

CalASTA Sacramento Section

Rejean Anderson, President # Gay Currier, V.P. # Reylynn Imai, Secretary # Catherine Heusner, Treasurer

Spring 2019 Newsletter

ACTIVITIES

Don't we all love spring! School music teachers are busy preparing their students for the ever-important Spring Concert. Private teachers are busy preparing their students for recitals, concerts, and auditions. (As well as, often enough, their own recitals and concerts.) A busy time, indeed! Our ASTA section is also busy: in the month of May, we will hold our **Spring Recital** in Sacramento followed the next weekend by our **Solo Competition** in Davis. Entry forms are included in this newsletter, as well as an entry form for our **Illustrated Essay Contest**. Yes, we are holding our fourth **Illustrated Essay Contest** where students show/tell us what playing their instruments means to them. The first prize winner will receive a \$50 gift certificate to Kline's Music, one of our most loyal supporters, and entries will be on display at our next recital, so please do encourage your students to participate!

KUDOS to KIM! CalASTA State President

Our Section is honored to have Kimberly Cole Feeney as CalASTA state president! Kim will be retiring from 35 years of teaching school strings this year. This interview will illuminate her amazingly successful career. We congratulate her on her accomplishments and wish her well!

Kim, what motivated you to become public schools strings teacher?

I was motivated by a desire for financial stability and independence. I wanted a career doing something I loved, which would provide me with retirement benefits, medical coverage and a steady income. At the time I decided to get my credential, I already had a Bachelors and a Masters degree. I was substituting in several symphonies, freelancing and teaching privately. After speaking with several other musicians, I was convinced that I could teach in the public schools and still have some time to play the cello on nights and weekends.

Where did you get your degree and teaching credential?

I received my Bachelor of Music at CSU Sacramento and my Master of Arts at CSU Long Beach. I began my credential studies at CSU Sacramento in 1982.

What influence has ASTA been in developing your career as a strings teacher?

I received the majority of my pedagogical training through summer ASTA workshops. I had the opportunity to take classes from some great educators including Marvin Rabin, Phyllis Young, Dr. Dorothy Straub and Gerald Anderson. Probably the most exciting workshop was in Graz, Austria, which was one of the last international ASTA workshops.

(Cont.)

How long have you been teaching in the Davis JUSD? Where did you teach before?

I have been with the Davis Joint Unified School District for 31 years. My first full time teaching position was in the San Juan Unified School district. I was filling in for a teacher, Robin Williams, who was taking a leave of absence to pursue graduate studies. She asked me if I wanted a job. I interviewed with the district and the following September I took on the responsibility of eight elementary schools and a junior high. She returned the next year and I moved to the Sacramento City Unified school district and taught general music for one year. I began teaching strings in Davis in 1988.

What grades have you taught? Have you had to travel to different schools during the week?

I teach grades 4-6. In San Juan I had a total of eight schools including a junior high and I have had as many as seven schools in Davis. My usual schedule is one or two schools per day and I teach an average of 350 students per year. This includes an after school All-City Elementary orchestra that I created in 1995. It began with 24 fifth and sixth graders and grew to 120 players in 2004. Needless to say, we had to limit it to 6th graders only and it has held steady at about 50-60 players per year. Did I mention that it takes a lot of energy to teach music?

What role does parent involvement play in the success of your programs?

Parent involvement is crucial in any successful public school music program. I am fortunate that education is highly valued in Davis. Music booster groups are essential, especially at the secondary level. It is quite a balancing act to keep everyone happy and involved. This includes parents, students, classroom teachers (especially in pullout programs), administrators and local music stores.

Have the school principals been supportive of your programs?

School principal support is extremely important and it really has a wide spectrum. This year I have some incredible support from several of my schools. It really affects one's demeanor when they feel welcomed and valued. Being itinerant, we are not always seen in the same light as the classroom faculty and it is very important to make your presence known and to get to know as many of the staff as possible. This can be challenging when time is limited and you only see some of the schools once a week, but it is crucial when the kids are being pulled out of the classroom for lessons.

What does it take to become a successful public school strings teacher?

To be successful you have to "connect" and "please" a wide variety of school climates and personalities. Flexibility is extremely important and if you don't already have the skill, you need to become a "team" player. Each school has it's own personality and set of rules and you have to be willing to adapt and fit in at each site. It is also important to make the effort to collaborate with the other music educators in the district. A strong group of music teachers is essential to the success of the feeding system between elementary, junior high and senior high levels.

What are some of your favorite memories?

This is a very difficult question because there are so many wonderful memories including performances, guest artists, festivals, etc. I guess my most treasured ones are the hand written cards and letters I receive from students and parents. It is also wonderful to hear from former students who have continued in their studies and actually chose music as their major in college. I also love it when the students thank me at the end of a lesson. Yes, this actually happens!