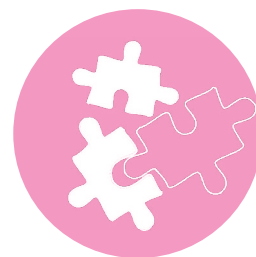




Lead Guitar

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Staff of Lead Guitar: Brad Richter, Holly Holmes and Marc Sandroff



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Lead Guitar, a new different methodology to learn to play the guitar, which since 1999 is being developed in the USA, although working as a project, was founded in 2007. Could this be a new way of taking music to schools and universities?

The Lead Guitar program establishes permanent classical guitar classes in public schools with low access to the arts. A Lead Guitar master instructor—teacher who has at least a Master’s degree in classical guitar performance—use a field-tested curriculum to teach students to play and to train teachers to teach classical guitar. This co-teaching method between a Lead Guitar instructor and a school’s Teacher-of-Record ensures not only the short-term quality, but the long-term sustainability, of the program. Typically, after 2-3 years of a school partnering with Lead Guitar, the Teacher-of-Record can carry on the program independently.

We already found different studies, also in Spain, where students who participate in music at school have more attendance, make better grades, and are more likely to attend college and have more lucrative careers than students who do not participate in school music programs.

In Lead Guitar, students learn technique, music-reading, theory, performance skills and ensemble-playing. They develop their discipline, self-esteem and ability to work as a team - attributes that help them realize success throughout their lives. In addition, Lead Guitar offers all of the benefits of a high-quality instrumental music education to thousands of students who would otherwise not receive them.

Though Lead Guitar was officially founded as a nonprofit in 2007, co-founder Brad Richter began developing and teaching the curriculum that would become the core of the program in 1999.

The idea started when, on a concert tour in the Four Corners area—where the state borders of Utah, Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona meet—Brad was asked to visit Page High School to give a guitar workshop. He met students who were both immensely talented and highly at-risk.

Then, Brad began writing a guitar curriculum to help the school's choir teacher guide them through the basics of note-reading and technique. Each subsequent year, Brad spent more time at Page High School to expand the curriculum, adding student concerts, guitar retreats on Lake Powell, and scholarship opportunities for the most serious guitar students. Lead Guitar's co-founder, Marc Sandroff, heard about the program when he moved from Chicago to Tucson and saw great potential in Lead Guitar. Marc wanted to help offer the opportunity to study music to some of the most underserved students in the country. In 2006, Brad and Marc gathered a motivated and experienced board of directors, and began offering the program to schools throughout the Southwest.

By 2012, Lead Guitar was serving 20 schools in five states and had taught thousands of students to play classical guitar. In August 2013, Lead Guitar became affiliated with the University of Arizona and three new CFA (College of Fine Arts) in Schools programs were developed based on Lead Guitar's model. Today, Lead Guitar has over 60 programs in five states.



The method used by Lead Guitar

Students learn technique, theory, ensemble-playing, and performance skills. These are the same aspects of other music programs that have been proven to improve test scores, attendance, and graduation rates.

The objective is

to appeal to students not usually drawn to band and orchestra programs, using an instrument to which young people relate well, while mirroring the curricular integrity of those more traditional programs. If there is a population at your school that is not receiving music education, then Lead Guitar could help.

The process is that

a Lead Guitar (LG) instructor partners with a certified teacher from a school to co-teach a year-round guitar class. The classroom teacher learns and plays along with the students while the LG instructor models the curriculum. When the class meets without the Lead Guitar instructor present, the Teacher-of-Record (TOR) guides practice and reviews concepts introduced in previous meetings. Whenever possible, the LG instructor stays for an additional hour each week to offer private or small group lessons for students or for the teacher to further develop their guitar technique and pedagogy.

Among all its content include

- Up to 70 hours of on-site teaching, including classroom instruction and private / small group lessons
- Annual Teacher's Workshop for Professional Development credits as well as private lessons for teachers, where needed
- Digital access to instructional videos, method books, sheet music, and evaluation and assessment resources
- Access to in-school touring artist assemblies
- Access to on-campus matinees, performances, master classes, and the end-of-year Lead Guitar Showcase Concert – Lead Guitar partners with universities and colleges in each region to provide access to campus, critical for those students whose families have never received a college education.

Notably Lead Guitar does not replace or undermine music teachers, but rather partners with music teachers to give them a new subject to teach. This aims to increase total enrollment in music and in many cases stabilizes the partner music teacher's job by helping them add teaching time to their schedule and new skills to their resume. Lead Guitar could not do what they do without the incredible classroom teachers who partner with them. Classroom teachers are also invaluable in passing on wisdom and classroom management techniques to Lead Guitar's teaching artists, often early-career concert artists and college professors, and thus giving them more real-world teaching experience for the next stage of their career.



How does Lead Guitar provide program to schools for free?

Lead Guitar relies on the philanthropy of many, many organizations, family foundations, corporate donors, and state and federal arts organizations, including the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).

Without doubt we can understand that the methodology proposed and developed by Lead Guitar, can bring not only the practice of the guitar, but also music education to those people who have fewer possibilities. Music Education is a right that must be part of the education of any person, therefore all efforts are critical when it comes to working towards educational inclusion. Access to music education, in some environments, is a privilege that very few enjoy. Therefore, the Lead Guitar proposal brings music to the classrooms with the best professionals.

If this were possible with all the musical instruments, music education could be brought to all people, which would mean avoiding educational exclusion, parameters defended by UNESCO.

All the marvelous work that many professionals are doing can be followed on the website of this great project: <https://www.leadguitar.org/>

Report by Ana M. Vernia for ARTSEDUCA ♦