

PROVIDING RESOURCES TO IOWA'S JAZZ EDUCATORS

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President's Message

Chris Strohmaier

Congratulations on surviving the first half of your year!

Hopefully you have made it through your holiday concerts and are getting ready to enjoy a little much needed rest and relaxation before things pick back up again after the first of the year. Wherever this break looks like, I hope you can take some time to invest in yourself and your craft. We have so little time to grow as teachers while school is in session, it is important to take that opportunity when we can get it. So go through the [classroom resources](#) on the new JEI website, or if you are lucky enough to be at Midwest, attend a jazz session or two. Or pick up a new book. One of the resources I really like is the Teaching Music Through Performance in Jazz book series. If you're not familiar with these, each volume includes in-depth essays on pedagogy, history, and practical teaching, followed by analyses of a variety of jazz literature broken down by ability level. It's definitely worth checking out.

In this newsletter, you will find information about our new website, the 2026 All-State Jazz Band Etudes, the Jazz Clinician Database, and the new Iowa Vocal Jazz Championship co-chairs. I hope you will take time to read through everything and then spend some time looking through our new website - but more on that below.

And please, if you know of any vocal or instrumental jazz educators who are not members of JEI, please encourage them to join through the homepage of our website.

Thanks. Here's to a great start to 2026!

Chris Strohmaier

NEW WEBSITE

As of this month, our online presence has a sleek, new look and functionality. A big

thank you to Kelli Swehla and Julie Feirer at Winterset Websites for their work making this happen. You will still find all of the same, great content that we have always had, but in a much more user-friendly layout.

The site features a treasure trove of classroom resources created by some of the best jazz educators in the business, along with a variety of digital artwork, past newsletters, and our clinician database. You will also find information and etudes for 2026 Instrumental All-State Jazz etudes, a listing of JEI Hall of Fame members, and information about the Iowa Vocal Jazz Championships. There is also a scroll with some great pictures of Iowa jazz students in action.

So please visit jeiowa.org today to check it out!

And make sure to say thank you to Kelli and Julie if you see them!

ALL-STATE JAZZ BAND ETUDES

The 2026 Instrumental All-State Etudes Are Live!

A complete set of etudes and recordings can be found at jeiowa.org by clicking on the [2026 All-State Jazz Band Etudes](#) tab. You can also find instructions on how to apply.

The online submission portal (Opus Events) will open on February 1.

AUDITION INFORMATION

AUDITION ETUDES

DIRECTIONS FOR SUBMITTING

AUDITION RECORDINGS

CLINICIAN DATABASE UPDATE

Our Jazz Clinician Database is one of the best resources that we offer on our website and you can be a part of it!

Do you have knowledge that you would be willing to share with others? Are you willing to help out fellow educators even if you don't really know them yet?

Then click here and fill out the form to be listed on the [JEI Jazz Clinician Database](#).

And if you are already listed on the database but need your information updated, please reach out to [Chris](#) or [Jen](#) and they can do that for you.

WELCOME NEW IVJC CO-CHAIRS

Starting this fall, the Iowa Vocal Jazz Championships has new co-chairs!

Reagan Garza is the new Communications and Adjudications co-chair for IVJC. Reagan is the music director at Indian Hills Community College in Ottumwa. Before moving to Iowa, he earned a bachelor's degree in jazz saxophone and a master's degree in jazz voice from the University of North Texas. While at North Texas, Reagan studied with Rosana Eckert and Jennifer Barnes, was a member of the UNT Jazz Singers and the Two O'Clock Lab Band, and while under his direction, the Zebras, UNT's Contemporary Music Ensemble, won a Downbeat award for outstanding performance. Reagan has worked with famous artists such as Laila Biali, Darmon Meader, Jacob Collier, Micheal Mayo, Voces8, Benny Benack III, Bria Skonberg, and King's Return.

Mary Pohlman is the new Facilities co-chair for IVJC. Mary is a passionate music educator and choral director dedicated to cultivating artistry, confidence, and community through music. She is a graduate of Drake University and the School for Music Vocations in Creston, Iowa, where she developed a strong foundation in vocal performance, music education, and ensemble leadership. Mary began her teaching career at Montezuma Schools, where she taught K–12 music for five years and gained broad experience working with students of all ages. Since 2018, she has been a member of the Clarke Community Schools faculty in Osceola, Iowa, serving as the high school choral director. In this role, she directs two high school choral ensembles and is actively involved in shaping a vibrant and growing choral program. In addition to her choral work, Mary is the vocal director for Clarke’s fall musical, collaborating closely with students and staff to bring full-scale productions to the stage. She also serves as an assistant speech coach, further supporting students’ performance skills and expressive communication.

In addition, Joey Gutzman from Grundy Center and Rishi Wagle from Cedar Rapids Washington will temporarily assume the treasurer responsibilities for IVJC. A search for a more permanent IVJC treasurer will begin before the end of the school year.

Thank you to Joey Gutzman and Jason Behrens and the entire IVJC board for helping to name these two outstanding educators. Please congratulate Reagan and Mary if you see them.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Happy Holidays from JEI! We wish you a restful break and look forward to seeing you at festivals in the new year.

Our gift to you is a playlist with less Mariah and more Ellington:



2025-26 DATES

October 27, 2025 - **Middle School Combo Camp, Waukee Site**

November 15, 2025 - **All-Iowa Middle School Jazz Band, Coe College**

December 20, 2025 - **Membership deadline to receive All-State Jazz submission discount**

February 28, 2026 - **All-State Instrumental Jazz Auditions Due**

April 24, 2026 - **NEIBA Combo Day for High School and Middle School Students**

May 13-14, 2026 - **Iowa All-State Jazz Band Rehearsals, Johnston High School**

May 14, 2026 - **Iowa All-State Jazz Band Performance, Downtown Marriott**

REMINDERS

Invite Your Friends To Become Members of JEI!

QUICK LINKS

Past Newsletters

Clinicians

Resources



Stay up-to-date with current activities and future events by following us on your favorite social media channels.



Contact Us

President | president@jeiowa.org

Secretary | secretary@jeiowa.org

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