



Proudly sponsoring Election Day Lunch!



Proudly sponsoring Election Day Breakfast!

Election Day Professional Development Workshop

East Hartford High School

Tuesday November 3, 2026

8:30am-3pm

[Session List](#)

Additional sessions are being added constantly - check back for new info!

Presenter Name	Session Title	Description	Session Focus
Brian Smith	Audio 101	This session will provide an overview of audio signal flow and basic equipment operation. An opportunity to ask questions specific to your programs will be provided, so feel free to come with questions!	Everyone!
Nick Kokus	Band Directors Roundtable	Join us to chat about all things band! Bring your questions, ideas, challenges, successes, or anything else you've been wanting to discuss with your fellow band colleagues.	Band

Lisala Baetty and Elana Master	Beyond the Notes: Building Musicianship, Confidence & Independence in Every Student	Discover practical, engaging strategies for moving students beyond learning about music to actively thinking, reading, playing, creating, and responding as musicians. Drawing from Music and the Brain's national general music method used in hundreds of K–12 music classrooms, this interactive session explores ways to build musical literacy, independence, and confidence through movement, singing, rhythm, keyboards, and collaborative learning. Participants will leave with activities and research-validated teaching strategies they can use immediately—whether or not they have keyboards in their classrooms.	General Music - Elementary, General Music - Secondary
Jack Zaino and Emmy Dell'Orfano, accompanist	Choral Music Reading Session	Discover new choral repertoire and sing through a variety of selections in this collaborative music reading session. Come explore fresh ideas for your ensembles, connect with fellow choral educators, and leave with repertoire to consider for your own program!	Choir

Colleen Cooney	Creating Integrated Pedagogical Pacing Guides	This professional development session integrates multiple pedagogies (i.e. Kodaly, Orff, etc...) into monthly pacing guides where sound, movement, and symbol function as interconnected ways of understanding music. Participants will learn to design pacing guides that spiral across sound and literacy, embodied rhythm, and ensemble creation simultaneously rather than using one pedagogy. Students continuously move between hearing, moving, reading, and creating, reinforcing musical understanding through multiple representations of the same concept. The result is a developmentally aligned curriculum that supports various teachers' strengths and deeper learning for students."	General Music - Elementary
Steve Zimmerman	Developing Instrumental Students Who Can Think and Practice Like Musicians	This session explores practical strategies for developing tone, rhythm, practice skills, and student ownership through lessons and small-group instruction. Participants will consider what they most want students to know and be able to do before they enter rehearsal, and how to build routines that help students become increasingly independent musicians.	Band

Facilitator coming soon!	Elementary Music Educators Roundtable	Join us to chat about all things elementary music! Bring your questions, creative ideas, classroom challenges, successes, or anything else you've been wanting to discuss with your fellow elementary music colleagues.	Elementary Music
Lindsey Clark and CT-ASTA	Fiddling for today's school orchestra	Why and how I teach multicultural folk-dance tunes to my orchestra students. Bring your instrument to try things out! (welcome to listen too)	Non-traditional Ensembles, Orchestra, World Music and/or Drumming

Kris Curtis	From Imitation to Independence: Designing Accessible, Active, and Artful Music Learning	This collaborative, hands-on session explores how music educators can scaffold students from modeled musical experiences toward greater independence in performing, creating, responding, and connecting. Through singing, movement, rhythmic speech, dramatic play, instrumental play, improvisation, and reflection, participants will examine how Orff-Schulwerk-inspired creative processes, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and sequential instructional practices can provide multiple pathways for meaningful music-making. Informed by practitioner research with PreK–8 music educators, the session highlights how explicit modeling, scaffolded learning, and flexible success criteria can support student reflection, creative decision-making, and agency. Teachers will leave with adaptable strategies that can be applied across curricula, grade levels, and individual teaching contexts. Participants are welcome, but not required, to bring a portable classroom percussion or Orff instrument, and those who have access to a soprano or tenor recorder are also encouraged to bring one for portions of the session that incorporate recorder instruction.	Composition, General Music - Elementary, General Music - Secondary
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Eneji Alungbe	How do I teach strings? I am not a string player.	We will be using violin, Viola, cello and bass to learn how to play and teach for the non string player teaching strings. If you have a violin Viola or cello please bring it with you. We can supply cellos and bases. Session will consist of us picking out some repertoire and working with our fellow musicians to figure out how to play our instruments.	Orchestra
Amy Perras, Brian Cyr, and Steve Zimmerman	Influence Without the Job Title: A Working Session on Arts Leadership	This session is presented by the Connecticut Arts Administrators Association and is built around live problem-solving: we'll surface real challenges from the room, work them through a shared decision-making framework, and connect that framework to the practical tools (data, budget language, scheduling strategy) that make requests land. We'll close with a clear line between advocacy and administration, and what CAAA can be for teachers who don't have anyone local to call.	Band, Choir, Composition, Elementary Vocal Music, Folk Dancing, General Music - Elementary, General Music - Secondary, Guitar, Jazz, Music Technology, Non-traditional Ensembles, Orchestra, World Music and/or Drumming
Wayne Splettstoesz	Interactive Lab: Digital Music, Podcasting, and Statewide Networking	Join us for an open-ended, hands-on session designed to spark creativity and connection. Participants can explore Soundtrap, podcasting setups, and modern DJ equipment while test-driving various lab tools. This informal space offers a unique opportunity to discuss your specific program needs, share ideas, and network with music educators from across the state.	General Music - Elementary, General Music - Secondary, Music Technology

Erin Zaffini	Keynote Session	Somewhere along the way, many of us were handed a map of what a music teaching career is "supposed" to look like: stay in your lane, build your program, wait your turn, and measure success by concert attendance, festival ratings, and years of service. But careers rarely follow the map, and the educators who thrive over the long haul are often the ones willing to step off it. In this keynote, Dr. Erin Zaffini invites music educators to look honestly at the choices that keep us going, and at the ones that slowly wear us down. Drawing on her journey from K–12 music classroom to teacher educator, standards writer, mentor, and leader, she explores what it means to sustain yourself across every season of a career: the exhausting first years, the comfortable middle, the restless stretches, and the moments when you sense it's time for something new. Teachers will be challenged to reconsider where they "think" they belong, to seek out growth that stretches them beyond familiar territory, and to recognize that branching out (no matter how much or how little) doesn't mean leaving music education behind; it can be how you stay in it. Whether you're just starting out, deep in the middle, or wondering what comes next, you'll leave with renewed permission to grow, practical ways to protect your energy, and the courage to get a little out of your lane.	Everyone!
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Erin Zaffini	Let's Get Moving: Integrating Authentic Folk Dance into the K-8 General Music Curriculum	The best general music classes have our students on their feet, engaged, and moving! Come learn authentic folk dances that really inspire students to engage with each other and the cultures that they are learning about. Ways to adapt dances to meet the diverse needs of students will be addressed, as well as general tips for overall success when integrating folk dance into your classroom.	Folk Dancing
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Kathleen Theisen and Melissa Russell	Modern Band Jam!	Play, sing, experiment, JAM! In this highly interactive session, you will experience Modern Band from the inside out! Using guitar, ukulele, keyboard, bass, drumset, and vocals, we'll build songs together in real time while, switching instruments, improvising, adapting, and making music together. After we "jam," we'll unpack the teaching and learning strategies embedded in the experience: how to immediately get students playing, scaffold parts for people with different experience levels, teach multiple instruments at a time, encourage student choice and musical independence, and create an environment where students learn by listening, collaborating, experimenting, and making authentic musical choices. No modern band experience is necessary. Whether you're already teaching guitar, ukulele, keyboard, bass, drums, or popular music—or simply wondering how Modern Band might fit into your existing program—come experience the process firsthand and leave with practical ideas you can use tomorrow! Please bring your instrument or voice for this session!	Band, Jazz, Orchestra
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Matt Harman and Catalina Puerta	Orchestra Reading Session sponsored by Grand Mesa Strings	This session will enable participants to review ensemble music sponsored by Grand Mesa Strings. Ensemble music will have a range from .5 to 4. Participants are asked to bring a violin, Viola, or cello. East Hartford High School has graciously allowed us to borrow cellos and bases for the reading session.	Orchestra
Ryan Stuempges	Planning Student Travel: Why Wasn't This Covered In College?	Join Ryan Stuempges, a 20 year veteran choir director from La Crosse Wisconsin turned travel consultant for Bob Rogers Travel, as he shares his own student travel experiences and tips on how to create the best and most successful travel experiences for your music program. This is a subject that never got addressed while in college but hey...you're a music teacher so you're used to that right? 😊	Band, Choir, Folk Dancing, General Music - Secondary, Jazz, Non-traditional Ensembles, Orchestra, World Music and/or Drumming
Julie Spagnesi	Practical Tidbits for Beginning Band	The little things we say and do in the first weeks of starting beginners can have a huge impact on the habits they form. I will share the strategies I've accumulated for each instrument over the more than a decade I've been teaching elementary band, and also provide space for others to share the strategies that they've found that work.	Band

Steve Zimmerman	Rehearsal Systems That Build Stronger Ensembles	Effective rehearsals should build musicians and lead to low-stress, highly musical performances. This session focuses on practical rehearsal systems for strengthening fundamentals, increasing student playing time, improving pacing, and establishing consistent expectations for pulse, pitch, rhythm, and ensemble sound. Participants will leave with adaptable routines they can use immediately in band rehearsals. Participants are encouraged to bring their instruments for this interactive session!	Band
Jim Buchta and Kevin Tzanetis	Staying Inspired and Motivated in All Circumstances	Past CMEA Western Region Director, and TEDx speaker Jim Buchta along with TEDx performer and jazz trumpet artist Kevin Tzanetis share their twenty year story on the power of relationship and resilience. The session will include the twelve essential skills that make the best leaders and the eleven executive functioning skills that changed Jim's teaching even after 35 years. Participants will have an opportunity to ask questions to enjoy Kevin's jazz trumpet performance.	Band, Orchestra, Jazz

Dan O'Brien	Strategies for Building a Culture of Creative Excellence with Jazz Improvisation	It takes intention to build an instrumental program where students can access creativity on a consistent basis. This session will break down some of the ways you can intentionally facilitate creativity for your ensemble students, especially through a jazz program. As students develop their ability to improvise with melodic riffs, harmonic cells, and scales/arpeggios over chords, they become able to compose original music - first by using the frameworks of traditional forms, then by creating their own unique frameworks. By taking time with a clear instructional sequence to grow students' confidence in their burgeoning improvisation abilities, we can foster a culture of inclusive creativity that allows many students to engage. Participants should bring an instrument with them and/or be prepared to sing.	Band, Jazz, Orchestra
CT-ASTA	String Teachers Roundtable	Join CT-ASTA for a fun and engaging conversation about all things strings! Bring your questions, ideas, challenges, successes—or anything else you've been wanting to chat about with your fellow string teachers.	Orchestra

Anthony Susi	The Adjudication Festival Experience	Insight and strategies to ensure a positive and beneficial adjudication experience for your ensembles will be shared by Anthony Susi from his perspective as an adjudicator for various school districts, Great East Festivals & Fantastic Festivals spanning 20 years. Anthony Susi will hold a free drawing near the end of his session for one of his String, Jazz or Concert Band compositions at the grade level of the winner's choosing.	Band, Choir, Orchestra
Wayne Splettstoesser	Unlocking Creativity with Soundtrap: From Basics to Classroom Beats	Ready to bring digital audio production into your curriculum? Join me for an essential overview of the Soundtrap DAW. We will dive into the platform's interface, explore creative lesson ideas, and discuss successful classroom implementation. Whether you teach general music or media production, you will gain the tools and inspiration needed to launch your students' next audio project. Soundtrap will be providing raffle items to be distributed at the end of the session.	General Music - Elementary, General Music - Secondary, Music Technology
Emily Marquardt-Smith	Vocal Music Educators Roundtable	Join us for a lively conversation about all things vocal music! Bring your questions, ideas, challenges, successes, or anything else you'd love to chat about with your fellow vocal colleagues.	Vocal

Jack Zaino and Emmy Dell'Orfano, accompanist	Warm-Ups in the Choral Classroom	Explore engaging and effective vocal warm-ups designed to help your singers prepare for rehearsal and performance. Discover new exercises, techniques, and ideas that you can easily bring back to your own choral classroom.	Choir
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