

## *An Inspirational Message from Kelly Poquette*

2021 Burroughs Wellcome Fund Piedmont Triad Region Teacher of the Year



Welcome to 2022! As I reflected on what you might want to read, I thought I would tell you a story about the beginning of my teaching career. In my first year of education as a K-8 general music educator, I felt pretty good my first semester and then came February. At this time, I began to question if this was what I wanted to do. I came home at night and felt overwhelmed with planning for nine grades with two classes a week, planning a musical and other performances, and finding time for everyday life. Then one day, during my plan time, I was sitting in my office (I didn't have a classroom and was between two buildings), and I fell asleep. I had left the door open, and my principal stopped by and asked, "Are you sleeping?" and I admitted, "Yes, I am." **I was emotional, overwhelmed, and tired.** Perhaps you may be able to relate.

I had to reach a breaking point before realizing I didn't know it all and needed a team."

**If I had been less stubborn about needing help, I would have avoided many tears.** As the year continued, there were several successful performances with different grade levels and after-school ensembles. Students played instruments, danced, and sang with standards-based lessons in class. These joyful experiences occurred because I began to engage more meaningfully with my team. The support I received from my colleagues, the classroom teachers, enabled our school to come together. My team members helped with the performances by rehearsing the music and lines during their class, and they attended and allowed extra rehearsals. Although I was the only music teacher and didn't have a PLC, I had a community supporting me.

**My wish for you is that you surround yourself with a team.** For most of my seventeen-year career, I have been the only music teacher at my various schools. I planned on my own, and at times it felt lonely. However, I learned to connect with other music educators in my district and beyond. My school site team members became my team by proximity. We shared students and worked with the same admin team. Even though our disciplines were different, we had a shared community.

You are members of several groups by default, so take the time to create a team that will be a positive force in your journey. These self-selected team members will influence you in direct and subtle ways. **I implore you to choose wisely.** Look for those who come with **solutions** despite their complaints. Seek individuals who will listen when you just need someone to **listen** but who also offer guidance even if you do not realize you need it. May they **provide a brave space** to help you wrestle with challenges and difficulties. Those who differ from you will enlighten you to varied perspectives and help you grow and learn from them. Consider what you need to succeed, what you can offer others, and build your team.

Thank you for adding value to your students, colleagues, and community every day. The work you do is necessary and life-building. It is also challenging, frustrating, and joyful. Build your team and take it one step at a time.



**Save the Date: BT Twitter Chat**

**February 15, 2022**

**7- 8 pm #NCBTChat**

Sign up for a text reminder: [www.remind.com/join/ncbt2021](http://www.remind.com/join/ncbt2021)