

## A WEEK IN MY SHOES:

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You know all about *Curriculum for Excellence*, but what about 'Drumming for Excellence'? Daniel Duggan of Infectious Grooves shares a week in his shoes



While studying for my BMus Hons Degree in Jazz music I worked as a session musician in recording studios, TV and radio, playing and touring with a variety of artists, bands, shows and orchestras. It was a valuable experience, but my aim was to run my own business. I had a particular passion for African and Samba percussion, and had gained a lot of experience in those areas. I looked for opportunities to take contracts nearer home, as my wife Sarah and I had our first son, Dylan (we now also have Lynden and Niamh). That opportunity came from Northumberland Music Service, who were looking for someone to visit their schools and deliver African drum workshops. My career in education grew from there. I founded Infectious Grooves in 2000 in the north east of England with Sarah and moved

to Edinburgh in 2002. Infectious Grooves uses drumming to educate and inspire pupils through energetic workshops and equips teachers through practical training sessions and our *Release the Rhythm* Handbooks & CDs. We also resource schools by supplying percussion instruments through our partner company. Using percussion to reinforce learning is a fun and educational way of engaging pupils with the curriculum. I really enjoy my work and find great satisfaction knowing that we are having a positive impact on educational experiences.

**Sunday**

For me, and for many teachers, the working week starts before Monday! My week tends to be very varied, with lots of travel, so Sarah and I plan our diaries on a Sunday evening. A typical week involves workshops, training, corporate events and drum sales with

schools, organisations and people of all ages and abilities, so there's a lot to plan.

**Monday**

I spend the morning at Garvel Deaf Centre in Inverclyde, where I lead a drumming workshop. Drums are great for working with pupils with additional support needs. Many of the pupils at Garvel have cochlear implants, so they can hear the beats, but even profoundly deaf pupils can feel the vibrations – it's a very accessible instrument for all abilities. These drumming sessions are really fulfilling. In the afternoon I travel to Gourock High School, where I'm doing African drumming with pupils to help prepare them for their Higher Music exam. They need to be able to identify a Ghanaian drum ensemble in the listening exam and this gives them a memorable kinaesthetic experience of the sound. The workshop also involves

using various musical terms they need to memorise, such as ostinato, crescendo, accelerando and polyrhythm. In the evening I run a twilight session with teachers on 'Drumming for Excellence' (DfE), a programme I devised which uses drumming to support the curriculum. This programme combines rhythm and recall to create an innovative teaching method that appeals to every style of learning. Personal study on the work of Tony Buzan, who created the Mind Map, and Howard Gardner who created the theory of multiple intelligences, is the foundation for the DfE programme. All teachers from Nursery right up through the age groups are trained and coached to an autonomous level on how to use percussion to enhance learning for every subject from maths and English to history and modern languages. The teachers and pupils really enjoy it.

## "Drum beats can act as a mnemonic to help embed learning"

**Tuesday**

I have a Drumming for Excellence coaching session at Bonnyrigg Primary School in Midlothian. After school, I teach and rehearse a piece I've composed for African percussion with the Midlothian percussion ensemble for the Festival of Music. The ensemble is run by the Midlothian LEA percussion teacher and is open to pupils of all ages across Midlothian who play percussion instruments. The Festival of Music takes place on 4 November in the Usher Hall – this is the event's first time in the big venue so everyone is really looking forward to it.

**Wednesday**

I'm back in Bonnyrigg running the DfE coaching workshops through the day, then hold a twilight session with teachers after school. At lunchtime, I deliver African percussion packs to schools. Over the years, my business has grown organically, from running workshops and training to also providing African and Samba drums. Creative Scotland part-funds Midlothian to purchase the drums so lots of their schools have their own classroom percussion pack, and many other local authorities buy one set and pass them around a cluster of schools so many schools can benefit from using them.

**Thursday**

Today I'm in North Lanarkshire with Reeltime Music, a community group for young people on the fringe of education, due to discipline or social needs. I conduct a team-building drumming session which involves each pupil learning a simple rhythm, and then layering the rhythms on top of one another. It encourages them to work together to create the overall sound. Drums are accessible to all and instantly gratifying to play in this setting. This helps to build confidence and community within the group. After that I go to Parkhill Primary School in Fife for African drumming with P6 students, then on to a workshop with their choir Voicebox after school, for African drumming and singing. This is part of the Fife Youth Music Initiative

funded by Creative Scotland, which aims to ensure that all pupils in Scotland up to P6 have five hours' tuition or more each week. This initiative has provided access to many varied musical experiences and lessons to pupils in Scotland free of charge. A huge number of pupils and schools have benefitted from this funding.

**Friday**

Arkleston Primary School in Renfrewshire is studying African culture as part of a fortnight of arts and cultural studies, so I spend the day there doing African drumming with the pupils. It gives the pupils an exciting way to experience another culture. My workshops are tailored for different age groups, so younger pupils will have simpler tasks including techniques like storytelling, while I'll add in dancing and singing for older pupils.

**Saturday**

The majority of the work I do is in education, but I also run some corporate days and community events. Today I'm working with Brownies and Guides in the Scottish Borders at Netherurd House, facilitating team-building sessions with the Guide Leaders.



For more information about Infectious Grooves email [Daniel@infectiousgrooves.org](mailto:Daniel@infectiousgrooves.org) or visit [www.infectiousgrooves.org](http://www.infectiousgrooves.org). For more information about the Drumming for Excellence programme visit [www.drummingforexcellence.org](http://www.drummingforexcellence.org)