

Workshop brings the "Birthplace of Jazz" into classrooms

June 23, 2015 12:30 PM Barri Bronston
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One of the highlights of the Music Rising Educator Institute was a performance by the world-renowned musicians of Preservation Hall, followed by small group sessions with the musicians. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

What do people mean when they say New Orleans is the "Birthplace of Jazz"? How did 18th and 19th century gatherings in Congo Square impact New Orleans' music and dance culture? How do performers of a second line reflect and define a sense of place in New Orleans?

About 40 teachers and teacher trainers explored those questions along with ways to incorporate the musical traditions of the Gulf South into the classroom at the first Music Rising Educator Institute in New Orleans on June 20.

Sponsored by Tulane University and the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities, the workshop was based on the acclaimed [Music Rising website](#), a program of the [New Orleans Center for the Gulf South](#) at Tulane University.

The site, dedicated to the study, preservation and the promotion of musical cultures of the Gulf South region, was unveiled in 2014. Among other features, it includes instructional programs designed to increase the study of the Gulf South's rich musical cultures among schoolchildren and scholars alike.

"It's about helping teachers find a pathway to integrate these traditions into the classroom, while meeting their curricular goals and objectives in an engaging way," said Sonya Robinson, director of the Music Rising Educator Institute, who served as instructional strategist for the K-12 curriculum.

"I'm excited to take this back to my classroom," said Jermicka C. Williams, a music teacher at Westwood Elementary School in Shreveport, Louisiana. "It equipped me with the skills to execute Common Core with fidelity, cross the curriculum, and move in boundless and limitless ways."

Margaret Mary Sulentic-Dowell, a teacher trainer at the Louisiana State University School of Education, commented, "It taught me better ways to integrate music into the curriculum. It provided me with the specific focus on New Orleans that I was looking for."



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