EDUCATORS BSCAM MONTHLY

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN CENTER FOR AMERICAN MUSIC
AT MONMOUTH UNIVERSITY

Vol. I · September 2026

On behalf of the Bruce Springsteen Center for American Music, we want to wish all educators and administrators a happy and stress-free Back-to-School season! We hope you find this newsletter helpful. If this was shared with you and you'd like to subscribe, click here.

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Yours in Music,
Aidan R. Vogel
Museum Educator
Bruce Springsteen Center for American Music
Monmouth University

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT RECAP

Springsteen Summer Teacher Training Institute

The 2026 Teacher Training Institute cohort outside the Center

Our Summer Teacher Training Institute drew 50 teachers from across New Jersey and beyond for 4 days of professional development this August 3–6. Our agenda featured presentations by Melissa Kozlowski, the Center's Director of Curatorial Affairs; Bob Santelli, our Founding Executive Director; and myself, Museum Educator Aidan Vogel, as well as guest presentations from Ms. Alexandra Genova, Director of Educational Programs at the NJ Hall of Fame, and Ms. Triza Cox, Program Manager for TeachRock's Harmony Student Wellness Program. Teachers got an inside look at the Center and our educational offerings, and learned about how to better use American music in their classrooms.

Browsing BSCAM gear between sessions

Here's what some teachers had to say about their week at the Bruce Springsteen Center for American Music:

> *"Attending the Bruce Springsteen Center for American Music Teacher Training Institute was an exceptional experience!… I left feeling inspired and rejuvenated, ready to bring American music into my classroom!"*

> *"I learned so much throughout this professional development. Going into year 10 of teaching, this has reinvigorated my passion to create new lessons to excite my students by using music to teach history!"*

> *"The BSCAM has an incredible collection of music memorabilia, representations of artists, and the sounds that shaped a nation, spanning across history from indigenous America to present day. The Center represents the sounds, spirit, and people that shaped a country for over 250 years!"*

> *"The Center is remarkable and I can't wait to bring my students!"*

> *"The Teacher Training Institute is geared towards helping teachers incorporate music into their lessons, regardless of their subject area. It provides the ability and ideas to use American music in one's History, English, Music class and beyond. The Center is a comprehensive look at how American music has been shaped, and how music has shaped America."*

> *"The BSCAM is not a museum. It is a living, evolving teaching center that celebrates the heart of music and America."*

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INSIDE THE ARCHIVES

The Crescent 903 and the Personal Recording Boom of the 1950s

The Crescent 903, on display in the Center's OceanFirst Bank Special Exhibitions Gallery

Pictured above is a home recording device on display here at the Bruce Springsteen Center for American Music as part of our "Chimes of Freedom" exhibit. This is one of many personal home recording devices sold in the 1950s; specifically, it is a 900 series home tape recorder built by Crescent Industries of Chicago. Folk legend Woody Guthrie owned one just like it. These machines helped Woody and many musicians like him create their music. This music, aimed towards peace and harmony, came out of the horrific cacophony that was the Second World War.

The mass production of wax, wire, and eventually magnetic tape for recording and playback was something necessitated by the war, and afterward was aimed at the peacetime home consumer. Many types of people used these home recording machines, for many different purposes.

What was one of the first uses the American people had for this new technology?

Piracy — lest we assume the people of yesterday are that different from the people of today!

American consumers would copy all manner of things, including radio broadcasts and phonograph recordings, which would create what eventually became the thriving world of bootleg tapes and CDs, LimeWire rips, and the malware roulette of YouTube-to-MP3 sites that we know and love today.

In addition to musicians and pirates — sometimes one and the same — these machines were enjoyed by, and marketed towards, the home hobbyist. They were sold the same way a camera was, as the answer to the question of how to eternally preserve the memory of your family. Like a camera, the tape recorder could enshrine the sounds of your children's childhood. It allowed you to hear the previously imperceptible yet nevertheless noticeable march of time children take from the babbles of infancy into the distinguished voices of young men and women ready to leave the nest and take on the world. But not so fast, Mom and Dad — this isn't just for the kids; these devices could be used for preserving the recordings of your yearly parties for posterity, like an auditory time capsule of yourself and your loved ones. You could save the things Grandma wanted to share from a world that existed long ago, perhaps a world that sometimes is hard to imagine you shared. Oddly enough, it was mostly other people whom most home recording users preferred to tape. This technology produced a fascinating phenomenon: people didn't like the way they themselves sounded on recordings; it was funny and strange to hear how different their own voice sounded out loud from how it did in their head — a particular phenomenon that can still be experienced today when students hear their own voice for the first time.

Some people acclimated to that fact, however, using these as a sonic mirror to comb and preen their sound until they heard in their reflection what they heard in their soul. Professionals and amateurs alike would use home recorders to capture demos and musical ideas. A model like the Crescent 903 would have come with a microphone, able to record and re-record on a mono track, with input for the mic (also commonly spelled "mike" in the 1950s) and audio from other sources (radios and phonographs). It came with an instruction manual, replete with directions for how to disassemble and reassemble the machine, like a high-stakes game of Operation where you're the one who ends up on a gurney if you don't play correctly. The manual also shared instructions for how to use razor blades to edit and splice the tape together — all in all, a fun weekend activity for you and the kids! Somewhere a pack of personal injury lawyers is salivating.

With the development of readily available civilian home recording comes the beginning of artistic experimentation with the medium itself. In America and Europe, people like Pierre Schaeffer, Edgard Varèse, and Les Paul and Mary Ford were utilizing the unique properties inherent in the technology to create sounds that could not have previously been possible.

Non-musicians also began using this technology to give birth to a multitude of new uses. There was a new pen pal movement, "tapesponding," where people could now record themselves and mail the tape to their long-distance acquaintances, with some reels of tape being sold with mailing supplies included. Bird-watching clubs could now include bird-recording and bird-listening. This new hobby culture was excellent if you could afford the $100 it cost to purchase a Crescent 903. For the rest of us, however, these tape players and recorders would have been available through public services like libraries and schools. These public institutions made this technology accessible for the common people of America. Anyone with access to these institutions could learn how to use these machines and could then invent new uses and utilize them in their everyday lives. This opened a new world of knowledge through sound that had previously been hidden from students. Now a biology class wouldn't just read about the tropical birds of the rainforest, but could hear them. You could hear a powerful orator, not just read their words cold on a page.

Education, like music, is led forward by technology. A consumer technology that had the singular job of recording cost $100 in 1954 — about $1,245 in 2026. For that money, you could buy a new iPhone 17 and still have enough left over for a tank of gas. Most students have access to the descendant of this mid-century tape recorder without even giving it a second thought as an educational tool. Whether on a personal cellphone or a school-provided Chromebook or tablet, in 2026 schools and students have access to personal recording devices that can be used in the classroom.

This often-overlooked classroom technology can be used in almost every classroom in America. Young scientists can get recordings of local fauna to bring back and share with their peers, and math students can verbalize their thought process as they work through homework problems. Musicians can record and share their practice at home, and students who need the accommodation can record their lectures. History students can take oral history interviews of relatives, and English students can rehearse their speech or poetry and listen back for how it may be perceived by an audience. The simple recording app on our computers, phones, and tablets opens up a world of learning for our students of any age and allows them to interact with and connect to the world around them using a modern technology that's been on the cutting edge for the past 80 years.

Aidan R. Vogel
Museum Educator
Bruce Springsteen Center for American Music
Monmouth University

Do you use recording technology in your classroom? Please share your story here for a chance to be included in October's issue!

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SEPTEMBER TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

Dr. Laura Sharp

Each month BSCAM Educators Monthly spotlights an educator who uses American Music to help enhance their students' education.

This month our spotlight is on Dr. Laura Sharp!

Dr. Laura Sharp

Dr. Laura Sharp has more than 30 years of experience in the field of mental health, with a career spanning work with individuals across the lifespan. Her greatest professional passion, however, has always been school-based mental health and the opportunity to support the students and educators who shape our schools and communities.

Throughout her career, Laura's work has deepened her belief in the remarkable resiliency of the human spirit. This belief has inspired her to explore, develop, and share innovative approaches to strengthening the neurological, emotional, and relational well-being of both students and educators. She is passionate about translating what we know about the developing brain into practical strategies that can be used every day in schools.

Laura holds a doctoral degree in Clinical Psychology from Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine and is a Licensed Psychologist. She is also certified in School Psychology, School Counseling, and Pupil Personnel Supervision. She is the co-founder and CEO of Lotus Educational Services, LLC, where she works to strengthen the capacity of educators and school communities to foster resilience, connection, and well-being.

When asked how she uses music in her classroom, Dr. Sharp said:

> *Music has been an essential part of my life. It has made great times even more wonderful, inspired me to grow, enhanced my ability to cope with challenging situations, and created lasting friendships and community. My own experiences with music have built a passion for incorporating music into the classrooms I work with. For me, music is a valuable part of everyday classroom life, creating an engaging and welcoming learning environment. We use music during transitions, independent work, morning routines, or other classroom activities to help students feel more comfortable and focused, making classrooms places where students want to be and are excited to participate and learn.*

> *As an educator with almost 30 years of experience in public education, my primary goal is to support student growth, wellness, and learning. The use of music through songs and rhythms can help children remember information and develop listening and memory abilities. By connecting new information to rhythm and repetition, music provides students with diverse pathways for understanding and remembering what they learn.*

> *As a psychologist, I understand that students learn best when they are emotionally regulated and a part of a caring community. Music can enhance self-regulation and emotional development. Familiar songs, calming music, and rhythmic activities can help students recognize and manage their emotions, navigate stressful situations, and regain focus when they feel overwhelmed or distracted. In addition, music can strengthen relationships and community. Singing, moving, clapping, or creating music together encourages students to cooperate, listen to one another, and participate as a group. These shared experiences can help build connections between students and teachers while creating a sense of belonging. Music can provide opportunities for students to express themselves, appreciate one another's contributions, and develop confidence.*

> *I believe strongly that incorporating music into the classroom can support students academically, socially, and emotionally. Music can promote learning while simultaneously strengthening self-regulation, relationship building, communication, and classroom community. When music becomes an everyday part of classroom routines rather than something reserved for occasional activities, it can contribute to a more positive, connected, and supportive learning environment for all students.*

Dr. Sharp will be joining us for our BSCAM "Teacher Tuesdays" series on October 27th. Tickets are free but registration is required.

Do you use American Music in a creative way in your classrooms? Email education@springsteencenter.org with the subject line **SPOTLIGHT** and share your story for a chance to be featured in a future newsletter.

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NEW THIS MONTH

One-Page Assembly and Field Trip Offerings

The biggest feedback we received from our Summer Teacher Institute was a request for a one-page document showing how each Field Trip or In-Class visit directly relates to the NJ State curriculum — an easy way for both educators and administrators to see the educational value in a format that is easy to share!

As such, we have created these one-page documents and have uploaded them to our website. As more offerings become available on the website, their accompanying one-pagers will be uploaded beside them.

Visit the Education Page and One-Pagers

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NEW EDUCATOR PD OFFERING

Teacher Tuesdays

Held 6–8 PM in the Center's beautiful Powell Soundstage, "Teacher Tuesdays" is a new monthly professional development series designed to engage and inspire educators through the lens of American music and its cultural impact. Each session will explore a different theme — ranging from history and social movements to songwriting, identity, and interdisciplinary teaching strategies — while providing participants with practical tools they can bring back to their classrooms. Programs will feature guest speakers, behind-the-scenes access to exhibitions and collections, and opportunities for collaboration with fellow educators. Participants will receive a certificate for 2 hours of professional development, making Teacher Tuesdays both a meaningful and rewarding way to connect classroom learning with the power of music.

Our first session will be held on October 27th and will explore how an understanding of brain development, regulation, relationships, and readiness to learn can inform everyday classroom practices. Educators will learn how students' neurological and emotional states can influence their ability to attend, engage, connect, and learn — and how simple classroom experiences can help support regulation.

A central focus will be music as an everyday classroom intervention. Through rhythm, movement, songs, musical routines, and intentional listening, educators can use music to support regulation, attention, transitions, connection, memory, and engagement.

Our guest presenter for this program is Dr. Laura Sharp. Dr. Sharp has more than 30 years of experience in the field of mental health, with a career spanning work with individuals across the lifespan. Her greatest professional passion, however, has always been school-based mental health and the opportunity to support the students and educators who shape our schools and communities.

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Grade Levels — All

Subject Areas — All

Program Format — Lecture / discussion / hands-on activities

What to Bring / Preparation — None required

"Teacher Tuesdays" are free to attend, but registration is required.
Register here

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CURRICULUM OF THE MONTH

TeachRock: Lessons on Recording Technology

Check out some lessons on Recording Technology from our friends at TeachRock:

The Evolution of Sound Recording — Grades 6–8 and 9–12

Has the Crescent 903 left you interested in learning more about the history of recording technology as a whole? Check out *The Evolution of Sound Recording*.

Multitracking in the Countercultural 1960s — Grades 9–12

Want to know what happens in the decade following the tape recorder boom of the 1950s? Check out *Multitracking in the Countercultural 1960s*.

Producing the Sounds of a Changing South — Grades 9–12

Interested in the intersection of recording technology, business, and race in the 20th century? Check out *Producing the Sounds of a Changing South*.

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Bruce Springsteen Center for American Music · Monmouth University
382 Cedar Ave, Long Branch, NJ 07740
Questions, ideas, or stories to share? education@springsteencenter.org