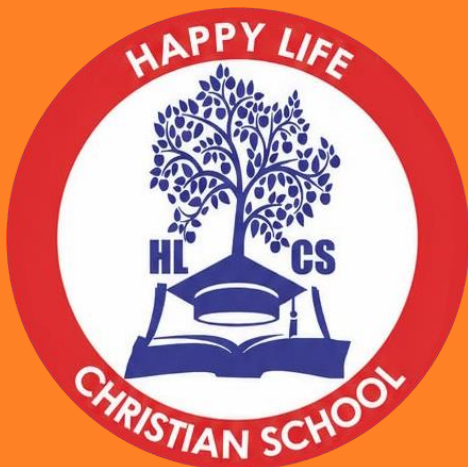




MISSION TO KENYA 2026

JUJA FARM MUSIC EDUCATION

IMPACT REPORT

Strengthening Music Education at
Happy Life Christian School
Juja Farm, Kiambu County, Kenya | July 2026

Equipping Teachers. Inspiring Learners.

IMPACT SNAPSHOT

The 2026 return to Happy Life supported students through direct music instruction while also expanding access to instruments and strengthening work that local educators had already begun.

138
Students

Experienced music concepts in Grades 4–6

Provided direct music and recorder instruction to 138 students in Grades 4–6 during the mission.

- Grade 4: 51 students
- Grade 5: 43 students
- Grade 6: 44 students

These students formed the primary group I supported through classroom music instruction during my time at Happy Life.

20

Fast Track Students

Identified for Recorder Ensemble Preparation

Within the Grades 4–6 group, the Creative Arts & Sports teacher selected 20 students who showed readiness to progress more quickly.

- Grade 4: 8 students
- Grade 5: 6 students
- Grade 6: 6 students

This smaller group of additional recorder instruction focused on rhythm, note values, fingering, listening, and early ensemble skills. The 20 Fast-Track students formed a subset of the 138 students I directly taught.

120
Students

Received Recorders

The mission provided individual recorders to 120 students in Grades 4–8 who did not already have one. This instrument-access figure extended beyond my direct teaching group because students in Grades 7–8 also received recorders for the school-led music program.

MUSIC ENTERED THE REGULAR SCHOOL DAY

In 2026, Happy Life incorporated music into the regular school day through Creative Arts & Sports. A licensed Creative Arts & Sports teacher, new to Happy Life that year, led the school's ongoing instruction.

THREE MUSIC PATHWAYS

- Creative Arts & Sports gave students music instruction during the regular school day.
- Fast-Track Recorder gave teacher-selected students from Grades 4–6 additional opportunities to progress.
- Music Club operated as a separate school-hours pathway that supported broader instrumental development.

The 2026 work supported each pathway without treating them as one program or combining their student counts. The future assessment framework continues to track them separately.

The mission expanded student access to instruments and reinforced foundational music skills while Happy Life's educators continued leading music throughout the school year. Rather than creating a separate mission-dependent program, the 2026 work supported a music program that Happy Life had already begun developing.

When I returned to Happy Life in Juja Farm on July 2, 2026, I carried expectations shaped by the work I had left behind eight years earlier. In 2018, I supported students through classroom music instruction, choir, instrumental learning, cultural dance, and preparation for the Kenya Music Festival. I left hoping the foundation we had built would continue developing as new groups of students moved through the school.



My return gave me an opportunity to reconnect with students I had taught during that first mission. Many had reached high school, university, or trade school by 2026. Former students remembered songs and dances from our time together, and I learned that some of the children continued singing choir songs for years after I returned to the United States.

I initially looked for progress through the measures I understood best. I wondered how many students now played instruments, how far they had progressed in reading music, and whether ensembles or festival participation had continued. Those questions reflected the program I remembered from 2018 and the future I had imagined for it.

“I also believe cultural and educational exchange should begin with listening.”

— Kennesha

As I spent more time at Happy Life, I began evaluating the return differently. The school had developed new ways for students to experience music, and local educators now carried responsibility for the program throughout the year. Instead of trying to reconstruct what I remembered, I began looking at where my support could strengthen the work they had already started.

In 2018, more than 150 students experienced supplemental music instruction at Happy Life Christian School, while approximately 20 students prepared for the Kenya Music Festival across several performance categories. The work included choir, recorder, instrumental instruction, cultural dance, and festival preparation.

A NEW CHAPTER IN MUSIC EDUCATION

Understanding How Happy Life's Music Program Had Changed Since 2018

In 2018, I developed supplemental curriculum and instructional resources to support music outside the regular school-day structure. I wrote curriculum, organized materials, and left sheet music so future teachers would have resources they could use after I returned to the United States.

When I returned in 2026, I learned that Happy Life had protected those materials and continued to use some of the curriculum. However, I also discovered that the school had developed a different structure for music education. Happy Life now provided music during the regular school day Creative Arts & Sports. A licensed teacher currently provides the instruction at Happy Life, has his first year at the school. The school also offers a Wednesday clubs program during school hours, with Music Club as one of the available options. The minister of music from the mission's main church location supports Music Club program, and a local saxophonist helps with instrumental instruction.

These changes helped me recognize that Happy Life did not need me to become responsible for its music program. The school already had educators and local musicians working with students. As a result, my role shifted toward supporting their established programs and connecting the resources from 2018 with the direction Happy Life had chosen in 2026



**“The learners have shown interest in learning
Music and playing Musical instruments.”**

– Principal



EXPANDING ACCESS TO MUSIC

Removing an Immediate Barrier to Student Participation



Happy Life's regular school-day music instruction brought an immediate challenge while I was there. Some students had recorders, while others did not. When I worked with the students, the ones without instruments used pencils to practice finger placement, but they could not participate fully without access to a recorder.

I initially purchased 20 recorders and worked with the Creative Arts & Sports teacher to identify students who needed them. One class nearly required the entire first group of recorders, which

quickly showed me that the need extended beyond my original purchase.

While I remained in Kenya, I shared the need through Facebook Live and social media. Supporters responded, allowing us to expand the effort. Ultimately, 120 students in Grades 4–8 who did not already own a recorder received an individual instrument. Happy Life also retained 25 additional recorders for continued program use, bringing the total number provided to 145.

**“The learners are able to access
recorder without sharing.”
– Creative Arts & Sports Teacher**

Providing an instrument expanded access for students, while direct instruction represented a different form of mission involvement. The 2026 mission accomplished both without treating the numbers as interchangeable.

The recorder distribution did not create Happy Life's music program. It addressed a practical barrier within a program the school had already begun building.



BUILDING MUSIC LITERACY

Using Recorder Instruction to Strengthen Foundational Musical Skills

During the 2026 mission, 138 students across Grades 4–6 directly experienced classroom music and recorder instruction with me. The Creative Arts & Sports teacher also identified and selected 20 students from those grades for additional Fast-Track development based on the progress he observed during the school year.

Our Fast-Track sessions remained short, with each session lasting less than 30 minutes. The students had not yet reached independent staff reading, so I worked from the skills they already understood. I wrote letter names and exposed them to note values to use those notations as a way to connect recorder fingering with rhythm and counting.

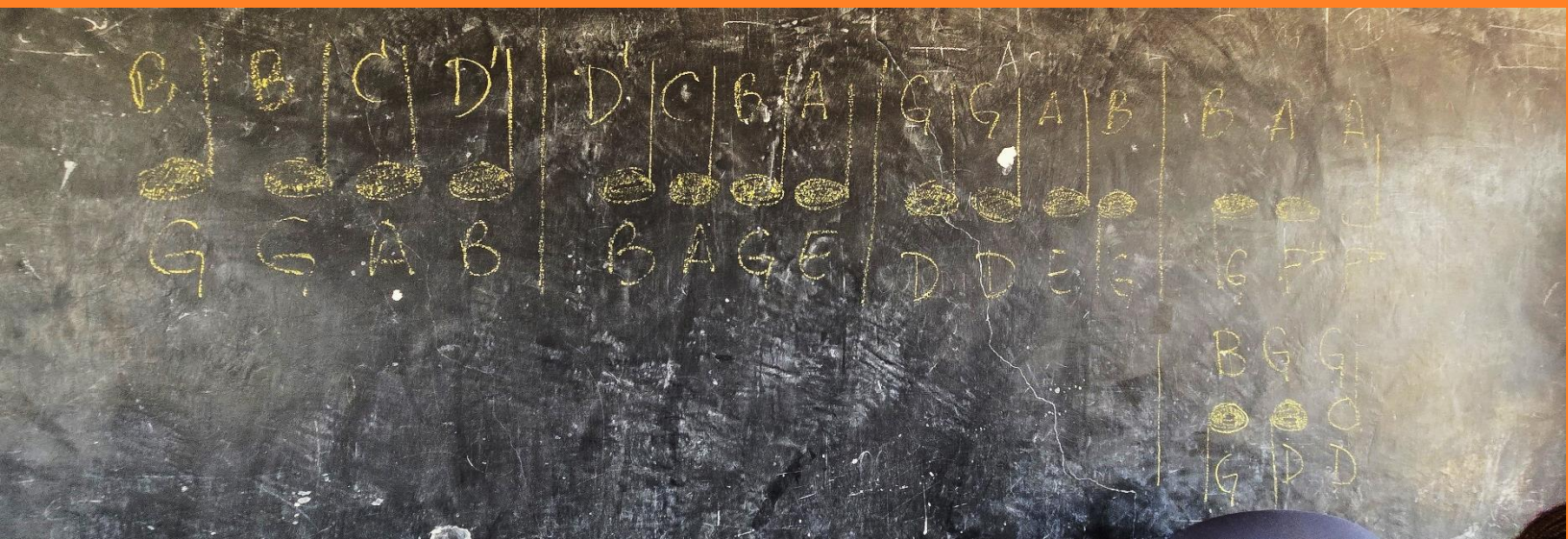
“Learners are able to play melodies using recorder.”

– Creative Arts & Sports Teacher

The students responded quickly when I introduced additional notes. They began connecting what they saw with how long they needed to hold each sound. One of the clearest examples came through “Ode to Joy.” I divided the students into two groups and assigned each group a different musical part. The students listened to the other group while maintaining their own notes, allowing them to experience harmony and early ensemble independence.

The sessions strengthened fingering, rhythm, note-value recognition, listening, and ensemble awareness. It did not establish independent music-reading mastery. Therefore, the short instructional period did not allow us to measure long-term progression.

Their teacher has continued to work with the group after I left, and works with them twice a week. Future assessment will help show how students’ progress from letter-supported notation toward stronger staff recognition and more independent music reading.



BEYOND THE RECORDER

Connecting Foundational Skills to Broader Musical Development

When it comes to the recorder, I view the instrument as the starting point into music development. Recorders give students an accessible way to develop rhythm, note values, listening skills, and ensemble awareness before moving into more complex musical experiences.

Recorder fingering does not transfer directly to every instrument, but the language of music does. Students who understand rhythm and written notation can carry those skills into choir, keyboard, woodwinds, or other ensembles as their teachers determine they are ready.

“An instrument can provide an opportunity, but the education around it is what allows a student to make meaningful use of that opportunity.” – Kennesha

A stylized illustration of a recorder, shown in profile, with several musical notes floating above it. The recorder is light blue with a darker blue body and a white mouthpiece. The musical notes are also light blue with black stems and flags. The background is a solid light blue.

Happy Life already has other modern instruments that can support future endeavors. Some students have begun receiving instruction on those instruments, while other instruments would become more useful to students who develop stronger musical foundations.

My hope is that students move gradually from letter-name support toward greater independence with standard notation. Stronger music literacy could help them do more than reproduce memorized songs; it could give them a foundation they could apply as their musical opportunities expanded.

Happy Life’s larger vision can be developed in stages. Recorder ensembles, choir, keyboard, and smaller instrumental groups could grow before the school establishes larger ensembles. I believe each stage could prepare students for the next without forcing the program to expand faster than teachers or students are ready to support.

The goal was not simply to put more instruments into students’ hands. The goal was to help students develop enough musical understanding to use those opportunities well.

BUILDING FOR CONTINUITY

Strengthening the People and Resources That Could Carry the Work Forward

Returning to Happy Life changed how I understood sustainability. In 2018, I placed considerable emphasis on writing curriculum and leaving resources. When I returned eight years later, I found that Happy Life kept those materials, which has given the current teachers something to review and use rather than requiring from ground zero.

The return also showed me that documentation alone cannot sustain a program. Teachers need resources they could use with their current students, communication must shift when staff roles change. As such, the director, principal, music teachers, and I joined to keep the lines of communication effective and with intentionality. The shared space now gives us a way to discuss resources and continue conversations while keeping all roles connected to the development process.

“I do not want the music program to depend on me being physically present in Kenya.”

– Kennesha

These observations shifted my understanding of investment. Sustainability did not depend on leaving more things behind, but rather how educators can work with students and use the resources effectively in order to continue developing the program within Happy Life’s own structure. Ultimately, the music program belongs to Happy Life. My role remains as one to support all endeavors and provide insight while the school’s leadership and educators determine how the program should grow.



THE NEXT STAGE OF GROWTH

Using Continued Assessment to Guide What Comes Next

The 2026 visit showed me what Happy Life started building, but a three-week visit cannot show what students and teachers are able to accomplish over an entire school year. Therefore, I developed a future assessment framework to help us follow student and educator progress after the mission.

The framework tracks student development, resource use, teacher continuation, and the growth of separate music pathways. It also keeps Creative Arts & Sports, Fast-Track Recorder, Music Club, and Children's Home music activities separate so future reporting does not combine different student groups without evidence of overlap.



“My hope is not simply to see more students holding instruments or performing songs they have memorized. I want them to understand the music well enough that what they are learning becomes a skill they can continue using.”

– Kennesha

When I return, I want to understand how far students progressed in rhythm, recorder technique, and music reading. I also want to learn which resources teachers actually used and what challenges they encountered. I believe that future assessment will help examine whether students begin moving into other instruments or ensembles as their musical foundation strengthens. It can also help us identify whether local teachers continued strategies introduced or reinforced during the mission. I do not expect to return in 2027 and find the entire vision complete. I want to see what continued, where students progressed, and how teachers used the resources already available to them.

The next stage should grow from what Happy Life's educators and students actually accomplish rather than from an outside timeline. Continued assessment will help future support respond to evidence without assumption.



ABOUT KENNESHA

Kennesha Walker is an educator, musician, missionary, and educational resource developer whose work supports schools and communities through education, music, technology, and sustainable capacity building.

Her mission work has included direct student instruction and collaboration with educators who continue the work throughout the year. She approaches each setting by first understanding what educators already have and what they want to develop, then identifying where additional instruction or resources may provide meaningful support.

Music has remained an important part of her Mission to Kenya work. In 2018, she supported students at Happy Life through classroom music, choir, instrumental instruction, cultural performance, and preparation for the Kenya Music Festival. Her 2026 return allowed her to build on that relationship while adapting her support to the school's current teachers and program structure.

Kennesha also brings a professional background in technology and education. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Computer Information Technology from Norfolk State University. Her broader work in Kenya now includes both music education and technology-focused educational development.

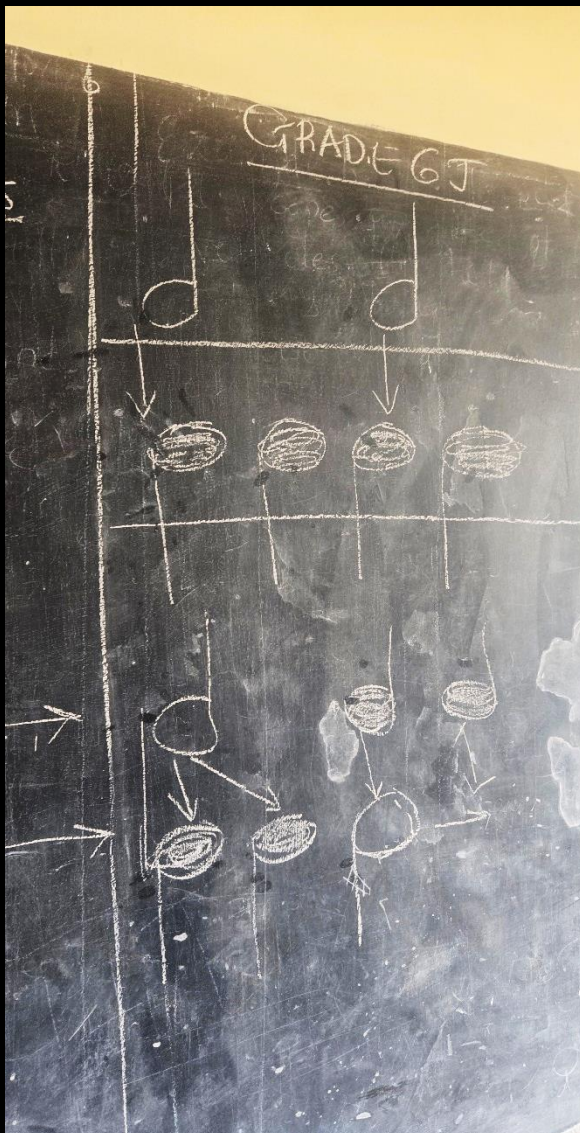
Across her work, Kennesha seeks to strengthen systems that can continue after a mission visit ends. Her approach centers on listening to educators, responding to practical needs, and supporting local leadership rather than creating programs that depend on her continued physical presence.

LOOKING AHEAD, SUPPORTING THE MISSION

Helping the Work Continue Beyond the 2026 Visit

The 2026 return showed me how Happy Life can continue developing music through its own teachers and leadership. It also helped me identify areas where future support could strengthen the work without replacing the people already responsible for it. When I return in 2027, I want to begin by learning what happened after I left and review student progression and resources used by educators throughout the year. I believe their experience will help deepen the next stage of support.

Future investment in Happy Life's music initiative can include progressive sheet music and method book resources, instrument maintenance, continued teacher collaboration, and support for students as they become ready for broader musical opportunities. Happy Life already has instruments that can become more useful as students develop the musical foundation required to use them well. Though an instrument can provide an opportunity, it is the education surrounding the instrument that allows a student to make meaningful use of every opportunity. Therefore, long-term investment can ultimately extend to include instruction and infrastructures that help students progress at a steady rate.



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