



tinue meeting on a monthly basis in Portland.” By 2003, this casual group was an official nonprofit, Oregon Safe Schools and Communities Coalition. Its mission focuses on sexual orientation and gender identity issues, but the ultimate aim is nothing less than ending all “prejudice and hate-motivated violence.”

The work takes many forms, including the publication of an annual Safe Schools Report that tracks incidents of bullying, intimidation, assault, abuse, and suicide attempts affecting LGBTQ students in the state. It also offers tips and resources on how a teacher can become “a visible supportive educator for vulnerable youth.” OSSCC supports school-based Gay Straight Alliance-type organizations, helping them generate ideas or just connect to other similar groups. And if someone suspects a child is being harassed and doesn’t think the school is responding appropriately, they can contact OSSCC for support, which could culminate in a representative from the state department of education being dispatched. “Typically, principals and superintendents listen to her!” says Wallace.

The group’s statewide focus “is very important,” says Wallace, “but it’s also very difficult and very complex.” With an annual budget of just \$22,000 and zero staff members, OSSCC counts on its enthusiasm being contagious. (“If you want to know what a working board is like, come and join us,” says Wallace, the current board chair.) Much like the origin of the nonprofit itself, an OSSCC-convened discussion group in the Bend-Madras area has recently sprouted into its own task force of

community members, community college representatives, teachers, and administrators who get together every other month to talk about ways to support LGBTQ students in their area.

One more key effort of the group? OSSCC’s Safe School Awards, which shine a light on other people and groups making a difference for LGBTQ students. “We think it’s important for us all to have good examples of what can be done,” says Wallace, “and to recognize the effort that goes into that.” —Margaret Seiler

INSPIRING CREATIVITY

MUSIC WORKSHOP

BRINGING MUSIC INTO OREGON SCHOOLS

With the click of a mouse, class is in session, as a goofy Laika stop-motion conductor with a big mustache introduces viewers to a whirlwind tour through the history of jazz, bouncing from snippets of Louis Armstrong blowing a trumpet to Portland’s own Esperanza Spalding playing stand-up bass and crooning. This is Music Workshop, a wholly online program that aims to connect kids, and their overworked, undersupported teachers, with the power of music—for free.

Through her nonprofit Music Workshop, Portlander Amy Richter harnesses the power of technology to lighten the load for strapped educators and bring es-

sential music education back to students around the state and around the world.

Richter had studied music therapy in college, but it wasn’t until becoming a mother (and witnessing the gaps in arts funding and resources while volunteering at her kids’ schools) that she turned her lifelong love of music into a career. After a decade managing big-budget marketing initiatives for Adidas, she founded Music Workshop in 2012 as a way to provide online music education resources for K–8 students and teachers.

Flash-forward seven years, and Music Workshop is now in use in 1,450 schools in 23 countries—including in more than 250 schools in Oregon. The nonprofit currently offers 19 online courses, ranging from instruction on instruments like guitar and piano to guidance on working in the music industry (“We like kids to know that you don’t have to be a rock star to have a career in music,” Richter says).

Richter notes that Music Workshop is not a replacement for classroom education, but it can enhance the classroom experience while taking some of the strain off the educators. “These teachers are asked to do so much with so little time,” she says. “Our resource is something that will help them deliver this additional component of history and appreciation without having to do added work.”

Says Laurie Meek, a vocal music teacher at an elementary in Happy Valley: “Students really enjoy this program. With our curriculum being over 20 years old, this is a fabulous addition to meet music standards.” —BN

