



Kelley School instrumental music teacher and Newark Central School District Music Department leader Cindy Briggs strayed from the typical holiday music fare with her fourth and fifth grade band members at the December 16th Winter Concert and it ended on a high note with the audience.

Because of COVID-19 last year, there was no beginning band, so both fourth and fifth graders began learning to make instrumental music together in September.

So Briggs took the audience on a sequential musical demonstration of how the youthful musicians had progressed since they began at the beginning of this school year.

She explained:

“Good evening Moms and Dads, Grandmas and Grandpas, Aunts and Uncles, brothers and sisters, friends and neighbors _ I am Mrs. Briggs and I would like to welcome you to our first LIVE and IN PERSON performance since December of 2019, pre-COVID. The musicians that you see on this stage have made a

commitment to work hard, practice outside of school and have high expectations of themselves. They get up early to come to school before everyone else and have made that commitment to begin a journey toward becoming musicians who will enjoy a lifetime of music-making. Tonight’s performance by the band will be a demonstration concert. That is, the band would like to show you the progress that they have made. And while you will hear a few familiar tunes, you will also hear where we started so you can see how far we have come.”

It began with Briggs having the young musicians show how they must sit correctly in band _ backs straight, behinds at the back edge of their chair and feet flat on the floor.

“It is amazing to see the change in their posture and focus as we get ready to play,” she said.

Then students, playing with mouthpieces only, showed what they sounded like at their first rehearsal in September.

“You might want to plug your ears,” Briggs quipped.

Musical Journey Chronicled At Concert



A couple of students, unable to attend their first concert, participated and played their instruments via *Zoom* on their computers from home.

Commencing from their rough beginnings, Briggs continued the 20-minute demonstration of the fledgling musician's musical journey as they learned a few notes to the point where they are now _ concluding with playing of "Jingle Bells."

Judging from these e-mail responses, it was a big hit.

"I just wanted you to know how much I enjoyed your concert Thursday night. In a space of about 10 minutes. I learned more about what is involved in playing an instrument and how exciting it is for young students to go from playing 3 notes to incorporating those 3 notes into playing an actual song. What a thrill it is for young students to be able to accomplish so much in such a little time. You chose such an innovative way to introduce us all to the basics of learning the fundamentals of playing an instrument. Bravo to you and your groups!!!"

"I am a volunteer at NWCH and as such have many opportunities to talk to staff at the hospital as well as people waiting for family during same day surgery.

Yesterday and today I couldn't help but overhear several people talking about the wonderful concert this past Thursday night. Not only were they commenting on what a great job you did but several were very complementary on your handling of your students. It is so obvious how much you enjoy working with these children and how much they love working with you. It is very satisfying to hear people in the community talk about good things happening in our schools."

Another parent wrote:

Truly, I was very impressed with the concert. I thoroughly enjoyed hearing the learning progression for the students. As parents, we hear the beautiful beginning sounds of music-making, but to hear these young musicians collectively and understand how they have grown in this process was a very unique experience. Grandparents and parents alike found the concert to be exceptional!

A parent of one of the students who participated virtually complimented Briggs in a note to Superintendent Susan Hasenauer.

"I wanted to take the time to give an enormous shout-out and thank you to Cindy Briggs for truly going above and beyond for the Intermediate Concert last night!"

She noted her child was upset because she would miss her first music performance.

*"In addition to all it takes to pull off a concert, Cindy eagerly added a "virtual" component to incorporate the students who were not able to attend! Somehow, she fit in a practice *Zoom* session with the kiddos which enabled them to flawlessly *Zoom* into the concert as if they were there! During the concert, Cindy took time to talk directly to the "*Zoom kids*" several times and even brought them down (the *Zoom* session on the computer) to the choir performance so they could be a part of that as well!"*

"Cindy's thoughtful inclusion of these students emulated and fostered equity, access and a sense of belonging for all students that our district is so focused on," Hasenauer said.

Briggs said she was happy the fourth and fifth grade bands' segment _ that she noted the students helped design the script and practiced for since the end of November _ was so well received.

"I think it's important for parents and others to see how far these young musicians have come from in such a short time," she said. *"It's also very encouraging for the students and should be celebrated."*