

DREAM

Up

Now™

Leadership Tools  
FOR Your Life  
and Your School

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# How to Bring Music Education to Your School District

## VH1 Save the Music Foundation

Are you looking to bring a music program to your school? VH1 Save the Music Foundation can show you how.\*

### What Is Save the Music?

VH1 Save the Music Foundation invests in schools. This nonprofit organization helps students, schools, and communities realize their full potential through the power of making music. Save the Music donates instruments, music technology, and other equipment and provides customized program support for teachers and principals, including professional development services. Since 1997, Save the Music has provided grants to over 2,000 schools, jump-starting their music programs and impacting millions of students. The organization also advocates at the local, state, and national levels to ensure music is part of a well-rounded education.

### How It Works

Save the Music offers two grants for teen music programs.

**For grades 7-8,** Save the Music builds instrumental music programs in band, strings, or mariachi. The Save the Music Core Grant program restores instrumental music in public schools across the country by providing grants of new musical instruments, music stands, method books, and program services valued at over \$50,000.

**For grades 9-12,** Save the Music launched its Music Technology Grant to prepare students for careers in electronic music creation, recording, and production. The Music Technology Grant helps students learn and further develop creative and technical skills they can use now and in the future. The grant package includes \$50,000 worth of hardware and software to support instruction in audio recording, audio engineering, DJ-ing, and beat-making.

The process for applying begins by reaching out to the foundation online. Visit [savethemusic.org](http://savethemusic.org) and click on “Contact Us” to get in touch with Save the Music’s program team.

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\*While *Dream Up Now* is not affiliated with VH1 Save the Music Foundation, this guide was approved by Save the Music staff. For further information, please visit [savethemusic.org](http://savethemusic.org).



For your school district to be considered for grants, a proposal and needs-assessment process must be completed a full school year before any grants would be in place. Save the Music works at the district level, with top-down commitment from district leadership to ensure equity across the entire school district. Save the Music does not award grants to individual schools without full district commitment.

Save the Music recognizes need a few different ways: Title I status, free- and reduced-lunch percentages, demographics, limited instrument inventory, and school resources.

This is a community effort. You will need the support of your principal and classmates. If you've engaged in *Dream Up Now*, you know the importance of finding your tribe and lifting one another up to pursue your passions and goals. This is an opportunity to walk the talk. If you've ever dreamed of changing the world for good, the place to start is where you live, among the people you see every day. Building a strong music program in your school district will change your life, as well as the lives of students in neighboring schools, for the better, now and in years to come. You and your community can be a force for good. Are you ready?

## Asking Your Principal for Help

Read up as much as you can about the Save the Music program—knowing how the grant process works and what your school would need to do shows your commitment. Once you're ready, make an appointment to ask your principal if they are willing to work with your school district to meet Save the Music's guidelines:

- Your school is prepared to implement an instrumental music instruction curriculum and to provide a qualified music teacher to lead it.
- Your school provides for at least one instrumental music teacher's salary in its budget for a new program, based on the receipt of instruments from Save the Music. (**Note:** funds from Titles I, II, and IV of the Every Student Succeeds Act are available. See *Speak Up for Your Right to Succeed* on page 7.)
- Your school is prepared to add instrumental music to the regular school curriculum, offering a minimum of 45 minutes of instruction each week.

All grantee schools agree to:

- Supply adequate, secure storage space for instruments and equipment.
- Respond to annual progress reports requested by VH1 Save the Music Foundation and welcome representatives from the Foundation to visit once a year.

- Accept responsibility for the normal maintenance of donated instruments, with the exception of maintenance that is covered under manufacturer warranties. This includes providing the necessary supplies for the instruments to function, such as strings and reeds. (**Note:** Federal funds are available. See *Speak Up for Your Right to Succeed* on page 7.)

## What If My School Has Music but Needs More Support?

Maybe your school already has a music program, but not much financial support or not enough instruments for everyone who'd like to join. Read on to discover more options.

**Reach a higher (district) power.** If music matters to you and you're ready to stand up for your education, be heard by the people who can make your future brighter. The VH1 Save the Music Foundation offers straightforward advice for making real change: send a compelling email to your local school board asking for exactly what your group or class needs. This is called *advocacy*. First, visit your local school district website and search for the school board page. School board members will be listed with their email addresses or a general contact email address.

Here's what to say in an email to your local school board members. Advocacy starts with communication and support. Include a story about the impact of music education in your life and how every student deserves music in their school.

Visit a music teacher in your district and ask them to share a statement on the impact music education makes on students' lives.

Share the latest research on the benefits of music education. Choose several facts that apply to you and your school. To find the most recent statistics and benefits, check out VH1 Save the Music Foundation's Advocacy Tools page ([savethemusic.org/category/resources/advocacy-tools](http://savethemusic.org/category/resources/advocacy-tools)). You can also check out Arts Education Partnership's Music Matters research ([ecs.org/music-matters](http://ecs.org/music-matters)) and NAMM Foundation's advocacy brochure "Why Learn to Play Music?" ([nammfoundation.org/resources-educators](http://nammfoundation.org/resources-educators)). Also see *Speak Up for Your Right to Succeed* on page 7.

Conclude your email by asking the board to invite a school ensemble to perform at a board meeting and have students share comments on the impact of music in their lives. This is a great opportunity to showcase your skills and make face-to-face contact with decision-makers in your district. Your love of music is most powerful when shared.

Have your principal review your email before sending it. It's important because they will be required to implement and oversee any new funding and



resources the district awards you for your efforts. Your principal may also know the best person to contact in your district, and this helps the odds that your email will be read!

Always say thank you. Include your contact information, as well as your principal's, and copy your principal on your email.

(Awesome work so far. Good luck!)

After you send your email, ask a group of parents and guardians to follow up with their own emails. They might say, "We understand that our student(s) wrote to you about our music program" and indicate that they are in agreement with your request. Family and community involvement carry weight, especially at the high school level, when parental participation tends to wane.

**Just need instruments?** Does your school or organization need instruments, but you don't exactly fall within Save the Music's grant requirements? Check out these great resources that can assist you with purchasing new instruments and/or refurbishing old ones:

- The Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation ([mhopus.org](http://mhopus.org))
- The Mockingbird Foundation ([mbird.org](http://mbird.org))

**The goodness of others—speak up for your school!** Talk to your music teacher or another teacher at your school about setting up a crowdfunding page. There are two great crowdfunding sites for classrooms where teachers can ask for exactly what they need and donors can choose where and who to support. Crowdfunding sites are a great way for teachers to reach out to the community, and beyond, for only the items that truly matter to your music class, like instruments, method books, uniforms, funding to attend competitions, or other meaningful resources.

- DonorsChoose ([donorschoose.org](http://donorschoose.org))
- AdoptAClassroom.org ([adoptaclassroom.org](http://adoptaclassroom.org))

## Upgrade Your School—and Your Life!

You can do it, with the help of your community. Your school needs a leader to make positive change a reality. Will it be you who starts a campaign to bring music to your school?

# Speak Up for Your Right to Succeed

## Highlights from the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Courtesy of VH1 Save the Music Foundation

The Every Student Succeeds Act has specific language that supports music and the arts as an integral part of a well-rounded education. From flexibility in Title I funds to support music education to increased professional development for music educators, the bullet points below will greatly support your case for comprehensive music education in your school.

- *A new and clear intent to support our nation's schools through a well-rounded education.* This is a big change from the flawed No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which focused heavily on students' academic success, narrowly defined as reading and math.
- *Enumeration of music as a well-rounded subject.* Replacing the Core Academic Subject language from NCLB, this language clearly articulates that music should be a part of every child's education, no matter students' personal circumstances.
- *Requirements for well-rounded education.* Schools are now able to assess their ability to provide a well-rounded education, including music, and address any deficiencies using federal funds.
- *Flexibility of Title I funds to support a well-rounded education.* All Title I programs, both schoolwide and targeted, are now available to provide supplemental funds for a well-rounded education, including for music education.
- *More professional development for music educators.* Funds from Titles I, II, and IV of ESSA may support professional development for music educators as part of supporting a well-rounded education.
- *Flexible accountability systems.* States must now include multiple progress measures in assessing school performance, which can include such music education-friendly measures as student engagement, parental engagement, and school culture/climate.
- *Protection from "pullouts."* ESSA discourages removing students from the classroom, including from music and arts instruction, for remedial instruction.



# How to Start a Club at Your School

There are two universal paths to living your best life: 1) find your tribe, and 2) do what you love. If you are curious about finding others at your school who share your interests, starting your own after-school club is a great way to meet new people and spend time doing something you enjoy.

You can do this. Gather your courage by remembering the fact that you are not alone in your desire to do something fun and interesting after school. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, students have no one at home to care for them after school in 69 percent of two-parent families and 71 percent of single-parent families.

These numbers reflect real people who are really bored, and alone. Starting a club can bring people together to have fun and to practice doing something everyone enjoys. Will it be you who starts a campaign to bring a new club to your school?

## Read the Fine Print

School clubs can be about a wide variety of topics, from yoga to drama to protecting the environment or most anything you like. Some clubs meet weekly, while others meet once a month or less. Most clubs have a teacher or school staff member who acts as supervisor, but students can also hold leadership positions, such as president, vice president, and secretary. Your school probably has a student handbook that shows the process for a student club to become school approved. The process may even be as simple as filling out a form.

Without school approval, you probably won't be able to have club meetings or post club information at school, which can make it difficult to recruit members. So learn how to make your club school-official. If you're not sure how to do this, ask a teacher or someone in the school office.

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### Five Big Bonuses\* of Starting Your Own Club

1. You'll say goodbye to boredom.
2. You'll meet people who you wouldn't have met otherwise.
3. Your grades in your regular classes are likely to improve.
4. You'll earn leadership experience that can improve your self-esteem.
5. You'll help strengthen job and college applications.

\*According to a 2007 study by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning

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To make the whole thing as painless as possible, here's a quick club mastermind quiz to help you sort out your thoughts:

### **Quick Club Mastermind Quiz**

1. Why do you want to start this club? List all the reasons. (**Ideas:** to begin pursuing my dream career; to practice or improve at a skill, instrument, or sport; to raise awareness about a cause I care about; to meet people with similar interests; to gain leadership experience.)
2. What will club members do during meetings?
3. How often will the club meet, and where will it meet?
4. What are the goals of the club? (**Ideas:** competition, performance, improve skills, just have fun.)
5. Do potential members need to try out for the club, or will anyone be allowed to join?

You might enjoy being in a club because you get to spend time with friends. Colleges and employers also like to see applicants who have participated in clubs because it helps them understand a person's interests better, and it shows that the person likes being involved and working with other people.

## Five (and a Half) Simple Steps to Start a Club at Your School

Now that you know all about *why* you want to start your own club, let's get started on *how* to start one. Follow these five and a half steps to start a club that is interesting, well run, and long-lasting.

### **Step 1: Make It Real**

Make sure your school doesn't already have a similar club. You can do this by asking someone at the school office. Check the student handbook to see what you have to do to make your club school-official. Talk to any teacher who you think might support your idea.

### **Step 2: Define What Happens During Club Time**

It's time to figure out the purpose of your club, what activities will take place, and what goals you have for the club.



For example, if you're forming a rock band, or maybe a meditation group, will the purpose of the club be finding gigs or mindfulness? Will the group meet to discuss music, or to discuss metaphysics and wellness? Will meetings be spent practicing, or will you watch videos of experts? What do you want to accomplish for the club to be considered successful? Three gigs a year? Ten members taught the basics of meditation?

By figuring this out now, you will be able to provide a clear, complete vision of your club when you advertise it to potential members in your school.

**Here are some other ideas for goals:**

- Build on every member's strengths rather than focusing on weaknesses.
- Provide an environment that helps members build positive peer relationships.
- Give challenges members can rise to.
- Provide fun, cool, creative activities.
- Provide opportunities for members to develop leadership and decision-making skills.
- Rehearse for competitions and/or tournaments with other schools.

### **Step 3: Spread the Word**

Once you have your club approved by your school, and once you've figured out a time and place to hold your first meeting, it's time to recruit some members.

Talk about your club in person and on social media with your friends and with people you think will be interested. If your school allows it, create and post flyers a week or two before the first meeting with the club's name, purpose, and time and date of the first meeting.

It's always better when flyers or posts are funny, eye-catching, and include pictures and text. If you have a friend or two who are definitely joining, recruit them to find more people. Peers generate the most buzz about a club. Make and post new flyers regularly.

### **Step 4: Hold Your First Club Meeting**

At your first meeting, introduce yourself, state what the club's purpose and goals are (everything you figured out in Step 2), what members will do, and any ideas you have for future activities and events. Answer any questions. Providing snacks is a great way to get people to love your new club.

Give a short description of the activities you'd like members to participate in during club meetings, such as band or meditation practice, and then end by



showing pictures of or describing your possible end goals (for example, venues or events you'd like your band to perform at or a trip to a park where you could hold an outdoor meditation) to get people excited about future meetings.

After you've spoken, give your new members a chance to introduce themselves and give their opinion on what they think the club's focus might be. Make note of everyone's ideas. The more included, listened to, and involved people feel, the more likely they are to return and to listen to you. Have a list where potential members can share their email addresses or social media handles to stay informed about future club info.

At the end of your first meeting, let members know where and when the next meeting will be held.

## **Step 5: Keep Your Club Going**

Your club is up and running, congratulations! It's important to make sure it lasts. Maintaining your club for the long term means that more students get to enjoy it. It will also be more impressive to colleges or employers because it shows that you can commit to something and that you have the skills to keep a club running long-term.

An important part of keeping your club going (and growing!) is continuing to listen to and collect ideas and input from members, recruit new members, and plan activities and events to keep your club exciting. It's a good idea to plan a special event at the end of the school year, whether that's a party, a weekend trip, or an important guest speaker. A special event gives members something to look forward to and helps keep people interested in the club.

### **Step 5.5: Assign Duties and Plan Events (Optional)**

If you're building a successful, exciting club, you're going to need help. Part of being a good leader is delegating tasks and electing leadership roles, so you aren't burdened with all the work. Sharing important roles with trusted members helps them feel included and needed.

Common elected officer roles include:

- **President:** leads and supervises the club with help from other officers
- **Vice president:** fills in when the president is not available
- **Secretary:** takes notes during meetings, maintains club records, keeps members updated on club news and events
- **Treasurer:** manages the club budget and expenses



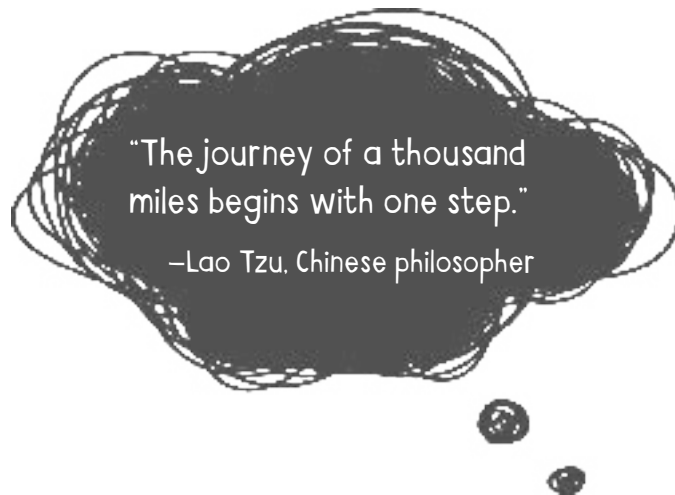
You can choose to hold elections or nominate people to fill these positions. Once you have your club organized and a leadership structure figured out, it's easier (and fun) to start planning activities that take place during club meetings or at special events. You and your officers might consider bringing in a guest speaker, planning a club outing, organizing a fundraiser, or hosting discussions, shows, or events.

It's smart to start with one small and manageable activity until everyone gets used to working with each other as a team.

If you're new to starting clubs (and who isn't?), it's easier and more comfortable to start small and use your first few meetings to get to know each other and brainstorm ideas. Don't try to do everything at once or expect your club to kick off at its full potential. Trying to plan too many things right away can be exhausting and overwhelming.

You will get far better results by encouraging group members to voice their opinions—make sure you listen to their ideas. Your members will enjoy the club more and can give you great ideas for future activities.

If there are similar clubs at your school or in your community, you may want to join up with them occasionally for special activities. You'll attract new members, have more opportunities for interesting activities, and find new ways to help your club grow and thrive.





# How to Find Your Passion

Somewhere in the United States, there is a kindergartner who is captivated with the stuffed pika toy her favorite aunt brought back from China. This little person will grow up learning everything she can about the pika and spouting random facts like, “There are fewer than 1,000 pikas (also known as *Ochotona ilienis*) left in the world.” One day, having graduated from college with a degree in zoology, ecology, or some other “-ology,” this pika-lover will lead an expedition to the Tian Shan mountain range to help this rare species overcome the effects of climate change that threaten its survival. Her passion and dedication will cause positive change for good.

## What Is Passion and How Do I Find It?

Figuring out your passion may seem easier for people who know from an early age exactly what they want to do with their lives. They don’t have to question what they “should” be doing; their passion found them first.

But what if you’re passionate about something like making funny memes, or gaming, or off-roading, and you can’t figure out how to turn that interest into a legit career path? Or what if you, like most people, have several (less intense) interests? Or what if you don’t have a clue what to eat for lunch, let alone what to do for the rest of your life?

“You don’t create your life first, and then live it. You create it by living it,” says Terri Trespicio in her super-popular TEDx talk, “Stop Searching for Your Passion.” She believes, “You don’t follow passion, passion follows you.”

Let’s look at the three main problems faced by people who haven’t found their passion.

### **Problem 1: My All-Time Favorite Thing Isn’t a College Major**

One of the most effective things you can do to turn a hobby like gaming, comic book collecting, or even gameshow-watching into a career is to go where people are making a living at it.

Tell people about your passions and interests so they can connect you with relevant groups and causes. Volunteer to hand out lanyards at a conference or get an entry-level, part-time position sorting the mail at a studio, design house, or distributor. The work you do there isn’t what matters, but your deep interest and enthusiasm do. Once you are in the door, give yourself fully to every task, even if all you’re doing is making copies. Your positive attitude will be appreciated.



Think about it. If you had an important task to give to one of two people—one who showed up on time and loved everything about being there and one who thought he/she/they were above the daily tasks and counted the minutes until the day was over—who would you promote? Go, help, give generously of your time and interest, and allow the people who know the work to teach you. You won't be made CEO on the first day, but you will get more responsibility, incrementally. Trust and be patient. If you find out you don't like the work, then go seek your passion elsewhere. But always, always, always give the best of yourself. Engaging in your work is not just for your boss, it's also for you. It's in engagement that your fire will be ignited.

Passion can't be found in your head because it lives in your heart. Use your strengths as much as you can. Doing what you're good at makes you six times as likely to be engaged, and more than three times as likely to be happy with your life, says Tom Rath in his book *Wellbeing: The Five Essential Elements*.

## **Problem 2: I Have Lots of Interests, but I Don't Know Which Is My "True Calling"**

No matter how hard you try, the path to figuring out your passion is not found by thinking about it. You need to take action and feel your way to your truth, from the inside out.

If you want to discover (or cultivate) your passion, bring the best of yourself to every new thing you try—and whatever you currently do. Rather than pursuing a specific passion in a specific way (as in the pika example), find out where your strengths are. The easy way to do this is to do anything and everything that presents itself in the larger arena of your interest. Here are some examples.

Interested in writing? Help out in any way you can within that world, whether it's interning for an influential blogger or helping a senior center produce its newsletter. Be in it to find your strengths. You may discover that you love writing local news articles even more than writing fanfiction or fantasy.

Interested in drama, acting, or stage work? Help out in any way you can within that world, even if all you're doing is folding programs for the matinee. If you show up and give yourself fully and enthusiastically to your work, you'll soon be shifted to wherever your strengths and positive attitude best serve the company. Trust that those who have gone before you and know the departments will recognize your enthusiasm, joy, and commitment, and that they will reward it by letting you have greater and greater responsibility.

You may go in, for instance, thinking you would shine as a set designer or dreaming of playing the lead, but when you're engaged in the actual work using



your hands and being part of the group, you might discover a talent for lighting, or singing, or makeup, or directing. The only way to find out is to engage in the work.

“You feel passion when you give yourself fully,” explains Terri Trespicio. “It doesn’t matter what you’re doing. Throw yourself into it, help, dare to be fully into whatever you’re doing.”

### **Problem 3: I Don’t Have a Clue What I Want to Do**

First off, you’re not alone. One of the most common obstacles to living a passion-based life is figuring out what you’re passionate about in the first place.

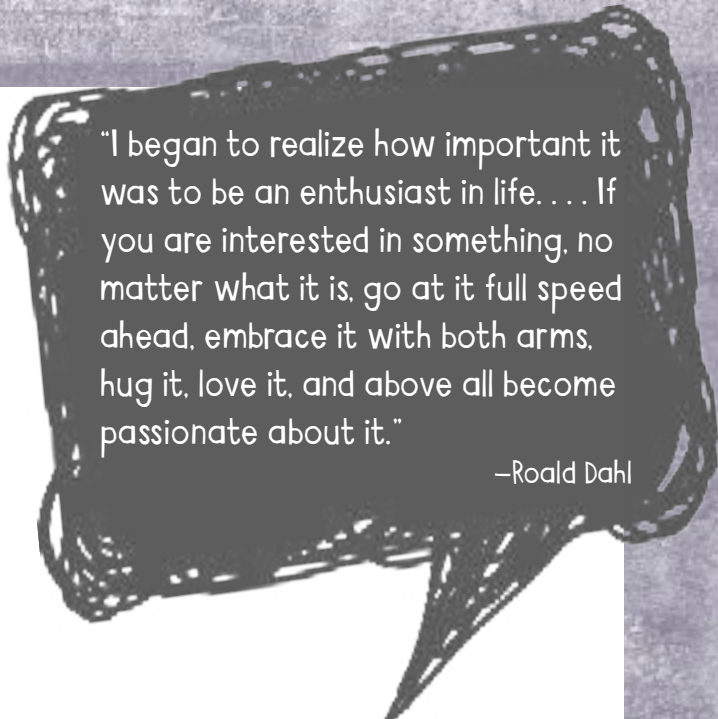
But where do you start? Have you ever thought, “If I could just figure out what I’m really passionate about, everything will fall into place”?

Sure, you could ask your mom or a friend, “What do you think I should do?” But they can’t be sure what will give you a sense of passion. First and foremost, your passion is about you. Finding it isn’t about doing something because your best friend enjoys it, and it isn’t about doing something to make your parents or your significant other happy or because anyone told you that you “should.”

Identifying how you can contribute to your community is, statistically, a sure-fire way to improve your overall happiness and confidence, and it brings a deeper sense of purpose. If you go online or into your school counselor’s office, there are all kinds of aptitude assessments you can take. We’ve even included a Mini Quiz to Uncover Your Interests on page 17. Your results will help uncover your potential, but they won’t light the fire. Only you can do that, because the flames of passion are fanned by engagement, not thought.

## **The One True Path to Finding Your Passion**

No matter where you are on your passion-seeking journey, one word keeps showing up again and again: *engagement*.



“I began to realize how important it was to be an enthusiast in life. . . . If you are interested in something, no matter what it is, go at it full speed ahead, embrace it with both arms, hug it, love it, and above all become passionate about it.”

—Roald Dahl

*Engagement* has many meanings. Let's look at Merriam-Webster's definition to see the layers of what it can mean when we use the verb *engage*:

en·gage | \in-'gāj

1. to attract and hold by influence or power
2. to interlock with: MESH
3. to hold the attention of: ENGROSS
4. to provide occupation for: INVOLVE

Finding your passion is a lot like falling in love . . . with your life. Engagement isn't a fake-it-til-you-make-it theory. It is a matter of learning to give of yourself with enthusiasm, even if all you're doing is writing an essay about endangered pikas in China.

You can practice being engaged in lots of situations. Think about how fast a class can go by when you're really involved with what's happening, compared to just counting down the minutes until the bell rings. That class flew by because you were deeply engaged. It's when you check out mentally that the clock magically slows down and time seems to drag on forever, especially in your least favorite subjects. Try listening, answering questions, and taking notes. Not only will your grades improve, but you'll be happier in the long run. Beyond that, engagement is good for your mental health. According to Tom Rath, "People with the lowest engagement were far more likely to later be diagnosed with depression."

It's okay to try new things. And it's okay to fail at or not really enjoy them. In truth, it's okay to be so-so, because you're free to move on and try another thing, and another. Passion comes from experimenting, playing, and giving something new a chance.

When you were little, you didn't always think about the outcome. You just played for the sake of playing. You enjoyed just being in the moment. And when you found something you liked, you returned to it, cherished it, and found others who liked it too. There's no need to force passion or feel stressed about it. Allow yourself to play!

Building your life around something you love is, in itself, an act of loving yourself. And nothing is more important than the relationship you have with yourself.



# Mini Quiz to Uncover Your Interests

Answer the following, using all five senses. If you come across a question that doesn't apply, just skip to the next one. Remember, passion comes from action. This quiz helps reveal what types of things you like so you can start thinking about what careers might interest you. Ultimately, you won't know what lights you up until you dive in and engage enthusiastically.

Are you a night owl or an early riser?

Where do you wish you could live?

What kinds of people do you (or would you) love to be around?

What are your three favorite topics to talk about for hours on end?

What is your dream wardrobe?

What kinds of compliments do people give you?

How do you like to spend your evenings?

How do you like to spend your weekends?

Do you like to spend time with your family?

What kind of music do you listen to?

What shows or movies do you like to watch?



What kinds of books do you like to read?

What are your last thoughts before you go to sleep?

What naturally flows for you without you even having to try?

Think of five people who inspire you. Who are they and what is it about them that you admire?

You inherit \$300 million. How does it change your life? What would you do with your days?

You are totally engaged in something interesting and time seems to have disappeared. What are you doing?

What difference do you want to make in the world?

You are invited to a party hosted by a famous person in history. Who is it and why do you want to meet them?

What fundamental beliefs or values do you hold?

If the only way to earn money were to be creative and artistic, what would you do?



What types of environments do you prefer?

What are the last 20 things you searched in your browser history?

What kind of advice or information do people come to you for? In which areas are you deemed to be knowledgeable? Do you wish it were something else?

If you could change three things in the world for the greater good, what would they be?

If you could absorb all the knowledge from books in seconds, what topics would you really love to know more about?

When you were a child, what did you always dream of doing when you got older?

The person who loves you most in the whole world asks you what you need to be doing with your life in order to be truly happy. How do you respond?

Read through your answers to this mini quiz. Do you notice any repeated words or patterns? These repeats are clues to what is important to you and to what you like and value. The ideas, activities, and skills you think you'd most like to engage in are the source of your passion.

Now that you've discovered what lights you up, you can begin seeking opportunities to engage yourself with 100 percent enthusiasm. If what you find isn't the best fit, take the quiz again and see what changes. Remember, passion will find you. Be open to it.



# About the Authors

**Rayne Lacko** is a Young Adult author and an advocate for the arts as a form of social and emotional well-being. A teen writing mentor, she cohosts a youth creative workshop, an annual writing camp, and a teen arts showcase and open mic event. Rayne is certified to provide mental health first aid to young people, and she completed the Pongo Teen Writing training to teach poetry to youth in juvenile detention. Through her work, she inspires young people and their families to use creativity to stimulate positive change in their lives and communities.



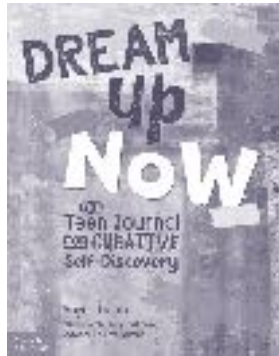
A curious world-traveler, Rayne believes music, language, and art connect us. She explores those themes in her novel, *A Song for the Road* (SparkPress, 2019), and in several articles for publications including *Writers Digest*, *School Library Journal*, *ParentMap*, and *GERM*. She resides on Bainbridge Island, near Seattle, Washington, with her spouse and two boys (a pianist and a drummer), a noisy cat, and her canine best friend. Learn more at [RayneLacko.com](http://RayneLacko.com).

**Lesley Holmes** contributes her expertise to several educational and arts nonprofits, helping children, teens, and older adults learn and heal through alternative therapies, music education, literacy, and food. She is the former executive director of Reading Opens Minds, a local nonprofit in her native Los Angeles that facilitates book clubs in at-risk communities for teens, LGBTQ+ seniors, and the recently incarcerated, and the former executive director of Children's Music Fund, a national nonprofit organization providing music therapy and musical instruments to chronically ill children in and out of the hospital. She specializes in community outreach and building relationships with community leaders to better the lives of children.

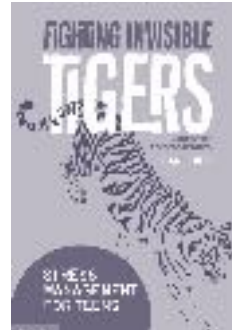


A lifelong chef and baker, Lesley is a Los Angeles native who enjoys early morning hikes in the Hollywood Hills where she lives with her two teenage daughters.

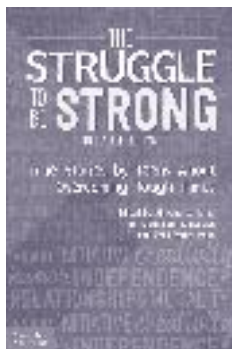
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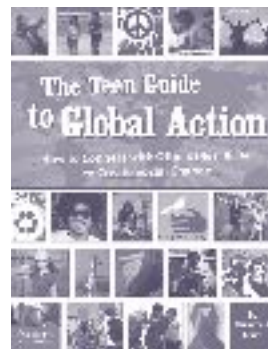
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