



TOUCHPOINT

The Division of Education Newsletter

Conn-Selmer
DIVISION OF EDUCATION

Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser
Vice President of Education
Cell: 260.410.0717
DrTim@conn-selmer.com

Michael Kamphuis
Managing Director, Division of Education
Work: 574.523.0677
Cell: 574.607.6000
mkamphuis@conn-selmer.com

Kelly Bryan
Manager of Educational Outreach
Phone: 574.523.0651
Cell: 574.329.8727
kbryan@conn-selmer.com

Gary Markham
Executive Director,
Music Administration Collaborative
Phone: 678.300.3438
markham@aol.com

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A Note from Dr. Tim

Greetings. In this edition of *Touchpoint*, **David Branson**, Former Director of Fine Arts for the **Washoe School District**, further explores the concept of Lean manufacturing as a vehicle for improving music education.



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Our Next Issue Featuring:
An article by Peter Warshaw

In Our Last Issue:

**Improving Music Education by
Using the Lean Business Model
by David Branson**

[Click here for the full article](#)

The Lean Business Model For Music Education

By David Branson

In the previous issue of *Touchpoint*, I briefly described the Lean model and its application to education. The following article is meant to provide further detail and specific illustrations of how this model can be applied to music education. The purpose of the Lean model for education is to help efficiently and effectively focus on increasing the value of music education for our students while also better serving the core values of our stakeholders.

The first step in the Lean model is to identify the core values for your customer. In music education your customer is the student. Everyone else involved in the music program would be considered a stakeholder (e.g., administrators, parents, assistant teachers, and community partners). While it is important to understand and consider your stakeholders' core values, these should not be used to drive program decisions. When determining whether a program process adds value, you will want to consider the core values for your students, the customer.

Table 1. Possible Core Values for Students and Stakeholders

STUDENTS	STAKEHOLDERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent Music Makers Healthy Competition Team work Discipline Appreciation/Love of music Mentoring/Coaching Leadership School pride 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance academic results Program provided within budget Acceptance of child Concerts, show, competitions, Evidence of student growth Development of self-worth Team work Belonging to something "bigger" than self

Once you have clarified your program's core values, you will want to map the processes for teaching music in order to ensure that you are supporting those values in the most efficient and effective way possible. According to the Lean model, a process is a collection of activities, (think of "links in a chain") that occur either in parallel or sequential order to achieve a specific goal.

Teaching music is an activity that includes both internal and external processes. Internal processes are those activities over which you have direct control. An example of this would be: tracking and replacing your inventory, communication with your stakeholders, selection and pacing of your curriculum and articulation with your feeder schools. External processes are those activities over which you do not have direct control but can still impact the quality of your program. These include: school site class scheduling, state education policies and local school board decisions. Although you do not directly control these, your music program should be integrated into the larger education system. You can empower stakeholders to help you improve the efficiency and quality of your music program by making sure that music is seen as a core subject that benefits all academic areas.

Next, you will want to evaluate your internal processes for teaching music. Each activity must be defined as either value add or non-value add from the perspective of your customer (i.e., students). Value add activities are those that are perfectly aligned with your core values. An example of this could be: group rehearsal, sectionals or private instructional time.

Examples of non-value add activities could be: taking attendance, distributing instruments, handing out music, and uniforms, classroom behavior management, testing and time spent traveling to events. Examine each of these activities and commit to changes that eliminate or minimize the time spent on non-value add activities. Whenever possible, if you cannot eliminate these activities, look toward delegating these responsibilities to students, assistants or parent volunteers.

The goal is to create more time for you to spend in value add activities. One way to do this is to make sure that process steps occur in tight sequence. For example, teachers who plan and execute high-quality, sequential lesson plans are going to move students towards independent music-making more efficiently and effectively.

The final step in the Lean model is to continuously refine and improve your music teaching processes by attacking the newest weak link and looking for methods to eliminate all unnecessary non-value add steps. When we have the courage to fix the weakest link in a positive manner, the overall chain becomes stronger. The weakest link might be a particular music section or an individual player. Remember there is no shame in being the weakest link, as even the strongest chain has a weak link. When you work to strengthen the your chain, do not affix blame or shame. Approach each challenge as an opportunity, and work to find solutions that develop and improve that link without sub-optimizing the entire process.

The Lean model provides a framework for music educators to create music programs that are focused on supporting the program's core values; core values defined by both students and stakeholders. This model promotes continuous process evaluation that challenges teachers to determine if internal music teaching processes are meeting the core values in the most efficient way possible. More importantly, the Lean model promotes development of a program-wide culture where music educators and all stakeholders are committed to continuously improving program quality.

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