

You Cannot Teach an *Empty Chair*



*an affirmational approach to
recruitment, retention, and representation*

Midwest Clinic: International Band & Orchestra Conference 2025

December 18, 2025 - 1:30 PM, Room W179

Chandran J. Daniel

*a little bit about **me**:*

Rural

Low-High SES

Charter

Urban

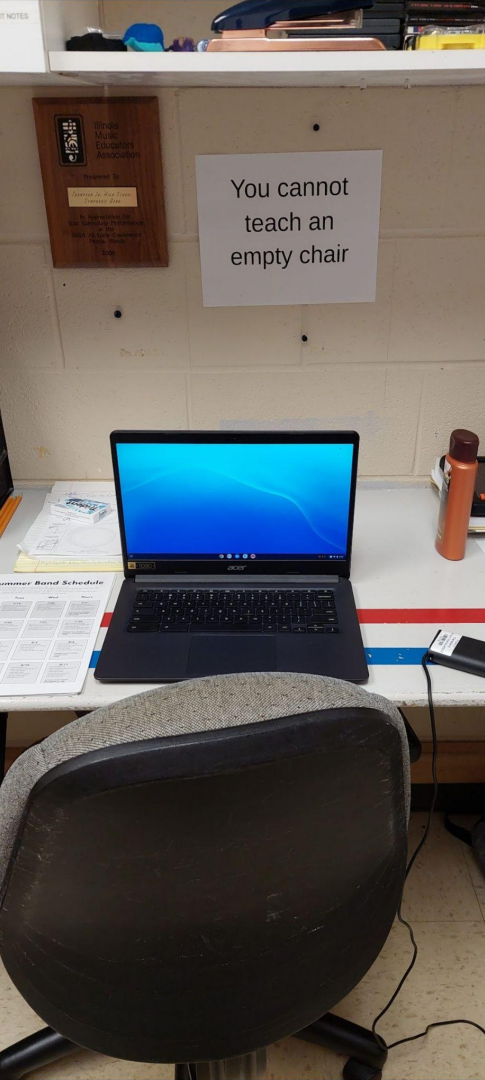
Diverse

Parochial

Suburban

Small School

Public



You cannot
teach an
empty chair

Christ is Risen
Thomas Grasse

In the Dark
of Midnight
Andy Beck

Fail
Better

Joy to the
World
Pink
Zebra

You cannot teach an empty chair

Never Give Up
Rolls Dillman
XX

Cristi Cory Miller
-Mac Huff

Weiss
-John
Lund

A Safe Place
to Land
-Mac Huff

Transposition Chart



D	D# Eb	E	F	F# Gb	G	G# Ab	A	A# Bb	B
E	F	F# Gb	G	G# Ab	A	A# Bb	B	C	C# Db

instruments:
Clarinet,
Tenor Sax,
Soprano Sax

*why does this **matter**?*

the long and short term health of
your program is **dependent** on
recruitment and retention

remember...

the quality of your pedagogy will
have zero impact on those who
are **absent** from the room

disclaimer:

many of the circumstances that
affect recruitment are
completely out of your hands

What is an affirmational approach?

an approach that values the
whole student

these are nice ideas...

the actual *Silver Bullet*:

“I want *you* here.”

the first step:

Who is **in** the room?

Who is **missing**?

Why?

helpful tools:

- school report card
- demographic information
 - SES breakdown

State Report Card:

<https://www.illinoisreportcard.com/>



School Snapshot

Academic Progress

School Environment

Students

Enrollment

Racial/Ethnic Diversity

Advanced Academic Programs

Low Income Students

Students with IEPs

Homeless

English Learners

Student Attendance

Student Mobility

Chronic Absenteeism

Chronic Truancy Rate

Truancy Rate

Student Discipline

Accountability

Teachers

THOMPSON JR HIGH SCHOOL (6 - 8)

CUSD 308

Compare Schools

Custom Report Card Builder

Racial/Ethnic Diversity

This graph shows the racial/ethnic diversity of students at this school by percentage or enrollment. [Learn More](#) ▾

2023 ▾

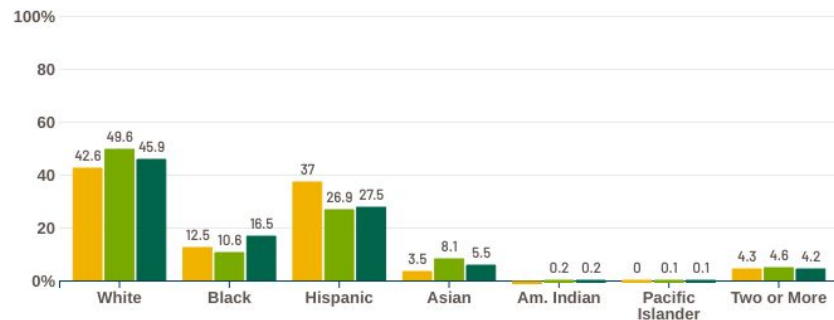
Snapshot

Trends

Demographics ▾

☐ Show Data Table

■ School ■ District ■ State



*setting **goals** for recruitment*

- Percentage of students population?
 - Is that number representative?
 - How accessible is entry?
- What is a reasonable capacity?

*tackle the **why**:*

deep reflection and analysis as to
what **barriers** exist to access to
the program

*barriers typically come in **three** forms:*

- Financial
- Scheduling
- “*Vision*”

Joshua T. Dickerson's "Cause I Ain't Got a **Pencil**"

I woke myself up

Because we ain't got an alarm clock

Dug in the dirty clothes basket,

Cause ain't nobody washed my uniform

Brushed my hair and teeth in the dark,

Cause the lights ain't on

Even got my baby sister ready,

Cause my mama wasn't home.

Got us both to school on time,

To eat us a good breakfast.

**Then when I got to class the teacher
fussed**

Cause I ain't got no pencil.

“Vision”

Do I see *myself* doing this
activity?

Yale Declaration on Equity in Music:

on Dignity
and Exclusion



Yale Declaration on Equity in Music:

Exclusion doesn't
“just happen”

Yale Declaration on Equity in Music:

Exclusion can only be
combated by assertively
pursuing inclusion

Yale Declaration on Equity in Music:

the affirmation of human
dignity manifested by full
access and participation

the lack of diversity is the obstacle

as spaces start becoming
diverse, that *diversity* grows
exponentially

*“Affirmation and Representation
in the Music Classroom”*

Jacqueline C. Henninger & Andrea Sanchez
TMEA Southwestern Musician, May 2021

*representation in the **small** things*

- Honor students' **names**
- Use **inclusive** language
- Remove the “I am **color-blind**”
or “I don't **see** race” mentality.
- Diversity in **all** things.

why diverse repertoire matters

if the thesis is music is for
all of us, then it should
look like all of us

best practices

- Do not leave recruitment to chance
- Recruitment is a year long process
- Be proactive in building coalitions with your office/guidance staff

multifaceted approach:

- Website
- Email
- Physical Mailers
- Phone Call Drive
- Face to face promotion
- Translation/interpretation Services

retention

good **Pedagogy** is the
best tool for retention

retention

getting beginners **fitted** with
the best instruments possible

retention

quality equipment can
be *instrumental*

retention through repertoire

yours, mine, and our

retention

late bloomers
and late starters

retention

Don't underestimate the
importance of *experiences*

all students deserve to be
taught by caring, brilliant,
master teachers like *you*

thank you *so much*
for *so much!*



You Cannot Teach an *Empty Chair*

Chandran J. Daniel
cjdaniel2k2@gmail.com