

Zé Leal is a music teacher with seventeen years of experience, fourteen of them in international schools. He is deeply committed to the power of music to build community, nurture creativity, and inspire lifelong learning. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Music Education and a Master of Science in Education from SUNY (State University of New York). He currently teaches Early Childhood and Elementary students at an international school in Brazil, where he leads the music program and also serves as the Lead Teacher for specialist teachers. Throughout his career, he has developed projects that have become signature elements of the school, including a large percussion ensemble that brings together students, families, and staff in collaborative musical experiences that foster unity and belonging. Some people joke that ever since this project began, even people's footsteps around the school seem to follow the same rhythm.

As the creator of a strings program that grew into a much-loved ukulele orchestra, Zé also encourages his students to build instruments using recycled materials and to explore sound through digital tools such as Ableton Live and BandLab. His teaching practice is enriched by his journey as a musician: he began as a self-taught percussionist and has performed and led workshops across Brazil and in several other countries. These experiences expanded his pedagogical and cultural vision.

A passionate traveler, Zé Leal has visited every continent and carries with him the openness and sensitivity shaped by living with and learning from different cultures alongside his family. These experiences expanded his worldview and strengthened his belief that curiosity and a sense of belonging are fundamental to the learning process. For him, music is more than a language, it is an essential tool in the formation of the human being.