

Northwest Kodály Educators
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:
A Commitment to Action

Introduction

Music educators come into the profession with noble and idealistic goals. We love people and want to contribute to improving their lives. We believe children hold the promise of a better world, and that our most important work is their care and education. We believe music, perhaps more than any other discipline, has the power to truly educate the whole child in each one's rich social, cultural, and emotional context. NWKE dedicates this equity action plan to all children. Our intention in creating this plan is to help ensure that everything we do as an organization will benefit all the beloved children in our care.

James Baldwin wrote, "Ignorance allied with power is the most ferocious enemy justice can have." Ignorance may be unknowing, unintentional, willful, evil, or just simply convenient, but its time is up. As an organization created to support and nurture music educators and therefore the children we serve, NWKE acknowledges that ignorance of systemic, institutional, and interpersonal racism and its intersecting forms of oppression must be brought into the light of collective reason, compassion, and action so that, together, we can cultivate a healthier and more nurturing human family.

In her article "What Exactly Is Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion?" in the *National Association of Colleges and Employers blog*, Karen Armstrong defines equity as:

The guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all while striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. The principle of equity acknowledges that there are historically under-served and under-represented populations and that fairness regarding these unbalanced conditions is needed to assist equality in the provision of effective opportunities to all groups.

We stand in humility before all who have experienced injustice by the "ferocious enemy" of "ignorance allied with power." We have more questions than answers. We will make mistakes. Our answers will change over time. The work we commit to is deep; it will be ongoing and embedded in all our endeavors as educators and lifelong learners.

Is Kodály-inspired music education relevant in this 21st century world of exponential change? Are there enduring truths and essential practices in Kodály philosophy that support the glorious diversity of our students? At NWKE, we believe the answer is yes. We recommit to these fundamental tenets of our practice:

- Music education must be child-centered
- The voice is the primary instrument, available to all
- Our materials are authentic, meaningful music with enduring value from the cultures of the children in front of us
- Joyful musical experience should precede musical training

In response to feedback from members and workshop participants, NWKE has identified the following areas we plan to consider as an organization that prioritizes a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive practice:

- Workshop Equity
- Board Priorities

In each of these areas, we have chosen measurable goals for the coming months, as outlined below.

Workshop Equity

Logistical Choices

The following logistics will be chosen with accessibility in mind:

- Location
- Ticket price
- Advance accommodations requests

Workshop Presenter Policy

When choosing and working with presenters, the board will:

- Actively seek out presenters of diverse races, ethnicities, abilities, gender, sexual orientation, age, and other characteristics
- Provide presenters with the NWKE Presenter Policy form as part of their contract to ensure the materials, repertoire, and presentation are inclusive and equitable
- Require presenters to submit materials at least two weeks before a workshop for the NWKE board to review and approve

Welcoming of Attendees

Attendees will be welcomed in these inclusive ways:

- A workshop organizer will greet attendees by name as they arrive
- Announcements and signs will encourage attendees to use pronoun stickers on their nametags

Feedback

At the end of each workshop, attendees will be asked to provide feedback. Feedback will be reviewed and discussed by the board after every workshop.

NWKE Board

Continual Improvement

In order to support continual improvement, the board will:

- Review the mission statement annually to make sure it reflects commitment to the Kodály philosophy, anti-racist practice, and our chapter's developing values
- Commit to annual training or professional development in the areas of anti-racism, equity, and/or inclusion
- Collaborate with other Kodály chapters to start larger discussions and share ideas about how to continue becoming an organization that prioritizes diversity, equity, and inclusion

Increase in Diversity

- Members at Large will work to attract a more diverse membership by inviting and welcoming all music teachers, actively recruiting preservice and early-service music teachers
- The board will review and revise the nominating process to attract a diverse pool of qualified candidates

The board will re-evaluate this plan annually.