

A New Approach to Mentorship: Working with Alliances and Making It Sustainable

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Why This Matters

- Teacher attrition is highest in years 1-5
- Mentorship programs often lose momentum after 1-2 years
- Our mission: Build sustainable systems of support through alliances

History of Mentorship in Music Education

- Early mentorship: passion-driven but volunteer-based
- Great intentions, little longevity
- Shift toward sustainable structure via alliances (Iowa, Idaho, Teach Music)

The Music Educator Pipeline

- Identify potential educators early
- Support during college and pre-service teaching
- Mentorship bridges the gap between training and retention
- Addressing turnover in the first 3-5 years

Pillars of Sustainability

1

Identify an
established need

2

Build strong
relationships

3

Align goals across
organizations

4

Fuel commitment
and passion

5

Transition from
volunteer-driven
to funded
structure

Role of State Associations

- Partner organizations collaborate to meet shared needs
- Pool and redistribute resources to support mentorship
 - Example: Iowa's Fall Symposium for first/second-year teachers
 - Example: Idaho's Kick off for mentor training and mentee on boarding
- Unified vision across seven fine arts groups

The Iowa Alliance Model

- Founded 2005 by seven fine arts organizations
- Core components:
 - Professional Development
 - Mentorship
 - Scholarships for growth
- Backed by the Department of Education for statewide reach

The Idaho Alliance Model

- Modeled after Iowa's framework and the Idaho Mentor Standards
- Began in 2021 as a partnership between Idaho Music Educators Association and Idaho Department of Education
- Now scaling to other content areas with additional partners
 - Music mentorship as the pilot
 - Content specific focus on rural and singletons

Urban & Rural Relevance

- Works across all environments
- Iowa: 80% rural / 20% urban mentoring
- Benefits of external mentors: objectivity, expertise
- Intentional pairing by content area = success



Professional Engagement

- Scholarships empower early-career educators to:
 - Join professional organizations
 - Attend state/national conferences
- Engagement builds belonging, which builds retention

Teach Music and National Expansion

- Digital mentorship and data platform under development
- Shared tools for mentor matching and resource sharing
- Integrates:
 - Alternative certification info
 - State mentorship data
 - Coalition-driven advocacy resources

The Future of Mentorship

- Hybrid mentorship ecosystems
- Cross-state alliance networks
- Data-driven impact assessment
- Sustainable models = lasting arts education

Discussion & Q&A

- What challenges exist in your state?
- How could alliances strengthen sustainability?
- What partnerships could amplify your efforts?

Closing Message

“Mentorship isn’t a program,
it’s a promise to the next generation of music educators.”

Contacts & Resources

- Dr. James Weaver – Music for All | musicforall.org
- Robert Morrison – Quadrant Research | quadrantresearch.com
- Leon Kuehner – Iowa Alliance for Arts Education
- Rebecca Martin – Arts Idaho
- Thad Driskell – Iowa High School Music Association