions in cuts to the Department of Education (DOE) budget, which devastated arts education in schools, including access to music education. **55% of ETM funding comes from private support, meaning personal contributions and investments from individuals makes our work possible.**

The evening kicked off with Tony Award-winner **Kelli O'Hara** singing "Take Me to the World" by Stephen Sondheim. Our next artist was Grammy Award-winning violinist and ETM Board Member **Joshua Bell** performing an original arrangement of Leonard Bernstein's "West Side Story" suite with his wife, soprano **Larisa Martínez.**

Grammy-award winner **Marc Cohn** performed a tribute to Bob Dylan, and Broadway and T.V. star **Norm Lewis** gave an epic performance of "Music of the Night" from "The Phantom of the Opera."

The celebration closed with a performance by the students at ETM partner school P.S. 103 in the Bronx, singing "Rise Up," introduced by legendary producer **Quincy Jones.**

But it was Cassandra Lopez, an alumna of M.S. 223 in the Bronx, who reminded everyone of our mission when she spoke of how heartbroken she would be if music education vanishes from schools.

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“If music education is taken away from schools now, future students will not have an opportunity to have the experiences and music-inspired friendships that students like me have had. Music is a key to open the doors of imagination, freedom, and self-expression. All children should have an opportunity to learn about it. **Music unites us all, and we cannot lose it.**”

ETM thanks all of our generous event sponsors, donors, and attendees for joining our mission to help children succeed in school and life.

## Foundation, Corporate, & Government Supporters Fall 2019 - Present

Thank you to our incredible philanthropic partnerships from the following foundation, corporate, and government supporters that help bring music education to tens of thousands of NYC children each year.

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