



# Music Ed Insights



## Three Ideas for K-12 Music Educators from... **José Antonio Zayas Cabán:**

### 1. Use global musics to teach core concepts, not just “world music units.”

- Introduce form, meter, rhythm, harmony, and phrasing using Latin American, Caribbean, and other non-Western pieces, not only European repertoire.
- **Example:** Teach meter, syncopation, or grouping through clave-based music (2-3, 3-2) or Brazilian/Caribbean pieces, then connect to more familiar repertoire.

### 2. Lead with rhythm and Latin jazz to build access and buy-in.

- Start units or even whole years with Latin jazz or Afro-Caribbean influenced pieces that are physically engaging and “universally accessible” rhythmically, then move to more complex styles (e.g., swing) afterward.
- Incorporate movement and dance so students feel the groove in their bodies before intellectualizing it, especially in jazz ensembles and general music.

### 3. Program with cultural intention and visible inclusion, even if you’re not an expert.

- Choose at least some repertoire that reflects the identities and stories of students and families in your community (e.g., Latin American, immigrant, or diaspora narratives), and talk explicitly about those contexts.
- Don’t wait until you’re “perfectly authentic” to start: experiment respectfully, do basic research, name your sources, and frame your choices as an effort to honor and learn from those cultures rather than to imitate them superficially.