

## EcoSonic Playground Project website bio: Johnson-Green

Elissa Johnson-Green is an Assistant Professor of Music and Music Education at University of Massachusetts Lowell. Dr. Johnson-Green's professional life in music began in performance. She received a Performance Certificate in Flute at The Juilliard School Preparatory Program under Brad Garner, a Bachelor of Music degree from The Peabody Institute of Music of the Johns Hopkins University under Robert Willoughby, and a Masters of Historical Performance and Musicology at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music under Michael Lynn. In addition, she studied privately with Julius Baker and with David Shostac at the Aspen Music Festival.

After having been a professional performer and studio teacher for many years, Dr. Johnson-Green changed her focus to music education. She then received a Master of Music Education and a Doctorate of Education in Music and Music Education from Teachers College, Columbia University where she worked under professors Lori Custodero, Lenore Pogonowski, and Harold Abeles. Dr. Lori Custodero was both her Master's thesis advisor and doctoral mentor, with focus on early childhood music education and childhood development. Dr. Johnson-Green's doctoral dissertation research centered on how music operates in the negotiation of transition in family life, namely, in school readiness and young children's transition into kindergarten.

Prior to becoming a professor, Dr. Johnson-Green worked for several years as a full-time music teacher and children's chorus director in K-8 education, first at the Anderson School, PS 334 in Manhattan and then at the Rashi School in Dedham, Massachusetts. Both of these appointments were formative in Dr. Johnson-Green's approach to teaching as these schools were vastly different in culture and population: PS 334 is a gifted and talented public magnet school, where children test into the program at 4-years-old; The Rashi School is a private school where a third of the children are on individual education plans. Both schools offered the opportunity to re-build languishing music programs, which provided Dr. Johnson-Green with the freedom to design, implement, and refine a differentiated curriculum based on improvisation, composition, music theory, aural skills training, and close listening. Her interest in integrated STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math) education led to her inclusion of all subject area material as relevant to music education. Rather than teach music *to* children, she teaches them how music works – beginning in kindergarten, music becomes the material in hands-on learning, where the mathematical processes and architectural forms of music are revealed for musical understanding.

Dr. Johnson-Green's research and project development on the EcoSonic Playground Project has been built on the foundations of her teaching practice and the curriculum she developed while in K-8 education. Her contributing ideas for the EcoSonic Playground grew out of her interest in developing an "immersion-learning" program for children in her music classroom. Here, immersion-learning refers to complete engagement with musical material using all prior skills and knowledge to push the boundaries of creativity. It requires differentiated and developmentally appropriate teaching practices as well as the teacher's ability to apply both structure and freedom to the learning process. This project is fundamentally synergistic as it demands multi-person teams to design, build, and play large-scale musical instruments. Musically speaking, the EcoSonic Playground is an ensemble project.