What do you love about teaching high school students?

I love connecting with my high school students and watching them grow, both musically and as people. Ages 14-18 are such formative years, and being a small part of their journey is incredibly special.

If someone currently teaches band or orchestra, and is considering music technology, what advice would you give them about the switch or about teaching the course along with their other responsibilities?

I would tell them to play to their strengths, be open to new ideas, and build a support system. The Music Tech teacher community is amazing (special shoutout to the GCPS Music Tech teacher chat!), everyone is so willing to share ideas, tips, and help troubleshoot your technology! When you play to your strengths, you get to bring your personality and musical experience to your classroom - and that becomes part of what you share with your students. As you teach Music Tech, stay open to new ideas. You'll start learning from your students - their interests, what sparks their creativity - and you can shape your lessons and projects to best suit your population.

How do you handle classroom management with your students?

Classroom management is all about having routines, procedures, and clear expectations set up from the start, along with building strong relationships with students and families. At the beginning of the year, we practice our procedures and I ask students to explain why we do things a certain way. That way, they not only understand what is expected, but knowing the *why* helps them follow through. I also prioritize relationships with my students. If someone isn't meeting expectations, I can have a one-on-one conversation to see what's going on and help them improve. When students know you care about them, and understand your rationale, they are much more likely to engage and participate in class.

What is your favorite lesson or unit to teach your students? For music technology and for Concert Band?

Band: Our Fine Arts Showcase is a collaborative winter program featuring band, orchestra, chorus, dance, and visual arts. We perform pieces separately and in various combinations, and end with a finale that includes everyone! After the show we host a Winter Market where art students offer homemade ornaments and decorations, face painting, pictures with Santa, and refreshments, while our music students provide the

background music in small ensembles. It's an amazing collaboration, celebration of the arts, and a highlight of the year!
Music Tech: My favorite unit is the Scary Movie Project in October. We partner with the AV Tech class and participate in their One Minute HorrorFest Film challenge. There is a film prompt that we use to create a 60 second soundtrack, then the AV students browse our library of soundtracks to use in their films. My students love this project too, because it lets them explore storytelling through sound effects and breaks us out of the box of more traditional music-making.

How do you continue to develop as a teacher?

Collaboration! I know it sounds like a buzzword, but it's truly how I learn best and continue to grow (and it's rarely in a formal setting). I am constantly talking with other music teachers and colleagues in my building, and I always walk away from those conversations having learned something new. Sometimes it's a classroom management idea, a technology tip, or a way to better support my ML students. Other times, I may vent about a lesson that didn't land the way I hoped, and someone will offer a nugget of wisdom that shifts my perspective. I also love when I get to watch others teach - I always end up energized and gain new ideas to take back to my students!

Do you have a piece of advice that has stuck with you over time you'd like to share with the readers?

"Firm, Fair, and Consistent" - I got this from Frank Folds and Amanda Bingham when I was teaching sectionals at their school. They had it posted inside their office, right above the door so they'd see it every time they walked into the band room. It's a great mantra for classroom management, especially in challenging times, and I've carried it with me ever since.

Do you have any advice for college students who are interested in teaching music technology and a performance-based ensemble? How can they prepare?

It can seem overwhelming, but it can be done! Start now by learning how to use music tech software like Logic or SoundTrap, and try to observe a music tech class to get a sense of what's involved. Finding a mentor who can share lessons and offer guidance is another great way to set yourself up for success. And once you start teaching, plan as far in advance as possible. That way you'll feel prepared and confident in the Music Tech

room while protecting your daily planning time for all the responsibilities of directing an ensemble.

Is there anything your program or school is doing that you are particularly excited about this year?

Yes! I am collaborating with our orchestra program to present a Halloween concert for our community this year. We will play a few pieces separately then join together for a few full orchestra selections. Our administration team even agreed to help narrate and be backup singers for the *Monster Mash*! So far it's been a fun way to kick off the school year, and we're excited for the final product!

Who inspired you to become a teacher?

Amber Weldon-Stephens and Laura Moates Stanley. I met them when I was a sophomore in high school attending the UGA Drum Major camp. I had never met a female band director before, and suddenly there were two strong, empowering women leading with such passion and energy! They were truly inspirational in the way they deeply cared for students (even students they only saw for a one-week summer camp) and the joy they brought to teaching music. When I think back on it, Amber and Laura really lit a spark in me that set my path in motion. Their friendship and mentorship still mean so much to me and I am so grateful for them!