ETM: The Podcast
Episode 11: Ashley Cuthbertson
TRANSCRIPT

Noah:
You are listening to Education Through Music, the podcast. As always, I'm your host, Noah, and my guest today is Ashley Cuthbertson. Ashley is the founder and CEO of A. Cuthbertson Consulting LLC, which is an educational consulting firm that helps K-12 music educators connect with their learners so they can engage students of all backgrounds and abilities in high-quality music instruction that develop skills for both inside and outside the music classroom Without any further ado. Ashley, thanks so much for being here.

Ashley Cuthbertson: Thanks for having me, Noah. I'm excited for our conversation.

Noah: So, before we get into our subject matter for today, which is culturally responsive teaching, in music education. I'm wondering if we could dive into how you got to where you are now and maybe the best place to start would be how you first became a musician.

Ashley Cuthbertson: Yeah, that's a great question. So I've been involved in music my whole life. So my family was musical. I grew up singing in our church choir. I started piano lessons when I was eight. Actually, on my eighth birthday that was my present from my parents we got a little piano wheeled into the house and I started lessons that day. And then I started playing the flute when I was in middle school and then I just kind of continued with that into high school and then I was a music major when I was in college, a performance major, and so music's actually always kind of been around my whole life. I don't remember a time where music wasn't a pivotal presence.

Noah: That's very familiar, that sort of origin story. It's very familiar to me and I imagine it will be to a lot of our listeners who are music teachers. There's another piece that I'm curious about, which is this transition from becoming a performance major, a performing musician, to becoming a teacher, which is different. They, they share a lot and and there are necessary elements, that sort of overlap between both of those vocations, but I'm wondering what the pivot point was for you in going from being a musician to a music teacher?

Ashley Cuthbertson: Yeah, that is such an excellent question because my path to becoming a music teacher was not the traditional path actually, and so when I was a child, as I said before, music was always around. It's always been a pivotal part of my life and I actually really attribute music and my participation in music to really all the success that I've had. And so I thought I was going to be the principal flutist of a major symphony orchestra. That's actually what I worked toward for many, many years. I was one of those kids that did the all district and the all region and the all state and competitions. I performed at Carnegie Hall when I was in high school as a part of a national ensemble. I was chosen and then I went to college thinking that was what I was going to do and I was very focused on that path. I'm a planner, so I had planned out basically my four years of college before I got there, because I knew when I leave my undergrad

I got to be ready for my master's, I got to be ready to audition for all the symphonies, right. And so when I was a sophomore in college, I went to James Madison University go Dukes, anyone's listening. And so when I was a sophomore, as many college students. I needed some more money and so I answered an ad that I saw on like the bulletin board of the school of music, looking for teachers to teach at a local middle school. They were looking for someone to come in and a few people to come in work with the students during the school day, after school, like lessons, sectionals, just general support. It was a very small rural school in the valley of Shenandoah in Virginia, where James Madison is located, so it was a one teacher teaching the band and the orchestra, kind of doing all the things. So she was looking for some support and in fact she had actually gotten a grant. So I answered that ad. I got hired, thinking I'm just going to do this to make some money and this will be an easy way to do it. And it was. But it also was really a moment for me to kind of notice the way that I loved working with kids in a way that I never would have thought. If you had asked me when I was, you know, 18, 19 years old, would I enjoy working with kids? I would have said probably not. I want to be a performer. But what I found was that I really enjoyed the challenge of working with students. I enjoyed the puzzle of trying to figure out what is going to make it click for this student versus this student, and I love the relationships that I developed with my kids. It was more than music for me and for them too. It really was about the relationships that I developed with them. And I was at that school you know, part-time, what I my schedule allowed for, I think it was two and a half years. I stayed with them because I just loved it. I love working with the kids. I love that director. She was just such a wonderful person and she was so dedicated and she showed me what it could look like to really marry the connection between relationship building, really understanding the community, because working in a rural school in a rural community is very different from where I grew up, in suburban urban northern Virginia, here to south side of Washington DC, and so I saw her really marry the unique aspects of working in a rural community and what the needs were of those kids and the families with what high quality music education could look like. And so I was like, all right, there's something to this music education thing and teaching thing, and so I had an opportunity right after I graduated from JMU to do a study abroad trip to Venezuela to volunteer with El Sistema, which is a social justice through change music education kind of program in the country, and so I was like, all right, I'm really interested in music education and this might be a great way to see it from a different lens. Changed everything when I was there. I was like this is it. I know I was supposed to be a performer and I'm already set up to do all these things, and I literally dropped everything and changed the trajectory of what I was doing because I knew something inside me told me that I can make a bigger impact working with kids, for them to experience music the way I had right. For me, music was never just about playing the flute or getting good and competing and being able to do all these wonderful things. It really was about the relationships that I made, the connections I made with people. Now I speak on stages and I work with people all over the country. I know that that confidence came from being a part of music and the wonderful experiences that I had, and I wanted to share that with other kids and I wanted to be able to have a bigger impact than I knew I could have, just as a flute player in a symphony orchestra. So that's how I became a teacher, and then I changed what I was going to do. I started teaching right away. Actually, I started teaching as a traveling teacher in private schools here in the northern Virginia area, and then I went and taught in BC in the charter

school system for a little bit, and then I came and taught in Fairfax County for 10 years before I transitioned to what I do now.

Noah: I heard some parallels with my own journey to becoming a music teacher. My first year out of college, I was not necessarily sure that I was going to end up teaching, but I went over to India and taught at the Gandhi Ashram School for a year and that was sort of like a sort of trial run into teaching and I realized that I loved it. And when I came back I went straight to grad school and got my music ed credential and started teaching them. I'm wondering what some of your early experiences in the classroom, how those experiences compared to your expectation of teaching?

Ashley Cuthbertson: Yeah, that's a really great question. So I came to teaching in a alternative, kind of unusual way. Right, I came through it because I literally was teaching and working with kids and found that I loved it. And so when I started teaching, I find it would kind of be the way it had been when I was that part-time teacher at that middle school, supporting, you know, two, three days a week for a couple of hours at a time. I thought it would be similar to when I experienced in Venezuela, which was kind of similar, like we would come in and we were in the capital of Caracas for I think a week and then we traveled all over Venezuela at the different centers, and so I kind of thought it would be a little bit like that. But what I missed was that I was only participating with those kids and those programs for like a few hours at a time. I was seeing a very small snapshot. So when I went into the classroom and started teaching, I kind of thought it would be like that. I thought it'd be all kind of fun and games. I'm going to share the joy and love of music making. No, I learned very quickly from my students that just me being really enthusiastic about teaching music was not going to cut it. But being a full time, your the teacher really requires you to be able to do lots of different things as I'm sure all the listeners who are music educators know, it requires you to be able to advocate for yourself, your perk and your students requires you to be able to develop community with your kids, but also with the greater stakeholders like parents, colleagues, administrators and things like that, and it also requires really sound pedagogy, which I hadn't learned at that point. I hadn't started my master's until I think right after I started teaching so I was literally learning the pedagogy of education while I was in the classroom with my students and I learned very quickly that just me being excited about it wasn't going to be good enough. And because I am the kind of personality that I am an all-in kind of person, I discovered really quickly that I would be the barrier if I didn't gain the skills that I needed for my students to be able to have a great music education. And just the same reason why I came to teaching I want kids to experience the joy and the value that music education has in their lives. It was a really kind of a daunting responsibility when I realized, like it's me I'm I could be either the gateway and the pathway or I could be what literally stands in the way of my students, and so I became really relentless about learning everything I could learn. I took all the courses, all the degrees, the certifications and the workshops. I used to do those like old school webinars before Zoom was a thing. I don't know if you remember those webinars, because I was really hungry for making sure that, as an educator in front of my kids, I was the one who had the power to make sure that they either had a great experience or not, and I never wanted to be the reason that a student wouldn't want to go on to continue in music or wouldn't see the value in it. And so when I came into the classroom, I think that was probably

the biggest thing that I had to kind of learn was yeah, you're it, and you can either make a difference in a really positive way or you can make a difference in a negative way. What are you going to do about it?

Noah: Yeah, I think that's such a huge realization a lot of new teachers end up having. They've gone from being enthusiastic students of music to then being the providers of music instruction and, uh, not all of the students are going to be like they were at first. You know it. It really takes a lot of effort and a lot of sort of big picture thinking in order to get to the point where you're realizing the sorts of environments that you need to build, the sort of connections you need to make available and that sort of thing, and so we are recording in the month of October, which is a time in which things are starting to either come together in classrooms or they're starting to fall apart. So I'm wondering if you have any words of wisdom for these new teachers, like we've mentioned, who are starting to have these realizations. What kinds of things might you offer them in this month in particular?

Ashley Cuthbertson:
Yeah, this is the month I say where the honeymoon is over a lot of times with kids, and so I would say that, especially for new teachers, you probably experienced a lot of what I know I did when I was coming into teaching, where I had that joy, that enthusiasm. I had in my mind kind of already a lot of preconceived notions about what I thought it was going to look like, what I thought it was going to be. So I always tell the teachers that I work with that. First of all, you have to make sure that you know who your learners are. That's actually the most important thing. You may be led to believe by looking at social media or things online that you got to get right into the music making right away, but actually what I think we don't talk about enough is that the music making can't really happen the way that we know it can, in a high quality sense, without first really understanding the values and the beliefs of your learners. That's their culture. Also understanding how it is that they even learn. How do they want to move and groove about the world, sometimes I think as new teachers we get so excited about teaching the repertoire and getting the instruments into the kids' hands and getting into the choir and getting into the octavos that we kind of forget that there's very fundamental, foundational things that have to happen first. Once those things are in place, the other things come so much easier. And often when I see especially novice teachers that are struggling with just how do I facilitate my classroom, how do I make sure everybody's engaged, it's usually that piece that was missing, that they just jumped into the curriculum, they jumped into the choir rehearsals instead of really laying a good foundation of really understanding who are these people that I have the privilege to spend this time with and make music with. Understanding those things first sets you up to be able to do the musical things later without having to feel so much friction and struggle.

Noah: Changing gears a little bit. What prompted you to go from this position of teaching in a classroom to then supporting teachers in their classrooms?

Ashley Cuthbertson: Yeah, so I shared that. I kind of went about coming into teaching slightly kind of I wouldn't say backwards, but maybe a spirally kind of way, and so, as I shared before, I quickly saw the responsibility I had of I can't be the barrier to my students having success in my

classroom. So it led me to all these things the courses, the certifications, all the workshops, all the things, all the things that could have been done. But I didn't say before, though, is that most of those workshops and courses and some of the certifications I have are actually not music focused, because what I found was there was just not enough professional development for music educators that existed. That was speaking to what I needed, right. So I needed at that time somebody who was in the midst of getting their master's in education but had a strong background in music education and I had been teaching for several years beforehand, right, so I had all that experience at that middle school and in Venezuela. What I really needed was sound like pedagogical theory and translating that into practice. I didn't need, like, more songs and games. I didn't need more choral octavos, like I know how to teach that stuff. What I needed was, like the nuance and the pedagogy, of different um approaches to teaching in general, and so I found that there were not really like musical educational offerings that spoke to things like differentiation or universal design or arts integration. I just did not find that those things were existing, at least in what was available to me, like you know, was that 10 plus years ago, and so I did a lot of workshops and courses and certifications that were for, like, general education teachers or language arts teachers or other other teachers and other disciplines, because I saw that maybe I could figure out how to translate it into my music education context. The problem, though, is that was a ton of work. It was a lot of work and energy on top of already taking a lot of my own money, often my own time, my own effort to even go to these offerings and participate, and now also having to spend all this time to like translate it. So I am not one to back away from a challenge, though. So I did it, and I started to see a lot of success with my own kids, my own classroom. My colleagues in my school district started to ask me, like hey, can you share some of these things that you're learning? We see that things are like going really well. So can you share a little bit of that with us so that we can also do some of these things? And so that led to me sharing at my district level but presenting different presentations, doing some facilitation of PD. That led to people asking me to present at conferences, which I do pretty regularly now, just sharing like presentations, which again led to school districts seeing me at a conference and then wanting me to do some facilitation for their teachers, which kind of snowballed into what I do now, which is I work nationally, all across the country supporting K-12 music educators to be able to connect with their learners so that they can engage them in high quality instruction, regardless of their background, and my approach is through using culturally responsive approaches. When I was just starting off doing that, I didn't call it consulting, like I do now. I called it like presenting and mentoring. I also was a new teacher coach for music teachers in my school district and I was a college professor as well, and so I was like this is just what people do, right. And then I learned that consulting was an actual industry about maybe two or three years ago, especially with the pandemic starting with the racial uprisings of the spring and summer of 2020. I started getting just lots and lots of requests for the work that I do and it became really clear to me that the same thing that brought me to all of these workshops and courses and online old school webinars the very same problem that I had music teachers all across our country were having, because, even though like a decade or so had gone by from my time kind of in the trenches of failing forward, I say, of figuring out things that were going to work with my kids like there still was not better professional development, for lack of better way to say it, there just was not good quality professional development, for lack of a better way to say it, there just was not good quality professional development for music educators. And so as

requests for my works got kind of ramped up a little bit around that 2020 time, it became clear that it was going to be kind of difficult to continue to juggle. So I still have my whole full-time job teaching my own students. I had a part-time position teaching with our local youth choir. I was a college professor. I was doing all the things right. So it became pretty clear that for me to be able to continue to do all the things like that was probably not going to work for me, and I saw this huge hole that still was not being satisfied, and so I was, like you know, I have something that can really be valuable for teachers when I don't have to juggle my eight other responsibilities. What would it be like to create a space and create a company really, which is what I run now, What would it be to create a company that fully is devoted to filling that hole that still exists in professional learning for music educators? What would it be like to make sure that music educators have access to the same high quality support that our counterparts in math and science and this whole industries right that support these disciplines? Why don't we have something like that, especially since often we work with the most amount of students? Right, when I was a elementary teacher, I often worked with 400 plus students at one time, often like half of the school, because I was fortunate that I had a partner with me most of the time that I taught. So why don't we the ones who are usually seeing the most amount of kids? Why aren't we getting this at least the same amount of support? And that led me to founding my consulting company, which is what I do now, supporting music educators all over the country to really have the professional development that they need, not just more knowledge and content and presentations. That's not really what teachers need, because you can go on Google, you can Google any of the things but skill development is often what I see is lacking in professional development. For music teachers it's just more like stuff. But we don't need stuff, right, we need. How do I develop this skill? Because, like you said before, any one group of kids is not going to be like the same group of kids. So how do we develop the skill to be flexible enough to be able to adapt to those different groups of kids that we have, without wearing ourselves out, trying to reinvent the wheel for ourselves every single time? That's really what I find wears music teachers out is that we try to do it one way and kind of tweak it a little bit for everybody. But what if you just had the skill to be adaptable for whatever group you have? That's really what music teachers that's what we need and that's what my company prevents.

Noah: I wonder if, before we get into more specifics about the work that you do as a consultant, if we could start by just defining some terms. So I'm wondering if you could share your understanding of what culturally responsive music education entails.

Ashley Cuthbertson: Yes, so I define culturally responsive music education as leveraging the prior knowledge, interests and experiences of our young musicians in order to work in partnership with them so that we can engage them in relevant rural tasks that further their understandings about themselves, about others and the world around them. And that's a lot of words. Basically say you need to be able to connect to the cultures of your students, that's, their prior knowledge, their interests and their experiences, it's not just their race and ethnicity. You need to be able to work in power with your students, not power over, to be able to partner together to create a learning environment that's conducive to a learner-centered approach, not a teacher-centered approach. We need to make sure that our instruction is always focused on actual real world context of music making, not what I call, like the music kind of fun exercises

that makes us as music teachers feel good. But then our kids, who really need us to make the connection, are like why are we even learning this? Like, why do I have to learn the recorder? They're asking that question because it's not a relevant real world connection that you are engaging them in, and then the learning always needs to be furthering not just their musical understandings and their musicianship, but it also needs to be furthering their own understandings of themselves, of other people. That's the cultural competence and proficiency part. It also needs to be helping them to understand how the world around them works. That's the social, political piece of culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy that really differentiates, like multicultural education and diversity education, from a culturally responsive approaches. Students need to have the knowledge, but then what are they going to do with it? How are they going to understand the way that the society works? How are they going to understand when things happen and when events happen, or when they see experience different things? Have they been learning information that is going to equip them to know how to engage in a respectful, meaningful and compassionate way? So the learning that is culturally responsive allows all those things to happen in tandem through music.

Noah: That is the most comprehensive but also clear and concise definition of culturally responsive music education I've heard thus far and I really appreciate that. I'm going to have to go back and transcribe that so that I have it available for me when it comes time to talk it over. Getting into some more concrete steps for implementing culturally responsive practices First of all, why is the music classroom a particularly important place for these culturally responsive practices to be implemented?

Ashley Cuthbertson: Yeah, so a wonderful thing about music is that music is culture, right, so music is a reflection of people, period, because people create Music doesn't just come about, right. So music already reflects the people. Music also reflects the times and so, because music already is culture, it's vitally important that music educators are really well-versed in cultural proficiency and leveraging the culture of their students to be able to make the learning relevant and meaningful for their kids, because what we're already doing is teaching culture. So there's like both the opportunity, the great opportunity for us to make so many wonderful real-world connections. There's also, unfortunately, the other side of that, which is, if we get so focused on, like the basic concept and skills and technique only kind of teaching, that we miss the whole opportunity that music presents right there for us is like the people are there, the background, the history, the story, the society reflections are there. As music educators, sometimes I think, because we're so excited about our discipline, music teachers become music teachers. Because we're so excited about our discipline, music teachers become music teachers. Because we're so excited, right, about music. We just want to play the flute, we want to sing, but then we forget that we leave behind many of our students who don't already see the connections, and that really that's our job. So, as music educators, I think we especially I mean everybody, all educators need to be utilizing a closely responsive approach, and I look forward to the day where what I do is just the norm and not the exception. But as music teachers who are literally dealing in culture, it's so vitally important for us because there's so many mistakes that could be made, and problematic mistakes that could be made, when we don't fully understand the ways that culture is reflected in the literal discipline that we're teaching.

Noah: What are some good starting points for implementing a more culturally responsive approach to music education? We mentioned way at the beginning of our conversation, the importance of knowing your students, and I think that that should be a starting point for anything but especially culturally responsive music practices. But what are some other concrete steps that teachers can take at the beginning of their implementation of a more culturally responsive approach?

Ashley Cuthbertson: Yeah. So, contrary to what Google and the internet streets would tell folks, that culturally responsive teaching is all about this, like Black, brown, indigenous and Asian composers and diversity. Actually, culturally responsive teaching as you will note, in my definition of culturally responsive education I said nothing of diversity. I said nothing of diverse composers, because culturally responsive teaching actually doesn't really have anything to do with diversity at all. It's a whole other kind of thing. It's about how do we leverage the prior knowledge, experiences and interests of our students to make the learning relevant so that they can get to the deeper levels of engagement that allow the more rigorous instruction to even be possible. And so, while I think many music educators think that if I'm just diversifying my repertoire, I've got it, actually the hard answer is that actually it starts with you, the person. The teacher in front of the kids first has to really develop a lens for equity and cultural responsiveness, which means that you have to do some work on yourself, some critical self-reflection, to understand who even are you, all the parts of your identity, how do they intersect and interact with each other. What does that mean for how you see the world, how you even interact with other people in the world? A lot of times, some of the conflict that music teachers or the maybe I shouldn't say conflict, some of the, the conflict that music teachers or that maybe I shouldn't say conflict. Some of the um, like the I'm doing this motion, but what am I trying to say? Like the, the rub I guess the rub that sometimes the teachers feel is that maybe they can't like put their finger on or fully explain is they are experiencing like a cultural difference so they may hold a value or a belief that they haven't fully brought to the surface yet. They, they don't fully understand about themselves, and a student holds a different value or a different belief, not better, not worse, it's different. And so some of the I have to say behavior challenges. But I think it's more than just saying behavior challenges. Sometimes some of the things that teachers see that they're like why is my student doing this? Or why won't they stop doing this, or why won't they just listen, some doing this or why won't they just listen, some of it is literally a cultural difference. Some of it is just that you yourself have not fully, you don't fully understand how you show up in the world and so when you don't understand yourself, you can't really make space for how other people show up in the world, and so that's actually the first step and that's actually the hardest step. But what I tell my teachers is that I can very easily give you strategies. I can give you ideas for repertoire and cultural kinds of things to keep in mind. That's very easy. You can also Google a lot of that. What's really not easy, and what really is the work that people talk about, is how do you work on yourself such that you are not the barrier to the success that your students can have, which means that you need to make sure that you are understanding that your culture and their culture might not be the same, which is not a good or a bad thing but you have to understand how they're going to interplay with each other, because the problem that sometimes teachers face is that because they don't understand the interplay of the different

cultures in their classrooms I'm not talking about race or ethnicity or even language, really literally the values and beliefs. That's what sometimes leads to a lot of frustration. When teachers understand that this is just a cultural difference and when you understand that it makes it easier for you to navigate and better create instruction that will affirm your kids and not kind of destruct the ways that they naturally move in the world. So not an easy answer or an easy thing to do, but that's actually where the real work starts. And then everything becomes easier after that, because then you know what strategies to use, because you understand how your students think, how they feel, how they see the world, how they prefer to interact. Once you understand those things and you understand how you do those things too, then you know what strategies to pick in what situation. That's like the adaptable skills portion of the skill development. I see that as lacking in a lot of professional development is how do you understand all of those things first, so you know what thing to pull in what situation, for what class, what student.

Noah: I really love this framework for understanding the teacher's role within this setup because it's sort of especially this idea that culture and culturally responsive approaches and attitudes, that culture is not always visible right away, um, and it's. And it's not just about diversity, although there is. There is some interplay between what you look like, where you come from, what language you speak and your culture. You know, you can have two students who might look very similar, might speak the same language, but but have very different backgrounds culturally. And so, in order to to do your best, teaching, leading with questions and the getting to know your students is is really essential. You can't, you can't skip that part. You can't look at the diversity metrics of your school and and start writing your lessons before you meet your students. You have to sort of get to know where you're going to be teaching and who you're going to be teaching on an individual level too.

Ashley Cuthbertson: I think it's really disorienting when teachers don't understand that that's what is causing the friction, that's what the word I was trying to say before. When they don't understand that that's the friction that they're feeling is. It's just a lack of understanding your own culture, the culture of your students and the interplay, because sometimes I think as music teachers, we get so down on ourselves that we don't know the answer yet, our kids are not performing the way we see on Instagram. But sometimes, when we understand that it's a cultural thing that we have to understand, developing that lens for equity, I think that it really helps teachers to be able to reframe for themselves Like no, you're not a failure, you just have opportunity to learn here. And when you have those skills now, you'll be able to see those difference. I think sometimes it's like really difficult, especially when you're a new teacher and you don't even you're still learning like literally just how to be a teacher right, like sometimes a little bit trial by fire. It can be very easy to get. This gets so um, so downtrodden, I think. But some of it is just little changes that we have to just start making um presence in the pedagogy and the way that you're teaching. That makes a huge difference.

Noah: So that's the teacher's role, uh, in in their first step is is to sort of get to know themselves, uh, and how they're situated within this world of variety and culture and experience. What are some of the roles for other various stakeholders in music education students, families,

colleagues, administration, community and how can the teacher play a productive role in sort of organizing these various stakeholders towards creating a more culturally responsive musical experience for students?

Ashley Cuthbertson: Yeah, I think, when it comes to teaching or just a school building in general, all of those roles that you just named, all those stakeholders, are important to the success across the board for all the kids, right, not just in any one classroom but as a school, as our school, allowing kids to really thrive and be successful and be prepared for the next step. And so I think, when it comes to students, the role of students, I think, is just to be open to whatever kind of connections that might be present. I love when my students would bring things to me that I wasn't aware of right Sometimes, things that are happening in their real life, in their community, that I didn't always live right in the community where I was teaching and so my students were like the boots on the ground kind of people. And so I love when my students would make connections that I could then kind of run with and maybe our next lesson or the next team that was coming up, so that I could be better plugged into things that really would be real world for them that maybe I wouldn't have seen at first. As far as parents, I think one really important role that parents can play to support music education in general is just to get to know your child's music teacher. I cannot tell you how many times I was teaching and, or I would have an email from a parent or even a phone call from a parent and they would literally not know my name. They would call me a music teacher, or they would be surprised that their child even had a music class, right. So I think one vitally important thing that parents can do to support music education at large is just to get to know who is the person that's teaching your child music, just like parents get to know their classroom teacher or their child's math teacher, or whoever know the name of your child's music teacher, and get to know what kind of curriculum are they engaging your child in. Make sure that you're aware of that, just like you would be aware of what their language arts curriculum is, their science Music is just as important, and it's also important that parents are aware of those things. And then, as far as like administration and colleagues, I think one thing an administrator can do to support their music educators is just to make sure that they're aware of that. They make sure that their teachers are aware of the opportunities that might be existing for them as far as professional development or financial resources and to make sure that they what's the word? That they are coming to the teachers to share those opportunities and those resources, rather than waiting for the teacher to go to them. Many teachers I work with it's just intimidating to approach your principal to ask for money to replace broken instruments or money to go on a trip to take your students to have an experience, and sometimes, especially as a new teacher, it's like really intimidating to go to your principal and ask and advocate. And so one way that administrators can just alleviate some of that anxiety and make sure that the teacher is not, because what we don't want to happen is that teachers don't ask and then the kids don't get access right, so an administrator can simply just make sure that they are taking the lead to share. Hey, I heard about this great professional development that's happening. I want to make sure that you know that it's happening. I'll support you. However, it might be needed. Or, hey, we have a little bit more in our budget this year. If you need some instruments that need to be replaced, like, let the teachers know first, rather than them always having to come to you, because some teachers are just so intimidated that they don't ask. And then who really suffers is the kids.

Noah: It seems like it sort of takes a village to make a music education program work.

Ashley Cuthbertson: My mission is to make sure that every music educator is aware that they have support that's available to them, whether they need that support or not. But I don't want music teachers to have to be like me, kind of suffering a little bit trying to figure out how to navigate on their own that they don't have to translate, like I did trying to make a literacy workshop translatable to music education. We take out the work that worked for you so that you could just pick the shortcut to success, get you to enjoy making music with your students sooner. The best way for a music teacher who's interested in developing some skill and understanding around culturally responsive music education is to get plugged in with the offerings that my company has, and so we do a webinar pretty often, which is called the four keys to creating a culturally responsive music education program. It's free, and so if you go to our website on the very front page, whatever the next session will be coming up, the link to register for free will be right there. And then we always have workshops and our course that is running, and so if you're interested in learning more about that, you can go to ashleycuthbertsonr.com/PD to learn more about what we currently offer and what we have available.

Noah: Well, thank you so much, Ashley, for sharing your insight and your story. This has been enlightening.

Ashley Cuthbertson: I'm so glad. Thank you. This was a great conversation. We got into a lot of good topics. This was great.