

I began teaching elementary music in Tacoma in the fall of 2000, fresh out my graduate program at UPS. I started at Seward Elementary (on the site where Giadrone is now), moved to Bryant Montessori in 2002 when Seward was closed, and then moved again in 2010 to Point Defiance, where I have been based ever since. Over the last 20 years, I have been at approximately a dozen schools, including my home schools. In the 10 years I have been an itinerant, I have never once been in the same second school two years in a row. As a teacher this has presented a plethora of challenges: lack of continuity with students from one year to another, lack of motivation to really get settled in a position when I know I won't be there the following year, and the lack of available time to really create and deliver as high-quality of a program as I'd like. In addition, students have a lack of continuity when they have two different teachers in the same subject during the course of one week. Being split between two buildings is also detrimental to my students at my primary school – I am not available full-time to them and adding another 200+ students to my load takes away what I am physically able to do with and for them. The years I've been in one building full-time have enabled me to get to know my students beyond my classroom walls. I've worked with students in reading and math both individually and in groups. For two years, I had a 5th grade reading group that I really enjoyed. My music program didn't suffer through those groups and pull-out work. My first year at Point Defiance, I was at Point D M/W/F and at Arlington T/Th (where I was completely ignored by most staff and the PTA – I was completely left out of teacher appreciation week, which is pretty much the norm for the "additional" specialist) and there was another teacher at Point D T/Th and a different school M/W/F. The principal tried everything she could to get me there full time but had no luck. Programs had to be coordinated with the other music teacher. Some classes who performed never saw me in class.

Over the years, I have built up a choir of 4th and 5th grade students who come in early two days a week (a schedule I'll have to significantly change this year if the current placement model holds and choir is deemed safe – I won't do it if it's not safe to sing, much to the disappointment of many students, some of whom wait for years to be old enough to do what their older siblings have done – I have lots of legacy students in my choir.) In 2019-20, my choir had 45 students signed up; roughly 1/3 of my 4th and 5th graders were involved. When I am split between buildings, the amount of time I have available to run my choir to the caliber I like is significantly cut. I lose that time to connect with my students outside of class and choir.

As we approach the first day of school for 2020-21, I am faced with the prospect of being one of three music teachers in my second school. Each of us will be there for one day. Students will have no continuity and this placement will further our identification as "other". We are not the only school faced with multiple specialists filling one position that is 1.0 or less. Sharing programs comes at the detriment of everyone involved – students AND staff (the entire building staff, not just the specialists involved.) If Tacoma Schools want to be truthful in their motto of "Every Student. Every Day.", they need to support one teacher in one position all week long.