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**J.E.J. Moore Middle School's David Dockan  
Featured in National Academic Journal *The Orff Echo***

PRINCE GEORGE, Va. - David Dockan, Choir Director at J.E.J. Moore Middle School was recently featured in the Summer 2020 edition of *The Orff Echo*, a quarterly academic journal that focuses on music concepts.

Also referred to as the Orff Approach, Orff Schulwerk is a developmental method used in music education that allows students to learn musical concepts and develop their musicianship through speech exercises, improvisation, and movement. The approach dates back to the 1920s when German composer Carl Orff developed it alongside his colleague Gunild Keetman. Decades later, the Orff Approach remains a fixture of music education as teachers can complete coursework through Orff Schulwerk Teacher Education on their way to becoming fully-certified Orff Schulwerk instructors.

J.E.J. Moore's own Dockan is one of those instructors, having completed all three levels of Orff Schulwerk Teacher Education and now imparts his knowledge and love for music to his students daily, a love that dates back to his childhood.

"My background in music education started in fourth grade when I started learning the trumpet there," Dockan shared. "Once I learned trumpet, I kept taking band through high school, along with choir. I went to West Virginia University, where I got my Bachelor's Degree in music education. While there, I was a student conductor and led choirs, and I was a section leader in the marching band."

In 2016, Dockan joined the Prince George County Public Schools family teaching at North Elementary before moving to Moore Middle in 2018. He would continue his education during the summers, studying the Orff Approach at Rochester, New York's Eastman School of Music en route to Orff Schulwerk certification. From there, he earned his Master's in music education from Ohio's Kent State University.

The article featured in *The Orff Echo*, titled "Orff Schulwerk, Informal Music Learning, and Creativity: A Mixed Methods Study," served as a condensed version of Dockan's capstone project at Kent State.

For Dockan, the study sought to learn how music teachers utilize both Orff Schulwerk and Informal Music Learning concepts to encourage student creativity in their classrooms.

"I wanted an insight into what classrooms were looking like around the country and the world as I received responses from as far away as Australia," he detailed. "I wanted to know what they were thinking and what they knew about Orff Schulwerk creativity and Informal Music Learning, which gleaned from my love of pop music. Many people negatively connotate pop music and feel music teachers shouldn't use it in the classroom while I am in the opposite camp. I believe that is where students are. That is what students know and have already experienced, so how can we take that and guide them into the music education we want them to learn."

As he drafted the study, Dockan noted the results were a mix of what he expected alongside some surprising findings.

"The median respondent was a mid-career teacher, about 15 years of experience," he explained. "A lot of people either haven't heard of Informal Music Learning or don't know how to implement it into their classroom, but they were very comfortable with the Orff Schulwerk process, which has flourished here in America and around the world."

Dockan believes both Orff-Schulwerk and Informal Music Learning, a process of learning music that uses a model or recorded music, can work in unison with one another in the classroom instead of an either-or mindset.

"I think sometimes people believe it's a dichotomy where you have to either use Orff Schulwerk or you have to use Informal Music Learning, but I think they can blend nicely because they both are about self-directed student learning, as opposed to teacher-directed learning," he remarked. "More often in education, we are seeing that students need to be guiding their learning and figuring out these concepts on their own. That can help them understand the concepts instead of someone lecturing and telling them what they are. Both are active music-making processes."

Employing both principles in his classroom, Dockan detailed how he approaches Orff Schulwerk and Informal Music Learning in his lessons at J.E.J. Moore Middle School.

"Looking at the Orff Approach as a holistic approach to music education, it involves movement and fundamental parts of music and using those for students to create their things," he shared. "I give my students many 'elemental building bricks,' such as 'rhythm building bricks' and 'melodic building bricks,' and we take those and place them together to create their own pieces of music and sounds they think could sound cool."

Dockan continued, "For Informal Music Learning, I ask my kids what they're listening to, what's on the radio, or what's their earworm. Then I use that to guide what types of music I will use with them. One of my favorites was "Happier" by Marshmello, which we took and put it onto xylophones. They created an accompaniment and played the melody all around it."

Providing lessons to his students that utilize both principles results in students being more engaged with Dockan's teachings.

"When a student is actively engaged, they are less distracted and much more attentive and into what is happening," he detailed. "When you allow the students to use the music they listen to, they're able to use their voice, and their voice is heard in the classroom as opposed to me telling them they have to listen to an aria by Franz Schubert. It's just giving students their autonomy and the opportunity to develop these thoughts and ideas about music independently."

With his appearance in *The Orff Echo*, it marks the first time Dockan's work has been featured in a national academic journal. He hopes the insights he gleaned from dozens of other music instructors in the article's development can help other teachers across the country.

"It is exciting to be published and to think that it can help someone," he said. "I think one of my favorite things is teaching teachers how to do better, and hopefully, this gives them something they can bring to their classroom."

Dockan has presented the topic at his alma mater West Virginia University and plans to share his findings during a presentation at Columbia College Chicago in Illinois in the future.