



## By Marjorie LoPresti, with Richard McCready



### THE THEME FOR

Music In Our Schools Month® (MIOISM®) is “Music: The Sound of My Heart,” and is sponsored by the National Association for Music Education (NAfME). Therefore, in honor of MIOISM (March 2022) and Valentine’s Day, we’ll provide some resources along with special insights from noted music education technology and inclusive education expert Richard McCready, and explore how music education nurtures the heart and soul of young music creators.

### SEL AND MUSIC EDUCATION

Music classes and ensembles lend themselves naturally to the development of social and emotional learning (SEL) skills. The collaborative nature of music making, combined with the independence and interdependence of all participants has led music educators to nurture the SEL competencies even before they were codified by the organization Collaboration for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). Effective and meaningful music education has always fostered self-awareness, self-management, relationship skills and responsible decision making, as well as social awareness to build community, strong musical ensembles, and help young people grow into valued members of society. SEL competencies like those learned in music classes and ensembles are sought after by future employers.

Music educators can formalize their SEL instruction through *intentionality* – planned integration of SEL skills into the music learning process. SELarts.org provides an extremely valuable resource for aligning SEL competencies to the National Core Arts Standards (NCAS). Clicking into the interactive matrix available at [selarts.org/](http://selarts.org/) brings up essential questions and guiding principles for early elementary, late elementary, middle school, and high school.



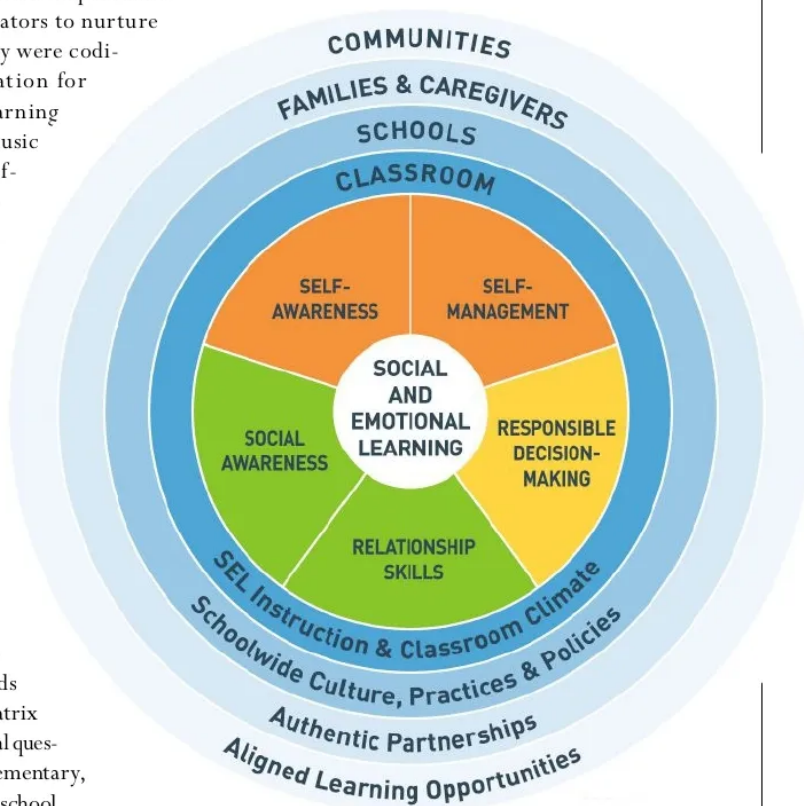
MUSIC IN OUR SCHOOLS MONTH®

### SEL IN THE MUSIC LAB

In music technology/music production classes, it’s quite easy for students to work alone at a computer, in a solo, personal zone. However, these courses should and do go beyond music creation and production, nurturing creativity and encouraging true workplace readiness through a collaborative studio

environment. Richard McCready, master music educator, has shared some of his magic for creating inclusive, safe spaces for all students while engendering SEL skills and career readiness. He is known globally in music education technology circles for his expertise in designing curricula for technology-based music instruction. His clinic “All God’s Critters Got

### CASEL Wheel



# THE SEL HEART OF THE MUSIC TECHNOLOGY LAB

## Arts Education & Social Emotional Learning Framework

		ARTISTIC PROCESS			
		CREATE	PERFORM/ PRESENT/PRODUCE	RESPOND	CONNECT
SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING COMPETENCIES	01 SELF-AWARENESS	CR/SeA	PR/SeA	RE/SeA	CN/SeA
	02 SELF-MANAGEMENT	CR/SM	PR/SM	RE/SM	CN/SM
	03 SOCIAL AWARENESS	CR/SoA	PR/SoA	RE/SoA	CN/SoA
	04 RELATIONSHIP SKILLS	CR/RS	PR/RS	RE/RS	CN/RS
	05 RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING	CR/RDM	PR/RDM	RE/RDM	CN/RDM

## Self-Management and Perform / Present / Produce

		ARTISTIC PROCESS		
SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING COMPETENCIES	<p><b>Middle School</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognize and describe how one's personal actions or behavior affect the positive and negative feelings of others.</li> <li>Recognize factors that impact how others perceive them.</li> <li>Recognize how facial expressions, body language, and tone impact interactions.</li> </ul> <p>EE LE <b>MS</b> HS</p>	<p><b>04</b> Analyze, interpret and select artistic work for presentation.</p>	<p><b>05</b> Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.</p>	<p><b>06</b> Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.</p>
	<p><b>09</b> Demonstrate an awareness of the differences among individuals, groups and others' cultural backgrounds</p> <p>EE LE MS HS</p>	<p>EU: Artists consider a variety of viewpoints and make choices about the selection and performance/presentation/production of artistic works by considering cultural, historical, and social perspectives of the intended audience.</p>		
	<p><b>10</b> Demonstrate an understanding of the need for mutual respect when viewpoints differ</p> <p>EE LE MS HS</p>	<p>EQ: How does social awareness influence the criteria that artists use to select prepare and present/perform/produce artistic works?</p>		



a Place in the Choir: Creating Unapologetic Inclusion In The Music Classroom” (July 20, 2021, [musicedtechconference.com](https://musicedtechconference.com)) was a tour de force showing how the heart, attitude and intentionality of the teacher is the primary factor in whether all students will feel accepted, safe, and valued. In a podcast with Dr. Jim Frankel, he revealed some of the nuts and bolts for his successful program. **Click here for more information.**

During a recent interview, Richard shared his top recommendations for music lab classes such as music production, guitar, piano, and ukulele. Without creating a class climate of unconditional positive regard, efforts toward SEL objectives will fall short or fail entirely. Most of the ideas presented here translate well to general music and ensemble courses:

**Make the classroom reflect the students.** Know your student population as best you can, demographically and musically. Make your classroom space reflect their diversity. Hang posters of successful musicians and producers who look like them and reflect the wide range of their musical preferences. In addition, Richard keeps a wide variety of chair types in his classroom, offering students a choice of seating style as well as location. Some students will gravitate toward a metal stool, while others choose an upholstered studio chair. These aspects of classroom environment show students that you value people who look like them, the music they like, and honor the choices they make. These form the foundation of a trusting relationship which is needed to open the door for SEL competencies like self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making.

**Use a wide variety of teaching strategies.** Most music educators were taught in a conservatory style, with emphasis on using music notation. Throughout the world, and particularly in popular music and studio music production, other modalities are used to teach and collaborate musically. The piano roll, beat grid, and other graphic representations of music found in digital audio workstation (DAW) programs from Soundtrap to Pro Tools are now standard in commercial music production. Aural skills, visual modeling (videos too), plus call/response or ‘rote’ learning are valid in most musical traditions and cultures. Along with more traditional music education methods, they help to meet the needs of all learning styles. By teaching using a variety of modalities as well as notation systems like lead sheets and tablature, you give students the freedom to choose what works best for them as individual learners and creators. You are modeling social awareness and relationship skills, while fostering self-awareness and responsible decision making.

**Coach. Don’t direct.** In too many musical ensembles, individual players sacrifice their individuality and creativity to the will of the director. In those situations, SEL competencies are encouraged to improve individual contribution to the group’s performance of an existing musical product while creating space for individual self-knowledge and expression. In the music lab, particularly in music production and modern band courses, the ideas of individuals *create* the musical product, not reproduce it. Here, the teacher should model coaching skills and help students learn to coach one another in a supportive manner. When the teacher models by suggestion rather than direction (“Yes, and maybe this too”... or, “What if you try”...), students learn to employ the kind collaborative coaching notable in many successful studio situations. In the documentary *Get Back*, the Beatles work through song writing sessions using some of

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## THE SEL HEART OF THE MUSIC TECHNOLOGY LAB

these techniques, albeit with disagreements at times.

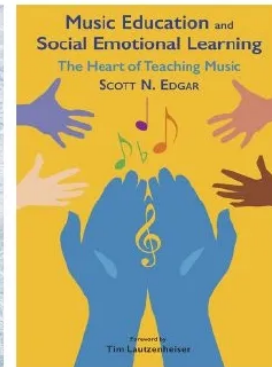
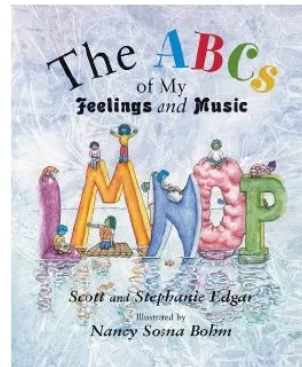
**The producer has final say.** Richard uses the term *producer* rather than *composer*. When it comes to creative projects like compositions, remixes, solo performances, and audio recording, the producer seeks out feedback from classmates and the “teacher,” but always maintains creative control. If you intend to teach “responsible decision making” as an SEL skill, students need to have creative control to exercise their decisions. If you have been successful in creating an environment in which the ideas of all participants are valued, producers will consider the ideas and suggestions of others to improve the final product, ultimately making choices that best fit their unique creative perspectives.

**Encourage connected, organic music making.** Not all music creation, performance or production must involve written notation or a solitary composition process. Students have musical experiences outside the classroom as listeners, performers, and creators. Some create their own music with a “garage band”. Some perform with a community or church group. Others have deep aesthetic experience as music listeners, with song ideas in their heads all the time. Your awareness of and engagement with students’ complete musical selves models a sophisticated level of social awareness. This sets the scene for true collaboration, valuing the input of each person present. These relationship skills unite with responsible decision making to create a valuable, student-driven musical outcome. This level of teamwork is highly valued by prospective employers, too.

If the 2022 (‘21-’22 school year) theme “Music: The Sound of My Heart”, is true, then the 2021 theme “Music Changes Lives” provides the core truth of intentional, heartfelt inclusion of SEL objectives in music education. When we are our best selves each day with our students, we teach more than music. We create real community and help students find meaning and connectedness in their education and lives.

### ADDITIONAL SEL RESOURCES

- *Music Education and Social Emotional Learning: The Heart of Teaching Music* with available student workbook by Scott N. Edgar, GIA Publications. Foundational reading with practical, classroom-ready strategies and materials.
- *Portraits in Music Education and Social Emotional Learning: The Heart of Teaching Music* by Scott N. Edgar, GIA Publica-



tions. Inspiring stories and ideas for implementing SEL at all grade levels, with contributions from Jill Gagliardi, Elise Hackl, Meghan Hickey, Mary Jensen, Jessica Kwasny, Andrew M. Ladendorf, Brandon Larsen, Sandra Lewis, Darlene Machacon, Rachel Manchur, Bobby Olson, Michael J. West, and William Winters.

- *The ABCs of My Feelings and Music* by Scott N. Edgar, Stephanie Edgar, illustrated by Nancy Sosna Bohm, GIA Publications. Valuable resource with engaging songs and activities for SEL in elementary general music.



- *Music FUNdations for Band and Music FUNdations for Orchestra*, by Scott Lang and Robert Sheldon, Scott Lang Leadership (<https://musicfoundations.com/>). Activity book/supplemental method with ready-to-use activities for infusing SEL into band and orchestra courses, with musical pieces by Robert Sheldon. Also available via MusicFirst. **T**

**MARJORIE LOPRESTI** is Director of Content for MusicFirst, professor of Music Education Technology at Rutgers University, and co-author of *Practical Music Education Technology* (Oxford University Press). She has over 30 years of experience teaching elementary and secondary music, and has been named NJMEA Master Music Teacher and TI:ME Music Technology Teacher of the Year.

**RICHARD MCCREADY** teaches Music Technology, Piano, and Guitar, at River Hill High School in Clarksville, Maryland, and is also the Resource Teacher for Music Technology for Howard County, MD. He was awarded the 2013 TI:ME Mike Kovins Teacher of the Year Award, the 2013 Howard County Music Educator of the Year Award, and also the 2014 Maryland Outstanding Music Educator Award. He is a sought-after clinician and curriculum consultant, and author of “Making Music With GarageBand and Mixcraft” (Cengage, 2010) and “Make Your Own Music: A Creative Curriculum” (Hal Leonard, 2015). Richard is also the series editor of the Oxford University Press “Prestissimo” series of Music Tech guides and was featured in the “Music Technology Cookbook” by Adam Patrick Bell (Oxford, 2020).