



CONNECTED ARTS NETWORKS QUARTERLY SESSION, NO. 11 COACHING TO BUILD RESILIENCE

Connected Arts Networks (CAN) establishes national virtual Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) for educators in dance, music, theatre, visual and media arts. CAN aims to build a sustainable model of professional learning for arts educators in public schools to strengthen their leadership skills and build their capacity to address social-emotional learning and equity, diversity, and inclusion in their arts instruction. Find out more about the project and our partners [here](#).

Arts educators are navigating increasingly complex classroom dynamics, from the lasting emotional effects of pandemic-era learning to rising student anxiety, burnout, and disengagement. Education systems are placing greater emphasis on social-emotional learning, mental wellness, and trauma-informed practices.

Resilience has become an essential trait, not just for students, but for educators themselves. Yet resilience isn't about pushing through at all costs, it's about *engaging with challenges intentionally and creatively*. For arts educators, who often work at the intersection of vulnerability, expression, and experimentation, this definition aligns deeply with their work.

CAN educators participated in a workshop with Elena Aguilar about **coaching** as a powerful way to cultivate **emotional resilience** among educators. She argues that teaching is emotionally demanding work, and that resilience—the ability to recover, learn, and grow from challenges—is essential to sustaining both effectiveness and joy in the profession. Coaching provides the reflective space and supportive relationship educators need to develop that resilience and thrive in complex school environments.



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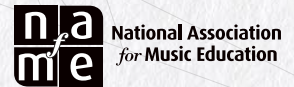
Shelly Cole (she/her/hers)

Theatre Teacher / Arts Coordinator

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Currently in her 30th year of teaching, Shelly is chorus and Road to Rock teacher at Piper High School in Kansas City, Kansas. She earned her BME from the University of Nebraska at Kearney and MEd from Baker University. Shelly is a CAN Teacher Leader and has served as the Kansas Tri-M Chapter Advisor since 2018, and she also serves as the NAfME Tri-M Advisory Council Southwestern Division Representative.

Community: How do you build trust with students or with teachers you work with?

Creating a brave space starts with modeling bravery. I try new things, admit my mistakes, and invite students to do the same. In my classroom, students know they can respectfully correct me when I am teaching parts and sing the wrong lyrics. Showing students that teachers are human and make mistakes establishes an environment where they feel comfortable taking risks. It is the same with coaching teachers. When you approach coaching as “let’s try this together,” it creates a shared learning space that encourages bravery.

Action Research: In your opinion, what’s the difference between coaching and teaching? How is this connected to your action research project?

Teaching is imparting knowledge, while coaching guides others in applying it. I begin by teaching students the skills they need, then shift into a coaching role—helping them use those skills to create music. My action research focuses on helping students connect with themselves and others through check-ins and grounding exercises. This emotional awareness supports their ability to interpret the character of the music. Students must first be in tune with themselves and their peers to feel safe enough to take creative risks. Expressing a character through song is vulnerable work—it takes trust and an adventurous heart.

“Showing students that teachers are human and make mistakes establishes an environment where they feel comfortable taking risks.”

—Shelly

Impact: Can you share examples of how coaching techniques or resilience skills have helped you build stronger working relationships within your school community?

The coaching skill that best supports my students academically and personally is active listening. By asking students what they hear or how they feel about their work, feedback becomes a conversation rather than a critique. When I ask, “What score would you give this as a judge, and why?” students often identify their own areas for growth. From there, my role is to guide their practice and offer techniques to help them improve.

Resources: What educational resources on this topic would you recommend to colleagues?

I highly recommend *Classic Leadership* by Tim Lautzenheiser—a 12-week course that’s invaluable for developing student leaders who are kind, proactive, and forward-thinking.

Another must-read is *Upbeat! Mindset, Mindfulness, and Leadership in Music Education and Beyond* by Matthew Arau. He truly understands the joys and challenges of music education and lives it in an inspiring, relatable way.

Reflection: What advice would you give to readers who are seeking support in building resilience either for themselves or in their students?

Keep going. Rest, reflect, and take the time you need—but don’t stop. When life feels overwhelming and you’re at your lowest, sometimes the only option is to take it one step, one breath at a time. The only way out is forward. Find a support buddy—someone who will listen when you need to vent but also help you get back up and keep moving. You’re not alone, and every step forward counts.





Amanda Standard (she/her/hers)

Dance Educator

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A graduate of LaGuardia High School of the Arts and Howard University with a Bachelor of Science in Biology, Amanda serves as founder, Executive and Artistic Director of both Divine Dance Institute, Inc. (DDI) and SoundXpressed Dance Company in Washington, DC. Through each group, she's provided novice, preprofessional, and professional dancers the opportunity to study and perform all over the DC metropolitan area, nationally, and abroad. After more than 21 years of owning and running DDI, the Maryland Dance Education Association presented Amanda with the Dance Educator of the Year for Private Studios award in 2018, the FAME Educator of the Year award in 2019, and the National Dance Education Educator of the Year (Private Sector) in 2020. She has taught K–12 while tackling multiple subjects at various levels and currently serves at Benjamin D. Foulois Creative and Performing Arts Academy, a K–8 specialized program. Through DDI, she has launched the Emerging Artists Showcase, the Pneuma Dance Project Summer Intensive, Seedz Summer Dance Lab, PG Powerdanz Project, and the Divine DESIGN Summer Enrichment programs.

Community: How do you build trust with students or with teachers you work with?

I build trust by showing up consistently, listening with empathy, and creating space for vulnerability without judgment. Whether with students or fellow educators, I lead with transparency and model what it means to be both strong and human. Trust grows when people feel seen, heard, and safe to take risks—so I make it a priority to affirm identity, invite honest reflection, and cocreate brave spaces where growth can happen.

Action Research: In your opinion, what's the difference between coaching and teaching? How is this connected to your action research project?

Coaching draws out, while teaching pours in. As a teacher, I provide foundational tools and structure. I hold space—listening, observing, and asking guiding questions that allow students to make choices rooted in their own identity and understanding. Balancing both means knowing when to lead and when to release—offering direction without limiting expression. This balance was central to my action research project, The Sankofa Tree, which invited students to explore their past, present, and purpose through movement. I witnessed how coaching supported their resilience, voice, and creative independence—proving that when students are trusted to lead, they rise with power and authenticity.

Impact: Can you share examples of how coaching techniques or resilience skills have helped you build stronger working relationships within your school community?

Coaching enhances my ability to truly listen, build trust, and guide students toward self-discovery. During The Sankofa Tree project, I used reflective questions and active listening to help students connect personal experiences to movement. Constructive feedback allowed me to affirm their efforts while pushing them to refine their craft. These practices created a space where students felt seen, heard, and capable. Coaching also deepens my relationships with colleagues—helping me collaborate, support, and lead with empathy and clarity. It's not just about guiding others—it's about growing together.

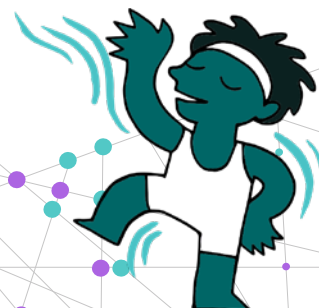
Resources: What educational resources on this topic would you recommend to colleagues?

The *Moving Child* film series explores how movement supports emotional regulation, resilience, and brain development in children. It's especially helpful for educators integrating somatic awareness into learning spaces, making it perfect for teaching artists and SEL-focused instructors.

Brain-Compatible Dance Education by Anne Green Gilbert. MY FAVORITE! I built a class in it! This book bridges movement, cognition, and emotional development. Gilbert introduces the BrainDance, a powerful tool to help students center, release stress, and build resilience through structured movement patterns. Great for both classroom teachers and dance educators.

Reflection: What advice would you give to readers who are seeking support in building resilience either for themselves or in their students?

Resilience is built over time, not overnight. My advice? Create space—for breath, reflection, and growth. For yourself, find a practice that anchors you in your purpose, whether through movement, prayer, or quiet time. For your students, model what it looks like to pause, persevere, and process. Celebrate progress, not just perfection. When we give grace in the struggle and support in the stretch, resilience has room to take root.





Joselyn Ludtke (she/her/hers)

Theatre Curriculum Coordinator, Director, and Teacher
Auburn High School
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Joselyn has taught theatre and technical theatre to high school students in class and after school since 2000. As a member of the Connected Arts Network, she cofacilitates a monthly Professional Learning Community focused on action research in theatre and technical theatre classrooms. She is defending her doctorate dissertation Pursuing Equitable and Reflexive Teaching and Learning Practices Through Insider-Driven, Community-Based Participatory Action Research. To find her own collaborative roots, Joselyn works with students, professionals, and community and college theatres to solve creative problems, design, create, and staff for all areas of technical theatre. Dramaturgy, paint, jewelry, lettering, and gooey bits are of particular interest.

Community: How do you build trust with students or with teachers you work with?

Getting to know each individual by building relationships and communities based on listening, learning, and looking to understand and connect is a base for building trust. When humans find common interests, listen to each other's stories, and share from a place of caring, we build connections and joy. These connections with others celebrate the positive moments and help carry us through rougher times.

Action Research: In your opinion, what's the difference between coaching and teaching? How is this connected to your action research project?

The classroom is a balance between teaching and coaching (or guiding). As students need to learn new skills, techniques, or frameworks to further their journey, modeling new skills or techniques, modeling new frameworks or providing access to new lenses allow for students to be introduced to content they may not have found or thought about without the guidance of a teacher. For example, my students may not have discovered how to weave their own stories into the design of *The Importance of Being Earnest* without first being introduced to hidden histories and Black Victorians.

Impact: Can you share examples of how coaching techniques or resilience skills have helped you build stronger working relationships within your school community?

Providing constructive feedback is a key to guiding students to set goals for growth. As a coaching tool in the classroom, feedback from teachers or peers can allow students to see their work through a different lens. These varied perspectives encourage growth in the artist and in the classroom community by guiding the collective understanding of our work. Ideas fly and bounce off of each other to create something new.

Resources: What educational resources on this topic would you recommend to colleagues?

Our students deserve, and we deserve, a type of teaching that celebrates our uniqueness, our histories, and our contexts.

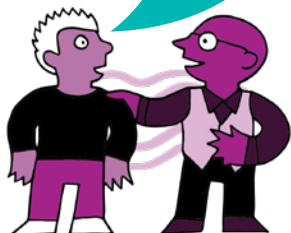
- *Techno-Vernacular Creativity and Innovation: Culturally Relevant Making Inside and Outside the Classroom* by Nettrice R. Gaskins
- *Onward: Cultivating Emotional Resilience in Educators* by Elena Aguilar
- *Unearthing Joy: A Guide to Culturally and Historically Responsive Teaching and Learning* by Gholdy Muhammad

Reflection: What advice would you give to readers who are seeking support in building resilience either for themselves or in their students?

Look for the moments of JOY in your lives. Then bring the essence of that JOY into your teaching and learning. Be brave. Try new things. Fail at some. Try again.

Want to hear more
from these educators?

Listen to the corresponding podcast
episodes on [K12 Art Chat](#).





Melissa Hronkin (she/her/hers)

Elementary Art Educator

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Melissa received her BFA from the University of Alaska, Anchorage, and an MFA from Minneapolis College of Arts and Design in Visual Studies. After that, she returned to Northern Michigan University for her teaching endorsement and later earned an MA in Art Education from The Ohio State University. Melissa is a longtime active member of the Michigan Art Education Association and NAEA, serving as regional liaison, conference co-chair, and National Delegate. She has been pursuing yoga, mindfulness, and SEL certifications through various organizations, including Breathe for Change. Their focus on trauma-informed, equitable, and accessible yoga are aligned with the Connected Arts Network mission. In 2019, Melissa was part of the School for Art Leaders program.

Community: How do you build trust with students or with teachers you work with?

Assuming positive intent and having a “yes, and” vision when approaching challenges will create a sense of trust within communities. Active listening and mindfulness techniques can help create a relaxed atmosphere and can help us “hold space” for others. Being aware of our personal energy and what we bring to a space is also beneficial as a leader, teacher, and colleague.

Action Research: In your opinion, what’s the difference between coaching and teaching? How is this connected to your action research project?

My action research is about “Creating habits of resilient learners” by having students come up with a goal for the semester, determine action steps to reach that goal, and use peer-to-peer feedback as support and accountability systems. Setting brave goals as a big part of developing resilience involves being able to identify personal goals, and then being able to tolerate the discomfort that’s creating resistance toward that goal.

“We cultivate our resilience

and become stronger so that we can help others become stronger; we cultivate our resilience so that we have energy to heal and transform the world.”

Elena Aguilar

from *Onward: Cultivating Emotional Resilience in Educators*

Impact: Can you share examples of how coaching techniques or resilience skills have helped you build stronger working relationships within your school community?

Resilience skills prepare us for what we deal with emotionally. Resilience helps us prevent stress-related problems, as well as rebound more quickly and to optimize health and how we show up for our community. I think this is the most important lesson we can model and teach our students. Practicing self-regulation and mindfulness ourselves and with our students is like practicing fire drills—so when a crisis occurs, we have habits and skills that we can default to.

Resources: What educational resources on this topic would you recommend to colleagues?

- Emilia Elisabet Lahti is a Finland-born researcher of *sisu*, international keynote speaker, and author of *Gentle Power*
- *Burnout* by Emily and Amelia Nagoski
- *TED Talk* on Burnout:
- *The Empath’s Survival Guide* by Judith Orloff

Reflection: What advice would you give to readers who are seeking support in building resilience either for themselves or in their students?

The world needs you! As artists, we tend to feel emotions deeply (many of us are empaths) and be more susceptible to burnout. As a, HSP or highly sensitive person, we have heightened senses (see Judith Orloff’s resources). It is not a weakness—it can be your superpower if you can practice guarding your energy and cultivating a supportive community for support. (The Nagoski sisters say that “self-care” is not the cure to burnout—it is all of us caring for each other.)

