

A Message From James Square, DEI Council Chair.

August 2020

Greetings to all of you, and welcome to the new LMEA school year. As we have all experienced “these unprecedented times” in our own unique ways, I hope that I am safe in saying that MUSIC has been ESSENTIAL to our well-being as music educators. This season of both medical and societal unrest has presented itself as a time to reflect on many aspects of our professional organization. Kudos to Scotty Walker and Brett Babineaux for their diligence in using their respective platforms in LMEA leadership in tackling tough and pertinent issues, in particular: **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion** within the organization. What began as a phone call from a longtime college friend and colleague has blossomed into the LMEA Council for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (that’s a mouthful of buzzwords!)

Here are some questions you may be pondering while you read this message. Just what is this Council? Who is involved? Is there relevance for members? My students, school community, parents? What does this have to do with music? Presently, the Council is comprised of representatives from the traditional Band, Vocal, and Elementary Divisions of LMEA, with plans and ambitions to gain representation for the Orchestral and Jazz entities soon. What we have sought (and will continue to seek) is a cross-section of demographic markers that describe the membership, and to encourage participation in sharing ideas and concerns...some that are at times uncomfortable, but so very necessary to address. Several council members busied themselves with webinars, Zoom meetings, phone calls, emails, and such, to investigate and learn how we can develop ideas to promote “involvement from all, so that all can be involved” ... I heard this statement quite often during our conversations. Relevance and impact on all music educators? Oh yes...how do we UN-marginalize the marginalized? Do we better serve the underserved? In very “Square talk” laymen’s terms, how do we invite everyone to the dance, welcome everyone to in the receiving line, and get everyone on the dance floor? Here are more “buzz words” that have been thematic in the Council’s interactions: **Collaboration, Social-Emotional, Belongingness Needs, Cultural Affirmation**...the list can go on.

As a result of our collective thoughts, the Council has identified 3 Structural Elements to address, each with unique and beneficial action steps. These include **Mentoring, Awareness/Education, and Underserved Schools**. The Council has been subdivided (see what I did there?) into smaller committees, charged with creating activities, outreach programs, and partnerships throughout the state. You will learn much more about the Structural Elements and Implementations as this “era” progresses. Speaking for the Council, I ask as its Chairman, for your encouragement as we step out of the comfort zone, in many respects, to help expand LMEA’s impact on members, students, school communities, and families.

Until we meet again through this medium, will you invest some reflection time in seeking these videos: “What Dark-Skinned People Will Never Tell You”; “\$100 Bill Race”; watch and listen to Randall Standridge explain “The Nine”; a young women’s discussion of “What It means to be Pretty”; “Girls 5-18 Talk About What Beauty Means to Them” and review your notes from General Psychology (remember that class?) on “Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs.”

Best wishes to all of you in your musical adventures in the challenging circumstances of this new year. I do miss standing in front of my ensembles and Fine Arts classes. Personally, I am looking forward to my new non-musical role as a fulltime SPED/TWIEPA Inclusion teacher at my local Junior High school...truly serving the underserved.

MUSIC IS EDUCATION!