

ETM: The Podcast
Episode 15: THE ETM Model
TRANSCRIPT

Noah: You are listening to Education Through Music, the podcast. As always, I'm your host, Noah, and in this episode I'll be bringing you to PS236 in the Bronx where the annual winter concert is underway. We'll hear some music, of course, but we'll also hear from ETM's own, Davian Alin, who is the music teacher at PS236, as well as several other prominent voices from ETM, the principal of PS236, and a parent of two PS236 students. This episode ought to provide a fairly comprehensive overview of the ETM model, of the ETM model. It's really a behind-the-scenes on everything that goes into establishing a great music program from the very first day of school on and preparing for a great winter concert. Now, without any further ado. Mr Alin, Davian, thanks so much for being here.

Davian: It's a pleasure being here and to share this experience with you, Noah.

Noah: So here we are in your classroom at PS236. You've just put on a couple of performances in the morning and now it's lunchtime and you're going to be putting on some performances in the afternoon with your upper grades. How did we get here?

Davian: Well, it all started when we initially had ETM Academy. This is my first year at ETM, so receiving professional development from music teachers or former music teachers was very critical in getting me to this stage. Previous to that, I had been a classroom teacher overseas about 10 years ago and the experience was a little different because you didn't have that network, that support, that training from specialists in your area. Coming into a new school environment, we met the programs team, we did a lot of professional development and then we came into the schools, got set up, met with the principals and then we started to brainstorm even before school started, figuring out a concert calendar, having a winter concert in December and a spring concert maybe in May or June next year. So in terms of that's where it started.

Noah: Here is Stephanie, Senior Director of Programs at ETM.

Stephanie: At Education Through Music we really try to practice what we preach to our teachers and one of the things that we do is really backwards planning our professional development for our teachers. So that means that we're thinking about the end goal, which our teachers... is a winter concert or culminating experience, you know, sometime in the winter season and then sometime in the spring. So then we kind of step back from there and we think, you know, we give different deadlines to try to, you know, break up when things are due. We start in the summer with our summer academy. In the months of August we're already talking about, you know, quality singing, how you're going to start teaching repertoire with your kids, and our kickoff meetings with the principals, which is often the first time that the music teacher is sitting down with the principal at their school. We set the concert dates because often there's multiple schools in a building or there is no auditorium, and so we know that the conversation

around booking that space, as well as a rehearsal for it, is really important. We try to get that on the calendar immediately so that our teachers are able to plan for that date.

Davian: Because of the backwards planning model. It really put things into perspective, in terms of a timeframe and the expectations and how you have to pace the next two, three months out to achieve this goal. Rather than coming into the school not knowing what is happening, you come in with some sort of framework, some sort of general plan, because there was an existing structure. So you know something existed and you're trying to build upon that. So I think that was kind of encouraging. When I heard that this is not a new ETM partnership, so I knew that they were accustomed to doing certain things and I would have to...my aim would be initially, to build upon what initially existed and improve it.

Noah: Yeah.

Davian: Which I think we have done. It is comforting that you know, on one end, you have, as a new teacher teaching in a DOE type setting, having the support of ETM and not coming in blindly.

Noah: Right.

Davian: I would say admin has been very supportive, because especially Mrs. WB, the principal, because she's been here for a while.

Noah: And here is PS236's principal, Wright Bauer, also known to her students and staff as Mrs. WB. So today's concert day, what is going through your mind as a principal as the concert unfolds?

Wright: Oh goodness, a sense of pride. A sense of pride and being humble by the work that has been done by so many people here. The fact that we are able to have music in our school and the arts is really pretty amazing. We have worked with ETM, education through music, for a number of years and it has become such a great source of inspiration and a great source of enjoyment for our students in our community.

Noah: How did you first find out about ETM and start working with them?

Wright: Well, we found out through, actually, the former principal and I think she found out from another principal and I think we've been with ETM even before COVID. That's, of course, always a marker for so many things right.

Noah: Right.

Wright: So, but, yeah, we've had a few music teachers and have just been delighted with the programming that's been done. And this year we've really been able to expand our after-school enrichment program through ETM and through a grant that we got from council member Perina

Sanchez, and she gave the grant to ETM specifically for our school to do after-school programming and that programming includes chorus, it includes art, visual arts and it includes theater. So we've really been able to, now, sort of pull together, you know, the arts and what you see today in this celebration is really, you know, a culmination and a combination of all of those people.

Noah: Wow yeah, it's a sort of renaissance all at once happening here, at PS236. As a principal, one of your many, many jobs is to support teachers in their development of their craft. What is it like working with an ETM teacher as opposed to a DOE teacher?

Wright: I think the difference, you know there's a high level of support. I think they are, you know, for someone like our... you know, Mr. Alin. He is fairly new. I mean he's done, you know, he's done programs before, but I think he's new to this program and is also a student, so he is also in school and I think, you know, there's a real freshness that he brings. I think the other piece is that it's not just teaching music. He knows instruments, he knows, you know. So it's a very well-rounded, you know. You can say, oh, I'm a music teacher, but really what does that mean, you know? But he really kind of runs the gamut. So, as most of them do, and I think... I just find that each and every teacher that we've had here has been really wonderful. They do get the support, they are observed as well, and they're observed, I believe, using the Danielson model, which is the same model that we use here for our teachers. So there's a lot of oversight into his development and into working with us as well. So that's the piece. It's like I have an extra partner in ETM, so that is a real for someone like me who has, I don't know, 25 teachers that I have to do observations for, it's nice to have a partner, it's nice to see how it sort of all comes together for all of our teachers.

Noah: Arielle, you are no stranger to the ETM podcast.

Arielle: No stranger to the ETM podcast.

Noah: And thanks for coming back.

Arielle: Yeah, thank you for having me back.

Noah: Of course. So you are Davian's IS.

Arielle: Yes.

Noah: And today's concert day. So walk me through your thoughts and feelings and what goes into this time of year for an instructional supervisor.

Arielle: Okay, so my job really is to just help Davian with all the ins and outs of his concerts, logistically. At first he didn't know which grades were going to be in the concert, what the choir was going to do. So my job is kind of to get the principal, him and ETM on the same page and

also help him with materials he might need that are missing for the concert, like instruments, microphones, things like that.

Noah: Yeah, so what, what kinds of instruments and other things did you source for this show?

Arielle: So it's been an interesting time, especially with Davian. I had to go to multiple places to source the things that he needed for his concert. Yesterday was a crazy day because I was at Davian's school helping out with him, but then there was a call that there were extra boomwhackers at another school and I was here. He needed some extra ones. So then I had a cello on my back for that other school. So on the train I left Davian school with the cello on my back, got the boomwhackers. But I put the boomwhackers in the cello case because I needed a way to bring it back on the train. So left the cello but brought the cello case back to Davian school, gave him the boomwhackers. Needed a microphone stand, had to go back for a microphone stand, got him the microphone stand, and then everything was good after that. So that's just like just a tiny example of some things that I can do for Davian and other teachers when they need help during their concert.

Noah: That's not the least stressful way to spend an afternoon, but but with you doing it then, that's something that the teachers don't have to worry about.

Arielle: Right, because I think if I wasn't here mind you, I don't mind traveling, because it's not like I also have to deal with the stress of "oh my gosh the concert. I'm nervous. I have to please the principal." So I think that's...it's a stress I'm willing to take. It's traveling, it's okay, but with Davian now he doesn't have to worry about "oh my gosh, my boomwhackers are missing. Okay, let me just call my IS. She'll figure it out if she can. Oh my goodness, I don't have a microphone. How do I do it? Oh wait, my IS is here." Let me do it. So I'm like the gopher for this concert pretty much.

Noah: So you put the team on your back, or the cello or the boom whackers, whatever the case may be.

Arielle: The microphone stand, the amp.

Noah: Right, and then it's one less thing for the teacher to worry about.

Arielle: Right.

Noah: So you mentioned with the ETM PD it was music-specific professional development and professional development being facilitated by music teachers. So is that a contrast to what was happening...

Davian: Well that was a contrast for me, because even when I attended Teachers College briefly in Barbados. A lot of the professional development that I did was more specific to the age groups that's you were doing and not subject specific.

Noah: Interesting.

Davian: We did do music professional development but it wasn't on the scale that we, ETM, has and I would say the networking, because it's a small country, less than 300,000 people. There are only about, maybe 25 secondary schools in the island, so almost every music teacher knows each other. So it's a matter of networking with your peers, your colleagues, to really form that bond. And by doing that we have, as persons went off to study to the UK or Canada or US and they came back to the country. We kind of, you know, developed workshops around that. Eventually more certification programs started to happen at the Teachers College for music, but that took a while to happen and that was one of the real reasons I left the country to come to the US to study because I did up to associate degree in music and then I did external Royal Schools of Music diploma exams. But up to bachelor's level, master's level, there were no programs.

Stephanie: Our next professional development was in September, so about a month after the Summer Academy and in that session that day we had a session on winter choral repertoire, which was actually led by one of our amazing Department of Ed teachers, you know, who still partners with us, Antoine Dolberry, you know, has done amazing things with this choir. We love to bring in teachers so that our teachers can learn from their peers and really see great role models in them. So September, we have that session. A couple of weeks later we said, ok, you have all of this repertoire, you can use it or not. You know, we consider this culturally responsive repertoire. It's winter, it's not, you know, tied to any holiday. Anyone should be able to use it. And so then our teachers can either take what we've given them and know that, you know, the pieces are developmentally appropriate for all of their grade levels, because it's a lot of work to choose two songs for, you know, if you teach pre-K through five, seven grades, so we have to support them in that but also give them the autonomy to choose something else. Then their supervisor will look over the repertoire, give them any feedback and then the next step was the concert plan, coming up with the concert plan and we had another professional development session in November, the very beginning of November, to support the whole concert plan planning. We call it Concert Power and I think we called this one Reloaded because it was a 2.0 for some of our returners which goes through every step of you know the things that I've talked about around. You know, communicating with your administration and the other teachers, getting support from the art teacher, getting support from the classroom teacher. You know, making sure that families know, creating a program, decorating your stage. One of the IS talked about having the vision. What's your children's, your students', vision for the program? What's your vision for the program? What's your administration's vision for the program? And really making sure that everybody is getting something that they want.

Davian: Having that experience was totally different. Then I found it interesting that you're receiving all the professionals from people that were in the field recently, because sometimes you go to professional development, somebody has been a professor or a scholar or lecturer for 20, 30 years and has been, you know, out of the classroom so long that their methodologies and their pedagogy...

Noah: Right.

Davian: Is not necessarily bad, but it's out of touch with...

Noah: Outdated.

Davian: ..Current times.

Noah: Their, sort of, profession has changed. Their profession is now professional development.

Davian: Correct and because of the pandemic, a lot of things have changed...

Noah: Yeah.

Davian: In how we now do, even things like the concerts...

Noah: Right.

Davian: ...Streaming and how we prepare the students. That virtual interface is still there, although we are back in person. So I think that element of the pandemic changed things for the good because we were able to adapt and learn things from that. So I would say ETM's professional development and their ongoing training and commitment to helping teachers with certification was one thing that drew me to ETM. What I was looking for to get back into the classroom.

Stephanie: This school doesn't have an auditorium. It's something that Principal Wright Bauer really wants to get for her school and advocate for. But space is a commodity here in New York City. So before the concert we're breaking down lunch tables and we're sweeping up chicken nuggets and we're setting boom whackers and we're sweating and we're moving. But we're doing it all because we know that that's going to make the kids feel special when they get to a space that's decorated and you know they have microphones and lights and you know their teacher's going to stand up and conduct them, and it makes it feel real for them. And so we want it to look exciting for them and exciting for the community. It's not, it's not just singing in the cafeteria, it's a real show and I really feel like this whole community at PS236 in the Bronx really supported that effort and I'm so proud of Davian. You know, that's one of the things we try to support our teachers in is that...make this an opportunity for your community. Involve the art teacher and he did and she made the decorations and they were great and there's tons of staff members supporting the transitions and, you know, emceeding the performance, and that's what makes this special. We don't want it to just be the music concert, we want it to be the school's concert.

Wright: For us, as you can see, we're a very small school, right, so we have to do a lot more with less, you know. So the room that we are doing, you know this program in is our multi-purpose room. So in that room we do lunch, we do PE, we do staff meetings, we do winter concerts, we do graduations and it has a capacity of 150 people. So what's exciting about today is that we've been, because we keep saying we're a small school but we're able to figure out a way to bring in the whole community to this event through our PE teacher, who also has amazing technology skills and has set up our website, and so the fact that we can live stream this, that we can, you know, all of our families and their extended families have access to this is really amazing, because our issue is that we're never really completely together as a community. But this has brought us together as a community, you know, and we'll do things in the morning, like we have morning announcements, and that brings together our community. So we're always thinking about those ways to kind of have us all be together.

Noah: Yeah.

Wright: And it does. You know, it is problematic at times, but you know, today is a very joyful experience because now we can, now we could do this, we could do this for graduation, we could do this for so many things, or for our spring concert which, before you know it, will be coming up. So I think it's really, for me, it's like thinking about how you make it work, and sometimes you don't always have those resources. We don't have an auditorium, we don't have a gym, but you know what, collectively, together, we all make it work. And I think if I could think about anything today, that would be the thing that collectively, as a team, we have made this work. And so I'm very proud of this community, I'm proud of our people, I'm proud of ETM and our partnership with them. So I'm very grateful.

Noah: Fantastic, yeah, the thing that I am always struck by is the way that a digital space can make up for a lack of physical space, and especially in a school where a lot of your students are recent, their families are recent immigrants.

Wright: Yes.

Noah: Their extended families in other countries can watch the performance, which would not be possible if it were strictly a physical space concert.

Wright: It's true, it's true, so yeah. So I think it's just, you know, continuing to learn and grow as a community and not be, you know, not be sort of you know what's the word I'm looking for...not be...can't think of the word...

Noah: Rigid.

Wright: Yes, not be rigid in our thinking and sort of be expansive in our thinking and, you know, being creative with our thinking, because, again, isn't that what the arts do?

Noah: Right.

Wright: They're very creative, right. So to be able to be creative in how we think about something being a deficit and then turning it into a strength.

Noah: Yeah, and have you found ETM to be an adequate thought partner in that creative thinking?

Wright: Totally, yeah, totally. I'm so pleased with the connection between them and then also with a council member, you know so that we're bringing in. You know, we're bringing in some of that funding because ETM is nonprofit, and so you know, really, it's the work that they're doing is so important and it takes money, though, to do this work. You know so, to be able to connect in people from the community. You know, council members or you know, people from the legislature, because they're the ones that do get some of the money right. And so how do we make sure that you know we're getting some of it to support our communities, to support our children, who you know, are coming from other countries and our families, and you know what, music is sort of an international language, isn't it? You know so. You know so really to be able to, you know, embrace families and bring them in, and it takes money to do that. So we are so grateful that you know, we are partners with them and that it gives, you know, for a small school, it gives us an amazing experience here, so we're very grateful.

Children Singing: Days get shorter. Nights get long. Skies get cloudy. Soon the snow will start to fall. You better bundle up if you're going out to play. You don't want to catch a cold. Achoo! Winter is coming, it's on its way, and I know what to do. I'm gonna find my old buddy's sweater and I'm gonna find my rubber boots. Oh, I won't forget my hat or my mittens. Won't forget to zip my snowsuit. Gonna blow my sleigh to the hilltop if it takes all day. Weeee! Sliding and gliding. That's how I like to play in the winter. Days get shorter. Nights get long. Skies get cloudy. Soon the snow will start to fall. You better bundle up if you're going out to play. You don't want to catch a cold. Achoo! Winter is coming, it's on its way. And I know what to do. Wee!

Ana: My name is Ana Garcia. I have two daughters in PS236. One is in fifth grade, Alessandra, and I have another one in pre-K, her name is Maddie Garcia.

Noah: How do your children feel about going to music class and performing at school concerts?

Ana: She would tell me oh, we're having a show, it's about music. She'll be happy, very, you know she will say "Mami, I'm a little bit nervous," but she will always be happy. She will come home, try to rehearse everything that she had learned, whether it was with an instrument or singing or dancing. So she was always very active, you know, into it. With music, I think Alessandra has learned many things from various cultures and she brings it home and she shows us and it's kind of it's nice knowing how maybe I have, from where I'm from, the way we listen to music is different from another culture or the instruments sometimes that they use. I hear her and she's like "oh look, I learned this" and she tries to do it with others. Anything that she'll find, she'll try to make it sound like what she has learned in school, you know. So I think that when they so open to the kids learning about many cultures that it it's just, it's beautiful,

because I get to learn also. The music program, seeing them, I feel like it has helped them open more to a wider knowledge of what the world has to give us.

Children Singing: Celebrate how you celebrate. Celebrate how you celebrate. Celebrate how you celebrate. Celebrate with joy. Celebrate how you celebrate. Celebrate how you celebrate. Celebrate how you celebrate. Celebrate with joy.

Arielle: I visit Davian in class about two to three times a month and I've seen the process of him doing his concert planning. So I gave certain tidbits that I thought would help with not just the way they look logistically but sound as well. Davian, he comes from... He's an exceptional organ player. He plays the saxophone, so he's a big instrumentalist and in order to do that you have to have sang at some point during your life. But I don't think that it crossed Davian's mind that students they can't hear the octave down or they can't really decipher...like "I'm a third grader and my voice is up here, but you're singing down here." And so I gave Davian tidbits like maybe use your falsetto, instead of singing down here and expecting students to compensate or use the piano as an anchor. And when I come back and I see that he uses these things and I'm seeing that the students are getting better with their tone and all of that stuff, I don't know it feels kind of nice on this side, like, "oh, look at that, I'm helping." It's nice.

Noah: And then you can start to think about the next step.

Arielle: Like you've covered the falsetto because of the octave equivalence isn't there yet. So, falsetto is taken care of, what's the next thing that's going to make this a really positive and productive experience for the kids?

Arielle: Right, and there are, I think there are a lot of things that, not at the fault of the teacher. But when you're teaching, there are so many things that are happening simultaneously in every day and you have to think so quick that sometimes having somebody that's outside of it, that's... their brain is not going a million miles a minute because they're not really in your place of dealing with all of the students. Then I feel like it's, it's easier on the outside to think of things... that are that can help your classroom, versus years and years of doing the same thing over and over and you see it's not working, because you did it 15 times but you didn't know why the third time. So you still continue to do it 10 more times. You know, versus me, I'm here, after that second time. I think I can tell you what's wrong and how to fix it a little better. And working with Davian as well, because I don't think that somebody who's a good supervisor will just give all of their ways of teaching and be like "do it like this," you know. So I also love collaborating with Davian, and sometimes Davian will even say I love that bit of advice, but I don't know if that will work for my classroom as well, and I love collaborating with him in that way, because there are some things about his classroom that I'll never know and I won't be able to get from my side. But with us collaborating and it not just being like a me tell him to do this and he does it. I think it's better for a well-rounded classroom.

Noah: Yeah, it's such an interesting thing being sort of a teacher of teachers, for lack of a better term because you get to see how the things that you, that you taught students and the things

that you sort of realized in the process of working with students, like some of those things, are universal and one of those universal things that you pick up as a teacher is that telling people doesn't really do anything it's, it's really facilitating these experiences through which people learn and I'm saying people instead of students, because it's the same with teachers, it's the same with anybody If you just tell folks things, it doesn't sink in nearly as much as giving folks the opportunity to utilize their understandings.

Arielle: That's something that made the job easier as I started doing it more, because when I first started it mind you, I come from an elementary school background. I've taught elementary school for over five years and then leaving that to almost teaching adults like facilitating adults, I didn't think of it like teaching students. I was like, oh my gosh, what do I do? I can't tell adults what to do. But as soon as I switched my thinking into telling people what to do because even as a teacher I never really told people what to do I guided them in what they were doing and that's it. It's the same thing, yeah.

Noah: Same idea. I've been to a lot of school concerts and you can always tell when your colleagues are..they're working, versus they're working but also being entertained, yeah, like being really excited about what their students are able to do, but also sort of enjoying the moment.

Davian: One thing I would add that helped in the process, especially between November and even last week, was because the school is very bilingual. Having the speech therapists with students that have IEPs and certain instructional needs come in and push in on the music class to assist you in teaching that repertoire was a tremendous help. Even downstairs in the concert they are some of the ones emceeding and helping to get students ready, because there's students with that language barrier that don't speak English or have limited understanding of it. So having that support staff outside of the classroom teachers was a tremendous help. As I said, even the physical therapist came in one day because we had students that had problems with mobility and stuff like that, helping to get them into the performance. We have students in wheelchairs and stuff like that. So having the whole community of network of teachers and support staff be involved in getting the students ready was really a tremendous help.

Noah: I imagine also it...this can be such a great opportunity for teaching what they teach with the, the speech therapist, the occupational therapist, teaching what they teach through an authentic example. So, like you know, working on language through music is...that's a great way to work on language.

Davian: Because before preparations for the concerts, what would happen sometimes is that students will be pulled out one by one to go to these services during the day from, either during their cluster prep periods or in your regular classroom periods. But what started to happen as we got closer? The speech therapist especially the both bilingual and the English speech therapist saw the winter concert as a great opportunity to incorporate what they're doing, and it also assists me at the same time yeah, a fully integrated, integrated process yeah, you know, that's which which I've never encountered in my teaching career before.

