

William Edmundson

April 10 2025

Teacher interview reflection 6

Cathy Keller is an amazing and important teacher in the Colorado Area. She used to teach at Fossil Ridge's choir program, but has since switched to elementary teaching with Prairie View Elementary. Her journey into elementary music education began when she and her husband, Travis Keller, my former band director, made a joint decision for the sake of their future family. Recognizing that the demanding high school schedule wouldn't allow for the balance they wanted, she made the transition to elementary music. She described it as the best decision of her career. While she cherished her time at the high school level, she found her true passion in helping young children discover a love for music early on.

When I asked her about the biggest stressors of teaching elementary music, she was quick to point out the challenge of helping young students manage and express their big emotions. Since these students are still learning how to identify and process feelings, it can be incredibly difficult to support one student in a moment of emotional need while also managing the rest of the class. Another stressor she mentioned was engagement—specifically, working with students who aren't naturally drawn to music class. She said it can be tough to find creative ways to get those students involved and invested, especially when they don't share the enthusiasm that others do.

I also asked about her approach to classroom management, especially for younger students and those with ASD. Her strategy is rooted in a simple yet effective structure: participation in the learning activity earns access to the "fun stuff" like games and dances. If

students aren't fully participating, they miss out—but can earn it back by showing effort. Each year, she also teaches her students the M.U.S.I.C. rules, which stand for:

Make Good Choices

Use Good Manners

Speak When Appropriate

Involve Yourself

Care for Equipment

This acronym sets the tone for behavior expectations in her classroom and is reinforced as needed throughout the year. When it comes to her students with ASD, she shared that managing their needs is “a whole other ballgame” and hinted at a much larger conversation needed to cover all the complexities involved.

Connecting with students who are difficult to reach is another area where she shows a lot of care and intentionality. She focuses on positive reinforcement, highlighting when students make good choices and praising them for it. She also sends positive emails home, tries to connect with students' interests and incorporate them into class activities, and even attends their extracurricular events to show she cares about them as individuals.

Finally, I asked what advice she would give to someone pursuing a career in elementary music education. Her response was passionate and direct: go all in. She emphasized not treating an elementary position as a stepping stone to secondary, pointing out that the elementary years