

For D.C. Teacher, Enthusiasm and Creativity Drive Learning – and High Regards

By Izzy Hardy | 4 May 2021

When Joshua Krohn, a music teacher at Brent Elementary School in Washington, DC first started



teaching, he wanted to work primarily with college students.

But once he got a chance to teach kids at the elementary school age, he wondered what he had been missing. He dove headfirst into the role, not looking back. 18 years later, the educator's electric enthusiasm has not worn off– even in spite of a pandemic. And his community has loved him for it.

Joshua Krohn. Cred. Brent Elementary School.

A self-named “eternal optimist,” Krohn said that he has found some silver linings during virtual learning, one of which notably being that his students have started to come out of their shells.

Unintimidated by their schools' halls, Krohn said that his students have started to become more confident in their music and performance abilities.

One primary method that Krohn uses to encourage this growth in his students is by using a “performance buddy,” intended to show his students that they can move around to the beat of the music, and be silly about it.

“This is actually a Viking that I got when I was a child,” said Krohn, laughing as he reached off-screen for a small figurine during a Zoom call. “My Viking is my partner who sits at my desk, and we clap together, and we move around the room together. And my students, I can tell them

find something in your house you can move around with... it might be a stuffed animal, it might be a little figurine, for some of them it could even be as simple as a water bottle.””

Alongside making music as a group, Krohn said that he frequently likes to encourage mini performances during his class. Due to virtual learning, the educator has adapted his style into smaller fragments, asking his students to unmute themselves as everyone goes through the music. During even a non-virtual year, Krohn also said that he enjoys teaching rounds to his students, showing them how individual pieces can harmonize together as a whole.

But Krohn said that truthfully, he feels as though he can almost present almost any educational musical activity to his young students and it will be received positively – which is why he loves his job so much.

“There is something about being able to be in front of children and hopefully inspire students in wanting to learn more about the arts, and just get excited to learn about not only being a performer, but even learning about what it takes to be one,” Krohn said, speaking quickly and leaning back in his chair. “I could not ask for a better profession.”

When asked about where his love for music came from, Krohn sported a goofy smile. As a child, he was very excited about music – much like his students, he said. Krohn started by playing the violin and piano, and then began teaching himself new instruments. Now, he knows how to play around 45 different instruments.

With this ability, Krohn could probably work anywhere. But according to Melissa Krohn, his wife and a fourth-grade teacher at Lakewood Elementary school in Maryland, Krohn is happiest working at an elementary school. If he weren't teaching, he would be helping other teachers be better full time, Mrs. Krohn said.

The couple have been married for nearly seven years. When they first met, Mrs. Krohn said that her husband's positive nature and friendliness struck her. "He is always the first person to ask how someone's day has been going and will say hello to every person when out for a walk," she said.

According to Mrs. Krohn, her husband is very well-liked by the parent and student community at Brent Elementary. In fact, he has been [nominated](#) for several awards, several times: five times as the DC Music Teacher of the Year Award, three times for the National LifeChanger of the Year Award, and twice for a Grammy Music Education award. Despite all of this, Krohn has not actually won a single one.

Nevertheless, comments surrounding Krohn's nominations are overwhelmingly positive. One commenter, who posted on the LifeChanger of the Year Award page in [2012](#) – the first year the educator was nominated – said that "Mr. Krohn's devotion to his students, and the enthusiasm and joy he puts into his work are extraordinary." The commenter said Krohn is "wonderfully attuned" to her daughters' "emerging personalities and abilities, while also knowing exactly what kind of encouragement or advice is needed."

Another commenter said that Krohn “must be superman and live a 36 to 48 hour day rather than 24 hours” because of how much he accomplishes. In [2015](#), a comment – which was one of 68 total – said that Krohn has “made such significant and positive improvements” to Brent Elementary school’s theater and music program, as well as “dared to dream and reach for the stars.”

Krohn’s accomplishments include putting on multiple musical performances and plays throughout the school year and setting up many after-school music programs, according to Krohn’s anonymous nominators for the LifeChanger of the Year award.

Outside of his work for Brent Elementary school, Krohn is the current President of the Washington D.C Music Education Association. He also serves on the Eastern Division Board at the National Association for Music Education. With both organizations, he works with other educators to develop better strategies and approaches to teaching.

Despite his accomplishments, Krohn stayed silent when his nominations were mentioned, much keener when continuing to discuss his work as a teacher. The educator’s energy picked up each time he described a new aspect of his job, becoming an almost childlike giddiness.

According to his wife, Krohn struggles to remember to set apart time for himself, away from his hard work. She hopes that one day, he will actually receive the award and recognition that he deserves.