

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND *INCLUSION*

Radical Recruitment Resolutions

By Leah Claiborne

As we bring one year to a close and welcome a new year, many teachers use this time to reflect upon or re-adjust their recruitment process. Independent music teachers may have a few time slots left that can be filled before beginning a new semester. Community music schools know this is another great time of year to gain a new wave of potential students. Colleges and universities will begin to prepare for their live audition process. Whether we are independent music teachers, community school teachers or teachers in higher education, recruitment is a vital aspect of our profession.

Recruitment is a fantastic opportunity to diversify our studios and schools of music. Many teachers have preconceived notions about why there is a lack of diversity in their studio or their application pool. Other teachers have expressed the need or desire to recruit more diverse populations but do not know how to begin the process. This article will aim to debunk some of the myths about why music studios lack diversity within their student demographic while providing innovative solutions for diverse recruitment strategies.

Before exploring ways to recruit more diverse student populations, the first step is to debunk some myths about why there



is such a strong lack of diversity in many of our music studios across the country.

Myth 1:

Certain demographics do not value music in the way that other groups do.

Truth: Music is a fundamental part in all cultures. When given opportunity and exposure, all people can appreciate and learn many forms of music.

Myth 2:

If a family is not able to afford a good instrument, they will not be able to make the same progress as other students.

Truth: A good quality instrument is important in creating a solid foundation in music education. There are many ways families can gain access to great quality instruments if they are not able to afford one. These include:

- Rent-to-own instrument programs in community music stores
- Using houses of worship or a family member's home who has an instrument
- Finding resources like the Beethoven Foundation, beethovenfoundation.com, who give pianos to promising students
- Having a student build a relationship with their public school music teacher to use the school's piano before school, after school, and/or during their lunch period

Myth 3:

The reason more diverse populations do not audition at my school is because they did not have the same traditional training as others, therefore putting them at a greater disadvantage in preparation for the audition process.

Truth: We need to begin to redefine "traditional" training. There are thousands of talented students who have unique stories that led them to music. For example, some students begin their musical training in a church, which allows them to develop a highly skilled musical ear and understanding of harmony, while others may begin their studies in a community outreach program. It is our job as educators to locate these students and give them opportunities to succeed in our field while rethinking our overall application

process to be more inviting for diverse populations.

Recruitment Strategies

Understanding the make up of your community and/or your application pool is the first step to understanding how to diversify your student demographic. Research the demographic of your area/community and compare it to the student demographic of your studio or school of music.

1. Many college faculty members attend the same festivals each year which are often overseas. These festivals are a wonderful opportunity to recruit students, however these festivals cater to a specific population who are financially capable of attending. Alongside going to international festivals, faculty should also consider staying within the states and giving a concert/masterclass to community schools and, Historically Black Colleges/Universities and/or Hispanic Serving Institutions. Private studio teachers can visit public schools in various communities and build relationships with public school music teachers. Ask to give a performance and pass out take-home packets about your music studio.
2. Building relationships with various houses of worship is another wonderful way to reach diverse populations. Performing in worship services in different communities allows you to build relationships, expand your network and build a larger pool of potential students.

Diverse populations will not magically appear at our door step or in our application pool. We must take time to build relationships with various communities to see a difference, make a difference and be the difference for our future needs in music education. ■

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