

Teaching Bravery Over Perfection:
Engaging Girls in Improvisation

"The Beth and Kelly Show" Podcast & FB group

Beth Fortune beth@wmea.org & Kelly Clingan kelly@seattlejazzed.org

As we work for gender parity in jazz, engaging girls in improvisation is a critical component of our strategy. Teaching bravery over perfection is the concept that can most easily and successfully be built into classroom instruction.

Strategies:

- Improvise early & often
 - Drones are within reach right away
- Prioritize this work
 - Set time aside on a regular basis
- Bring in clinicians to shift the power dynamic
 - Put the community to work & make sure guests reflect school
- Book a gig
 - Build community through music

How To (especially if you don't have funds for clinicians):

- Circle up
 - Around or facing rhythm section
- Learn melody BY EAR
 - Sheet music does not enter this space
 - Rhythm section too
- Theory free zone
 - Use melody notes as improvisation notes
- Mandatory activity
 - Opting out is not on the menu
- Drones are your friend!
 - Explore intervals
- Build small groups

Why:

Students explore improvisation on a much deeper level than in a large ensemble

Spreading the wealth

Small group playing promotes individual independence

Ear training: intervals, chord qualities, form, etc

Stylistic awareness

Small groups can be more mobile for performances in the community

Majority of groups in jazz and roots music history were small ensembles

IT'S FUN!