

Select the Category for Your Nomination: Educator

Name of Nominee's Project/Activity to which criteria will apply: Music education at River Grove Elementary

Nominee Name (Required): Benjamin Kinkley

Position: Music teacher at River Grove Elementary

Length of time In position/or year in school: 4th year at River Grove Elementary

Length of time Nominee has been involved with the project: since 2009

Nominee's Phone # (Required): XXX-XXX-XXXX

Nominee's Address: XXXXX

Nominee's Email (Required): [XXXX](#)

Brief Description of how the Project or Activity works: Ben has been composing his own school performances based on the grade level curriculum for each grade at River Grove. He uses music to teach the subjects, he develops confidence in musicianship, and he supports cross-cultural, multilingual and cross-curriculum learning.

School Affiliation: River Grove Elementary

Is this a new or ongoing project/activity? Ongoing

Project/activity start date (estimate if needed): fall 2015

Will this project or activity continue into the future? Yes

Number of people benefited (estimate if needed): 550+

How are you familiar with this person's service to others in support of education? My children have benefitted from his music education at River Grove.

Criterion 1: Shows initiative yet demonstrates selfless conduct toward others: River Grove Elementary is very fortunate to have in its midst the great music teacher Ben Kinkley. When Ben joined the staff in the fall of 2015, he thought something was amiss: there was no school song. He asked every teacher in the school what they thought was unique about River Grove and wrote the lyrics and music. He wrote, "Music has a great capacity for unifying a group of people, strengthening place identity and enhancing the sense of belonging." It has been sung at nearly every school-wide assembly since, and most likely in homes of River Grove's 550 students.

Then Ben identified another need: the choral music available for music educators did not reflect and reinforce what students were learning in the classroom, and he said, "It's bad." So Ben created the first/second-grade program, his first at River Grove. After initiating conversations with teachers, Ben identified insects as a thread in the science curriculum, and he focused the program on the worldwide bee epidemic. When I attended this program to watch my six-year-old perform, I was amazed by the respect that Ben showed for children by teaching them about such an important problem that we will need to tackle with creativity and dedication.

For the show, Ben adapted the lyrics to three songs: Flight of the Immabee, Stay In the Hive, and Honeysuckle Rose. He transcribed a Lebanese folk song, Aghnia al Nahleh, which the students sang in Arabic. Because he wants to reinforce Spanish-language learning for our Spanish Immersion program, Ben includes a Spanish song in each of the programs. He arranged the Mexican folk song, La Abejita Baila. He found a beautiful poem about bees by Pablo Neruda, translated it, and set the English and Spanish words together as partner songs in Oda a la Abeja. All of the songs were performed to instrumental accompaniments he recorded.

For the fifth-grade program We Are America, based on the American history curriculum, he borrowed the fifth-grade textbook, read everything, and distilled it into major themes. We Are America includes the title song and five others in English, The First People, A Brave New World, Out of Africa, This American Life, and We Must Hang Together, as well as one in Spanish, Colon, Cortes, Pizarro. And to think he could have just bought a choral program.

Ben engenders the support of the stakeholders—children—by showing that they are worthy of performing great art, worthy of tackling complex topics, worthy of cross-cultural and language-learning.

Criterion 2: Inspires others to a high level of educational excellence & development: The answer to all these questions is yes.

For third through fifth graders, Ben's imperative is to have student-only accompaniment for the performances. To do this, Ben composes for music for multiple instruments including recorders, ukuleles, and marimbas, as well as strings instruments for members of the strings program. He teaches these instruments to the children. By fifth grade, these students have developed technical skills.

Ben further sought out the school counselor to learn about the school's social-emotional learning curriculum and to incorporate it into the third-grade program. My favorite song was "Way to Grow." This song is clever and reinforces the "growth mindset" made famous by Dr. Carol Dweck. Ben orchestrated this marvelously complicated performance. He had on stage four classes of students, about 100 in all, playing their preferred instrument to the beat: recorders, ukuleles, marimbas, and strings. Small groups took turns coming to the stage to sing, and the performers also switched halfway through. They were completely unaccompanied.

Ben told me, "Giving students complete ownership over the performance is empowering for them. I believe that everyone is a musician who just needs to be given the opportunity to find their 'voice.'"

Criterion 3: Builds a sense of confidence, competence, and citizenship in

others: The annual performances teach students that music is not just something you consume but something you create. This creation has real meaning: it teaches and inspires. These students are empowered to learn vocal performance and musicianship. They learn to trust each other as they perform together, and they are further empowered by the messages of the songs: "Everyone is equal/everyone deserves respect...everyone deserves an equal share" is the refrain he wrote for a song about the civil rights movement.

This year, Ben started a new, voluntary "Racchoir" for fourth and fifth graders during recess. With no extra cost or time commitment to families, the choir students can enhance their vocal performance skills. The choir took a field trip and performed Christmas carols for the elderly living in Oswego Place on Pilkington Rd. This gave students an opportunity to share their joy and energy with shut-ins and learn how visiting the sick and elderly can be a mutually beneficial experience.

He also incorporates the PTO-sponsored culture week into his music lessons. Last year, he taught a song in Japanese to the children. This year, they will learn a song in Finnish.

Criterion 4: Creates results-driven activities that leave a positive legacy: I don't know how you measure art or music or poetry and the impact that it has on people's lives, but a great teacher always leaves an impression upon his students. These students will be able to continue to develop their musicianship long after they have left school. For me, it is beautiful to see my children bond over singing the songs together that Ben taught them independently in school. The joy that they share in their relationship is enhanced by this music.

I don't know who could honestly follow in Ben's footsteps. It's hard to imagine any teacher throwing out the book and instead of writing it. This is what Ben does for River Grove Elementary.

Ben is in the early stages of codifying his practice so that he can share it. Many of his songs fit the common core curriculum and could be used by any music teacher anywhere in America (except of course his lessons on Oregon and that charming song about "Father Mc Laughlin, the Great White Eagle...")

Criterion 5: Participates at a high level in the community and school-related

activities: In December 2019, Ben performed Handel's Messiah with Cappella Romano. He also sings with the Resonance Ensemble, and he is a paid singer at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral in Portland.

Lastly, Ben maintains a YouTube channel Ben Kinkley's Music, where he can share his practice recordings with the school community and the world. The performances are awesome, and this channel could give you a taste of the wonderful world of music that Ben opens for children at River Grove.

Is there anything you would like to add, not addressed in your answers above? I would highly recommend checking out his YouTube channel.

Nominator name and contact information (email address required): Anne Le Chevallier

Your Address: XXXXX

Your Phone (Required): XXX_XXX_XXXX

Your Email (Required): [XXXXXX](#)

Whom will you be asking for a supporting nomination of your nominee? Lucinda Watson, Sarah Howel