

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF MUSIC

Creating a Positive Future for P–12 Music Education

BACKGROUND PAPER

NASM Annual Meeting 2004

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This paper has been produced as a resource for the NASM Annual Meeting session indicated above. It is not an accreditation or policy statement of NASM. Attendees are asked to read the paper before attending the session.

Introduction

Most NASM member institutions have offered teacher preparation programs for many years. Graduates with degrees in music education or pedagogy have served students and the musical development of our nation for decades. Numerous graduates in other specializations such as performance, theory, and composition have become teachers at the pre-college level. NASM member institutions remain committed to P–12 music study. In addition to being the primary locations for teacher preparation, they are also centers for research, testing grounds for new ideas, generators of methodology and repertory, and resources for professional development. There is a strong base for moving ahead positively and productively.

Music study for the P–12 age group is an extremely complex issue. There are significant numbers of tremendous successes. There is a long history of achievement. But there are also poor conditions, difficult situations, and an uncertain future. Too many students never obtain a musical education of substance and depth.

Administrative leaders and faculties of NASM institutions know firsthand both the joys and the vexing problems that accompany any commitment to work in this area. Many times, the challenges are so great for so long that people give up, a decision most visible among graduates who begin teaching music in the public schools. But it is also present, at least to some degree, in higher education when professors and administrators tire of fighting constantly for programs of substance against relentless opposition. Both relentless opposition and giving up take many forms.

In 2004, it seems clear that something must be done to address disillusionment and even growing premonitions of imminent or eventual defeat, especially regarding music programs in the public schools. The field cannot allow such feelings to grow to a point where their corrosive power becomes self-generating. It is important to begin thinking about positive ways forward.

Let us begin with an important fact: we professional musicians who teach a lot, a little, or not at all are only partially responsible for present conditions. While it is essential to recognize our own contributions to the current situation, we must not blame ourselves for values and conditions over which we have little or no control. Many of the problems we face are generated by massive commercial, political, and societal forces. The continuous movements of these forces are always creating new realities. The realities we are dealing with today differ from those we faced ten years ago. Facing realities foursquarely enables honest assessment and thoughtful judgment about what we can do—nationally, regionally, locally, and individually. It is critically important to avoid maintaining an atmosphere of constant crisis. Rather, we are in a difficult situation that we need to improve in ways that we can improve it. We have many resources, and we can make things better by concentrating over time on our fundamental P–12 mission—providing children and youth with a substantive musical education—and by being creative about the ways we work to accomplish that mission. We cannot be productive for the relationship between students and our art form if either the word ‘substantive’ or ‘music’ is removed from our fundamental mission. Being positive means keeping both and staying with our mission even as strategies, tactics, and operational plans are changed to meet evolving aspirations and conditions.

Purpose

This paper is intended to open a set of issues for consideration. It is neither an accreditation document nor an NASM position statement. It is a policy analysis paper intended to facilitate thought and discussion among musically engaged individuals with the power to act at the local level. It is not a national blueprint or plan, but rather a set of ideas for consideration as specific institutions determine their own futures. It is intended to be provocative, direct, assertive, and clear about several of the many essentials associated with a positive future.

Organization

The paper begins with five realities. These are not the only realities; however, they are relatively unmentioned. Readers are asked to consider the realities addressed here along with other realities that are known and talked about frequently.

The paper continues with a short section on observable characteristics of a “basic” discipline in elementary and secondary education. This list enables a ready self-analytical comparison between the way music is normally treated in contrast to disciplines such as mathematics, the sciences, and English. Next, there is an analysis of the critical distinction between survival and health, and the importance of considering this distinction when promoting music study and making decisions.

The paper concludes with questions intended to provoke thoughts about acting positively, including finding local approaches that can deliver steady improvements and visible results using a variety of means. There is a final statement about long-standing policy positions of NASM.

Five Realities

Numbers Served

It is hard to know with accuracy how many students in the P–12 age group are receiving the sort of regular music instruction that leads to basic musical competence. Whatever this number is, we know that not all students are receiving such instruction. And, we know that many students receive music instruction so infrequently they are unable to gain basic musical knowledge and skills. We also know that

the number of P–12 students exposed to music in some way in an educational setting is large in comparison to the number of students who are learning to perform, either through individual or group instruction. We also know that at the high school level, a small percentage of students are engaged in music study in school-based programs. We know that there is a large group of private music teachers that provide instruction to many thousands of students, and that there is an expanding network of community music schools and programs, a growing number of which are sponsored by NASM member institutions.

When the future of P–12 music study is discussed, there can be a tendency to concentrate on the large number of students that are not engaged. Too often, the tone is all negative: the rhetoric is full of regret and the message is one of failure. All sorts of reasons are posited: lack of teachers, lack of time in the curriculum, lack of interest on the part of students, poor repertory and content choices by school ensemble directors, insufficient connections with local ethnicities and cultures, lack of relevance, and many others. It is often asserted that changes in one or more of these conditions would enable or encourage more P–12 music study.

One reality that rarely emerges from all these facts, considerations, and regrets is that, nationally, the number of music students being served is large enough to support a significant pedagogical, economic, and structural base. For better or worse, this base can and does exist and even thrives, in many cases, without the economic or artistic need to address questions of music learning for a larger number of students. This reality may constitute an educational, sociological, or political failure, but it is not a music learning failure. It is a base on which to build or from which to change. It should be a source of inspiration rather than of regret.

Another reality is that no one knows for sure how many students at any age level are naturally disposed to or parentally pushed toward some sort of rigorous music study. By all means, let us continue to seek new ways of teaching; but, for example, even if repertories are changed, engagement with music performance or serious study of music in its theoretical, historical, and cultural manifestations all require dedicated effort. Listening recreationally to music, enjoying musical favorites, and talking about the music one likes requires no study and little effort. We do not know the extent to which a choice not to study music in high school, for example, is based on a lack of interest in doing the work that studying music requires, irrespective of the content being offered. Of course, individuals are attracted to certain types of music and turned away by others. But pursuing natural interests in music in any serious educational framework soon leads to the need for study, time-on-task, a personal investment in learning material and techniques that one did not previously know.

To be positive, it is critical to exhibit a healthy pride both in the significant number of students that are engaged in regular music study, and the ways they are engaged. When addressing questions about how to involve those that are not engaged, it is critical to be realistic about the many reasons for non-engagement. To do otherwise is to fall into the trap of continuous self-blame for all non-engagement. This is not positive. It is to suggest that if everyone would just do some particular thing or move in some particular direction nationwide, students would flock instantly to opportunities for rigorous music study, especially in the public schools. This is not reasonable.

To be positive, we must not make counterproductive correlations between numbers served and success. There are many worthwhile, highly successful non-profit and for profit enterprises that have a tiny market share. While increasing the number of P–12 music students is critically important for developing a positive future for music and for music education, we cannot retain a positive outlook if we make numbers served the primary or only indicator of the value of our effort and the viability of our basic goals, especially in the short term. To be positive, we must keep market share in perspective even as we work tirelessly to increase it, lest chasing it in the wrong way leads us to (a) counterproductive public presentations of what music study is for and what it can accomplish, and (b) lower aspirations for student learning

in music, an approach that is ultimately self-defeating. One way to formulate this is: How much and for how long are we willing to sell what we believe in and do, and how much are we willing to buy what those with other agendas for music want us to buy? The answers regarding our purpose are critical because it is possible to buy into other agendas in ways that alter our messages so that over time we play a role in defeating our own work.

Disparities

We are living in a time of fragmentation. Today, the relationship between music and P–12 education is being pursued with much less unity of purpose and approach. Fighting this reality is usually not positive.

There is less common agreement about the purposes of music and the other arts. For example, powerful intellectual, social, and marketing forces contend that work in any art form is primarily a means to other ends, that it has no intrinsic value. Many political missions are set forth for the arts. Indeed, content and repertory are chosen in many circumstances on the basis of political rather than artistic or aesthetic criteria. In fact, artistic and aesthetic criteria are regularly decried as being elitist.

There are many more types of connections between music and P–12 education, everything from sequential programs of music instruction led by specialist teachers to programs that use music exclusively to teach other subjects where the music additives are chosen by generalist teachers with little or no musical knowledge or skill. We have artists-in-schools programs and even a new designation for those so employed: the “teaching artist.” A constant array of new purposes is proposed for music and arts education in the schools. There are many repertoires, each with its own set of advocates who push for its inclusion in the curriculum. There are various methodologies and approaches that contend for attention and support. It is hard to deal judiciously with all this disparity because most rationales have at least a narrow legitimacy. But there is a fundamental problem: so many competing claims produce confusion about purposes. There are no common fundamental goals. For example, in many ways, the distinction has been lost between learning music and doing something with or being around music in an educational setting.

In addition, as already noted, there are numerous delivery systems. School-based programs, private studios, community education centers for music, charter and magnet arts schools, and home schooling cooperatives are among the most common. While these may or may not be disparate in educational purpose, they are disparate in terms of operational structures, control mechanisms, and often in the amount of weight given to music study.

These disparities regarding music’s purposes, connections between music and education, and delivery systems produce another critical reality. NASM member institutions are engaged, to some degree, in all of these disparate values, approaches and systems, through the efforts of their faculties and graduates, their own engagement with music teaching and learning in their communities, their music teacher preparation programs, their research, and so forth. Just one example: NASM member institutions graduate specialist music teachers for the public schools, private teachers, teachers who will work in community education programs, artists who will perform and make presentations in educational settings. NASM member institutions are thus connected with more of these disparities under one roof than any other music institutions in the nation. This reality provides a tremendous opportunity for effective action.

To be positive, it seems essential to recognize that disparity is the new reality, at least for the foreseeable future. This means accepting and encouraging parallel efforts: respecting approaches that are different from our own, as long as those approaches are centered on substantive music learning and as long as they are honest about what they can and cannot do. Honesty is critical. Over 20 different rationales are regularly given for studying music. But not every approach to music study can accomplish the purpose

delineated in every rationale; a program that does not require practice won't do much for self-discipline, for example. Honesty about what different kinds of programs do means matching purposes and promises with the nature of the teaching and learning effort. NASM member institutions have an enormous opportunity to help future music professionals in all areas of specialization make these connections as the basis for building and nurturing a much larger set of parallel P-12 efforts than we have at present. Schools and departments also have an enormous opportunity to help more musicians, whatever they do, gain a sense of how substantive P-12 music teaching and learning is connected to the health of the entire musical enterprise, and how those in various musical specialties must help each other.

To be positive in a world filled with disparities means finding ways to respect multiple repertoires without demeaning Western art music and those who wish to achieve in it. Such disrespect, though fashionable in some quarters, represents public rejection of some of the greatest achievements in the field we profess. It breaks alliances with work of many gifted musicians and teachers. It is bad for our image. We do not see scientists and mathematicians showering contempt on the works of Newton or those fluent with that body of content.

To create a positive future, it is critical to work productively with the fact of disparity on many levels, and to avoid spending tremendous energy arguing over differences or regretting difficulties that strategically do not matter. Please see the section "Survival and Health" below for a discussion of strategic necessities. Being positive means developing a new sense of community that recognizes disparities and encourages educational integrity, depth of purpose, and honesty about results in all approaches and systems that support substantive music learning.

Musician Teachers: What They Want to Do and Can Do

Traditionally, American schools and departments of music have set their requirements based on a belief that all music teachers should be competent musicians. In other words, no matter what their title or place of work, they should be musician teachers. Reciprocally, students sufficiently interested in becoming music majors at the college level normally seek to gain high levels of musical knowledge and skills. The individuals most likely to enroll in music education, pedagogy, and performance programs are those who want to make music and, in the case of future teachers, want to help others learn to make and understand music. These individuals are convinced that music is important on its own terms. They want to work in settings where other people feel music is important, and where there is a desire to learn what they want to teach. Facing the full meaning of this reality is essential in resolving the music teacher shortage.

It is clear, however, that there are ways to have music in educational settings that do not require the regular leadership of a musician teacher. For example, a performer or composer can come to school as a regular or irregular visitor. There are ways to include musical topics or examples in other studies without any need for musicianship skills. In most cases, however, musician teachers are not interested in teaching in ways that do not employ or engage their expertise in one or more aspects of music. Musician teachers are also severely challenged by working conditions where music study itself is not respected. Musicians become teachers in order to lead students to understanding and competence with subject matter and, in too many schools, wind up battling intractable opposition, both blatant and subtle, fighting for the existence of their programs year after year. As we know, some fight and win; others survive; too many quit.

On the way to finding positive approaches, we must question the extent to which we are making a sufficient distinction between two fundamentally different concepts for the presence of music in the schools: the musician as music teacher and the non-musician teacher as presenter of music content, perhaps supported by visiting artists who are not curricular teachers. Clarity is essential if we are to be successful. We ought not to join those who promote as though the results of either approach will be achieved by the other.

To be positive, we must look at the range of musician teachers and what they want to do and can do in relation to all of the disparities that we have noted previously. Being positive means realizing that different musicians want to do and teach different things, and finding a comfort level with these differences. Parallel efforts are natural to musicians. However, being positive also means being proud of the intensity that capable, dedicated musician teachers bring to their subject and to their pedagogical efforts. This means being proud of their desire to focus on excellence in meeting the educational and artistic goals that they have set. It means respecting the natures of musician teachers and musicians and the connections of those natures to high levels of performance and learning, whatever the musical specialization or area of study. It means declining to join those who attack such pursuits of excellence as evidence of elitism.

In summary, to be positive means respecting and building on the natural educational aspirations held by musician teachers for themselves and for their students, and showing the value of such depth of commitment and the achievement it produces as an example for all students in all disciplines.

An Inordinate Reliance on Systems and Processes

We are living in a society where the solution to almost every problem is thought to be the creation of a new system or process. The individual creative solution is often discounted and regularly mistrusted. One result is a proliferation of systems and procedures, many of which are mandated so that individual action is minimized. School-based music education is constantly under pressure from various systems. Many of these systems change requirements and methodologies frequently in ways that break continuity of effort. Massive amounts of time are spent on trying to ameliorate the effects of too many systems making too many changes too frequently.

The recent period of education reform has been particularly prolific in creating systems. At the beginning, there was some focus on disciplinary content. The national voluntary K–12 standards for the arts and for other disciplines are manifestations of this concern. But our nation’s inordinate propensity for technique and procedure soon produced conditions that obscured content as system followed system in ever-increasing proliferation. How many new bureaucracies have been spawned ostensibly to deal with standards at various levels? Now, it looks like calls for accountability will produce even more systems and procedures. Such proliferation has consequences.

For example, in the field of teacher preparation, many in NASM and elsewhere have embraced alternative certification because it is seen as a relief from the endless proliferation of imposed systems and procedures. Others threaten to close programs. Others steel themselves to tolerate a particular level of frustration. None of this is positive.

In most circumstances, those concerned about teaching music as a discipline to the P–12 age group cannot do anything about our nation’s inordinate reliance on and love for systems. The tendency to believe that process is content, or that process trumps content seems deeply ingrained. Some individuals and institutions know the difference and stay focused on content as much as they can. NASM and its member institutions are in this group. One reality we face is that a focus on content and substance often produces resistance and resentment which are worked out politically in rules and regulations that thwart individual judgment and initiative or steal time away from substantive effort. In many cases associated with public school music, there is no choice but to comply or quit. This sense of powerlessness is not positive.

These realities are related to several others we have been discussing. They create a sense of futility in musician teachers who want to do something besides respond constantly to bureaucratic mandates and interference. Ironically, they also channel intellectual effort into searches for more systems to impose on others. One wag puts it this way, “No one wants to teach spelling, but everyone wants to develop a method for teaching spelling that all other teachers of spelling must use.” As a result, we have a reduction

in spelling ability accompanied by a proliferation of systems for teaching spelling. The worse students perform, the greater the emphasis on new systems to solve the problem. The cycle is self-defeating even though it throws out constant images of efforts to improve for public consumption.

To be positive, we must try to disengage P–12 music study from time- and spirit-wasting systems, especially those that show no interest in musical content or music learning. We must try to seek or create conditions that keep content and process in productive relationships. We must reclaim the content of music and state over and over again that teaching such content is at the center of our purpose. We in music may not be able to control many elements of the P–12 elementary and secondary education sector, but we do not have to accept the premise that educational systems are all and musical content is nothing. The most powerful and important thing about music is music, not the procedures through which it finds presence in school or other educational settings. The idea being discussed here is not one of giving up, but rather of finding or creating alternatives.

To be positive means keeping what we are doing—teaching music—at a higher level of priority than the systems through which we are delivering instruction. It means keeping our public presentations about what we do centered in musical content. It means keeping our content as the central reference point as we engage systems-dominated discussions, debates, or situations. It means never accepting the notion that use of a particular process or system is the indicator of success.

A Vast Apparatus to Manipulate Opinion

For over one hundred years, the ever-increasing availability of mass communications has produced ever-increasing sophistication in the marketing of ideas, services, and products. We are all more aware of spin than we used to be, and we are certainly aware of the manipulative character of much advertising. However, are we thinking significantly enough about how opinions affecting P–12 education in music are formed? It is not unusual to participate in meetings about the future of music education and hear people reflect on what some group believes about music study as though that group reached its belief by itself through careful reasoning applied to a set of facts. This almost never the case. In the education and arts policy arenas, vast sums of money and other resources are poured into the manipulation of opinion. Even more advertising dollars are poured into the marketing of various youth cultures. The general public is a target, but so are decision makers at all levels. There are many ways to create conditions favorable to almost any policy, at least for a time.

Curriculum-based, specialist-led music education in the schools has been under attack from many opinion-creating forces for many years, some of these forces are obvious, some are not. This is a major reason why any or all rationales for music education in the public schools do not result in overwhelming public support. An example: for almost thirty years, massive arts advocacy resources have been used to advance the idea that the primary rationale for supporting the arts is to produce economic development. This rationale essentially says that arts education is of little consequence unless it is oriented to producing some kind of spending that contributes to overall economic well-being. In this formulation, the arts are not first a body of knowledge and skills to be learned or even sources of pleasurable experiences, but rather an economic force. This message seems pragmatic, but helping economic development become *the* rationale for the arts means promoting the view that music and music study have no rationale on their own terms, no anchor in any specific purpose except economic growth. The economic development argument is just an example, just one of the many opinion-making forces that influence the decision-making context. Most of these forces are not promoting the cause of substantive music study. This is a critical reality.

To be positive, the field must lead by never ceasing to try to convince the public and decision makers of its value on terms that are centered in music and music teaching themselves—music first, then the relationships to other things. It is hard to be positive and successful when your subject is always to be

secondary to everyone else’s agenda. If those concerned about P–12 music teaching cannot control the vast apparatuses that manipulate opinion (and fundamentally, they cannot) they can at least be aware that such apparatuses exist, note when they are in use, and make decisions based on what they think should be done for music study. It is hard to move public opinion to the value of music study if we regularly abandon what we believe and want to do based on our impression that by embracing other agendas, approaches, or images, we will produce a positive reaction in others and lead them to support us temporarily, or at least leave us alone.

In summary, to be positive, we must ground our public relations approaches in strong principles and great teaching and learning centered on music. This provides us with the means for responding to other ideas on the basis of what we believe in and what we know we need to do for P–12 music study. Otherwise, we can be working hard, trying to connect to the buzz of the moment, but in fact, undermining public understanding of what we do and why it is important. This approach—centering on music—enables us better than any other to address disparities, work in parallel, and create specific promotional messages for specific audiences that have a chance of making our case.

Characteristics of a “Basic” Discipline in Elementary and Secondary Education

We hear constantly that music and the other arts are basic subjects, along with English, math, and science. Most of us have said this ourselves. However, in most cases, there is a vast difference between the way music is regarded and treated and the way the traditional basics are regarded and treated, particularly in public education. Below, we have suggested fifteen observable characteristics that indicate whether or not a subject is truly being regarded and treated as a basic, irrespective of whether or not it is designated as a basic.

1. The discipline has a rationale for curricular presence in terms of itself. When its name is mentioned, nothing else needs to be said.
2. The discipline is taught the way the discipline works. The fundamental operations, vocabularies, and ideas necessary to do work in the discipline are the first educational goals.
3. Applications of, and connections from the discipline to other areas of study are not substituted for or conflated with the discipline itself.
4. Experiencing the effects or operations of the discipline is not substituted for the need to acquire knowledge and skills in the discipline. For example, the law is based on words and technicalities of language. However, no one suggests substituting visits to a court proceeding for the study of English.
5. Truly advanced work in the field is widely understood as being beyond the capability of the typical elementary and secondary student. Work in the elementary and secondary years is considered a foundation for advanced applications. For example, there are no projects asserting that 8th graders can perform neurosurgery.
6. Evaluations of competence in the discipline are on the basis of knowledge and skills acquisition, not on feelings or participation.
7. The discipline is taught seriously over many years to all students irrespective of their talent or interest. Significant curricular time is provided automatically.
8. It is understood that methods of teaching and delivery systems and processes are not the content of the discipline, but rather means for developing knowledge and skills in that content.

9. The teacher is expected to have in-depth expertise and significant ability to perform in and apply the discipline. This expertise is developed through several years of advanced study.
10. The cultural sources of disciplinary content are secondary to and eclipsed by the content itself.
11. The educational intent at each level is to move students beyond where they are; not confirm them in their comfort with what they already know.
12. The result of study in the discipline is intended to enable study or work at a higher level, not just leave a pleasant memory.
13. Experiences, studies, and goals in other disciplines are promoted for their ability to teach the basic discipline.
14. It is understood that mastery of the rudiments of the discipline and acquisition of basic knowledge and skills is the primary enabler of substantive connections between the discipline and all else.
15. Real goals for knowledge and skills acquisition in the discipline are far more prominent than idealistic goals for use of the discipline.

The discipline of mathematics meets all of these criteria. Unfortunately, in many circumstances, and for many people, music and proposals about music education meet few of these criteria. To the extent any or all of these characteristics are abandoned in music and arts education policy discussions and in educational programs, to that same extent, speakers or proponents or decision makers are confirming that music and the other arts disciplines are not basic, all rhetoric to the contrary.

A hard fact confronts us: music is often designated a basic but often not treated like one, even by many who claim to support the presence or study of music in schools. To be positive, those concerned about P–12 music teaching and learning must confront the meaning of this reality, and find courses of action that are reasonable given the resources that are available.

Here are some questions that might be useful in such considerations locally, regionally, or nationally:

1. What do we do about two facts: (a) many proposals concerning inclusion of music and the other arts in P–12 education do not treat the arts disciplines as though they were basics, and (b) many of these proposals come from others in the arts community? How do these particular realities affect our ability to be positive? Are there conceptual and organizational ways around these problems in our situation?
2. In terms of general education, should music always be a basic on the same terms as the basics that are treated as basics? In our local situation, for example, what are the chances of delivering music study to all P–12 students as though music were a basic? To some students? To any students? What does the answer tell us about what we should do today, and how we should plan for the future?
3. What are the potential short- and long-term effects of arguing that music is a basic while supporting approaches to music study or participating in partnerships that do not treat music as though it were a basic?
4. To the extent that music is not considered as a basic in the same terms as math, for example, but considered basic on different terms, what are those different terms? To what extent is there consensus

about those terms in each local situation? To what extent are musician teachers necessary to lead the type of instruction required or implied by the terms and characteristics chosen?

5. In some circumstances, would it be wise to minimize or abandon the term ‘basic’ and just focus on the value of music study itself? When is it better to say, “An educated person knows music” rather than “Music is basic”?

Survival and Health

For the human body, the distinction between survival and health is fundamentally clear. There is a strong relationship, but one is not the same as the other. When the terms are used beyond biology, confusion and conflation are common. It is natural for a field and the professionals within it to seek improvement. Searches for improvement often produce criticism about the present, as though the present is the enemy of the future. If care is not taken, messages associated with efforts to improve health can be transformed into inaccurate messages about survival. There are many dangers here. Among them is the continuous creation of unfounded negatives. Avoiding danger begins with making clear distinctions among issues of survival, issues of health, and the degree to which issues of health have an impact on survival. Thoughtful policy analysis is critical because it can produce reasonable valuations for losses and gains. When every setback is treated as a survival issue and presented in those terms, the cumulative effect is a pernicious image of failure and decline irrespective of the facts.

What *are* the survival issues for the field of P–12 music education, broadly conceived? What are the true make-or-break variables? These may be formulated in various ways, but here are several things that the field must have in order to exist.

1. There must be a definition of content and purpose sufficient to distinguish P–12 music study from P–12 study in other fields. We must answer the question, “What is unique about what we do and the content for which we are responsible?”
2. A sufficient number of policymakers and/or the public must believe in the work of the field. For these people, we must answer the question, “Why are our content and the unique things we do worthwhile?”
3. There must be a group of professionals capable of practicing effectively in the field and advancing it. These individuals must be able to answer questions one and two above as a preface to the question, “What should I/we be doing in this field?”
4. There must be a body of people who prepare new professionals. In addition to answering the first three questions above, they must answer the questions, “What do future professionals in this field need to know and be able to do?” and “What of this is most important to teach in the time available?”
5. There must be students able and willing to learn.
6. There must be basic resources: curriculum, time, materials, and facilities, for example.

Take any one of these things away for an appreciable period of time, and the survival of P–12 education in music is threatened. This is true at every level, from the private studio to the single school to the nation as a whole. By itself, the list reveals little that is not already understood, but these points should be used more regularly in policy analysis to consider statements, ideas, decisions, and projections about music and music study. For example, the loss of any one entity, whether it be an arts council, a university teacher preparation program, a particular philanthropic effort, programs in a school district, and so forth, tragic as

it may be, is not a survival issue for P–12 music study in general. This truth is not cruel, but rather, enabling.

Over the years, music teachers and their organizations have seen local, state-wide, and even national policies evolve that strike at one or more of the six survival variables identified above. Yet, although there have been and remain many local tragedies and disappointments, overall, P–12 education in music has survived and shows every indication of continuing to do so. In policy terms, survival elements are those that cannot be lost or traded away under any circumstances. This is why analyses of ramifications are so essential as ideas are put forward about P–12 education in music and its future. Proposals to improve the field that attack or weaken these strategic necessities are not worth following. Partnerships that do not protect the survival points are questionable and perhaps dangerous. When internal yearnings for improvement are reflected in actions and rhetoric that corrode the strategic base, they need shunting into more productive channels.

Of course, the health of the field is linked to its survival. But for purposes of seeking time-specific situation analyses as the basis for developing plans and projections, health-of-the-field concerns are primarily centered on issues of quality and quantity, and on choices about such issues as curriculum balances and methodology. Questions about any one of these issues can be posed in terms of health or in terms of survival. For example, efforts to improve quality can be presented either as an opportunity to build on gains already achieved through the hard work of professionals, or it can be presented as an attempt to correct failures caused by professionals. The first strengthens the conditions for survival, the second weakens them, particularly to the extent that the second supports arguments that music can be taught by those unprepared or barely prepared in the content of the field. Another example: issues of quantity can be discussed either in terms of a larger rationale or as the primary rationale. An illustration is (a) using low enrollment numbers in music education to justify policies that provide more varied opportunities for students to gain knowledge and skills in this unique field of study, or (b) using low enrollment statistics as an indication of popularity and market share and thus as a justification for reducing or closing programs.

Issues of survival and health are not and cannot be influenced or decided by music teachers alone. Clearly, P–12 music study in all its forms interacts with other fields and their interests, both within and beyond the arts and education. The intensity and complexity of these interactions make it even more important to understand and act in recognition of the six fundamental survival issues. Such an approach is essential for establishing a reasonable basis for cooperation, even though establishing and articulating this basis will bring charges of setting up barriers or failing to cooperate. But attention to survival and health means entering into all relationships and considering all ideas by asking several strategic policy questions:

1. Will the action we are contemplating cause us to diminish or deny the uniqueness of our field, that is, what music can do that no other field can do?
2. Will it harm understanding of what we do and its importance among those who make fundamental decisions about our survival, including parents and students?
3. Will it diminish understanding of the need for professional musician teachers to conduct the work of our field?
4. Will it damage our ability to recruit, develop, and support future professionals?
5. Will it decrease the number of students we are able to serve with substantive, sequential music study?
6. Will it diminish the fundamental resources we must have in order to teach?

These questions have been posed in the negative because the purpose of asking them is to prevent decisions that have negative effects. If, in reviewing a past or potential decision, the answer is “no” to the questions above, or “no, just the opposite,” then the decision is not touching a survival issue.

To be positive, it is essential to be able to separate issues of survival and health. A field cannot be positive about itself if every issue, challenge, or proposal is presented in terms of survival no matter what the scale or the projected result. It cannot be positive about itself if its internal dialog about improvement is characterized by rejection of past achievements and justifications of every change proposal are made by asserting that everything being done presently is a failure.

The positive truth is that teaching and learning music will continue in some form irrespective of what happens to specific programs of instruction no matter where they are housed. There are sufficient numbers of individuals who want to learn music themselves or whose parents want them to learn music for music instruction to be provided. Musician teachers will find a way. Creating a positive approach for P–12 education in music means keeping setbacks in proportion. Doing so increases the possibility of protecting the health of the system. Constant articulation of every problem in terms of field-wide survival produces an image of weakness and ineffectiveness that, indeed, can be dangerous to the survival of specific programs and to the health of the enterprise as a whole.

To be positive, it is critical to watch the rhetoric we use to describe and address the problems we face from time to time. It is also critical to understand clearly what the survival conditions are so that proposals, ideas, and conditions can be tested against them. Then, strategic issues can be identified and addressed in ways that (1) nurture efforts to improve numbers served, (2) respect disparities and encourage parallel efforts among dedicated musician teachers, (3) deal effectively with systems, and (4) produce greater public understanding of how music *is* basic.

Challenges for Music Schools and Departments in Higher Education

Schools and departments of music in higher education constitute the greatest concentration of resources in the nation for addressing issues of music study at the P–12 level. Even so, these schools and departments do not have control over what happens in general public and private P–12 education. In many cases, they do not even have significant influence. There are too many players, too many agendas, too many systems, and too many conflicting purposes for music programs in higher education to exert influence commensurate with the knowledge, skills, and experiences they have. It is not positive to be in a situation where you have the most overall capability and capacity, but little ability to use that capability and capacity. In the vast majority of cases, this frustration is primarily associated with music teaching in the public schools even though there is a direct line from the content and processes indigenous to schools and departments of music and the work of private teachers and those who teach either in strong, music-centered elementary and secondary school programs or in community education schools. The real contrast is between places where musician teachers are essentially in charge of music study and places where they are not, or where their influence on fundamental decisions is minimal.

There is only so much time and only so many resources. Each music unit makes a specific decision by design or by default about what contribution it wishes to make to P–12 music study. Since it is impossible to do everything, choices must be made. The disparities are too great to assume that choices can be made in any one institution to serve every agenda for P–12 music study equally.

Given all the realities, if individuals in schools and departments find it difficult to be as positive as they would like about the future of P–12 music study, it is important to determine the sources of the negativism. If part of the answer is feelings of futility, what can be done that will change those feelings? What

can be done to produce a positive climate for P–12 music study throughout each collegiate school or department based on positions and programs of work that are consistent with the goals and objectives of that school or department as a whole and its teacher preparation programs in particular?

Here is a set of additional questions that might help determine the specific features of a positive program. The term ‘your’ refers both to you, yourself, and to you as part of your school or department.

1. What would your teacher education program(s) look like if you could design it/them without reference to any external influences except your perceptions and that of our field about what teachers need to know and be able to do to be effective? If applicable, what are your answers for students preparing to teach, where being a credible musician is important, and for students preparing to teach where being a credible musician is not important or not possible? To what extent is/are the program(s) you would offer consistent with externally imposed requirements that you must meet? To what extent would you be more positive about the future of P–12 music study if you could offer the music teacher preparation program(s) that you thought would be most effective? What would happen if you offered the program(s) you wanted to offer instead of the one(s) that you are or feel forced to offer?
2. What messages would you use to promote P–12 music study if you did not consider what you thought other people might want to hear you say? How consistent is what you want to say with what you feel that you must say or ought to say? Would you be more positive about the future if you could deliver the messages that you wanted to deliver, rather than those that you think you must deliver in order to gain acceptance or retain some sort of justification for what you are doing? If applicable, what would happen if you started saying what you want to say instead of what you think others want to hear?
3. If your school or department were brand new, what would you think it should do in your community to provide and/or support P–12 music study? If you could do anything in the P–12 arena that you would like to do, what would it be? Would you feel more positive about P–12 music education if you were doing what you would like to do rather than what you are doing now?
4. What musical content do you think is most worthy of attention, irrespective of what others tell you that you should think about the value of various musics? To what extent would you feel more positive about music education if there were greater agreement with your point of view, or at least more respect for it? Would you be more positive if you could make content choices without worrying about the reactions of others?
5. What is your vision for the general musical literacy of your community? What appears the most reasonable and productive way to realize this vision? To what extent could you be more positive about the future of P–12 music study if you could see steady progress toward realization of this vision? If you could stick with a set of goals and a program of evolving work with others in the P–12 arena for 25 years, what would that program look like? Would you feel more positive about the future of education in P–12 music if you felt that a program could be sustained long enough to have the prospect of success? Would you be more positive if there were not constant calls and mandates for change?
6. What opportunities, challenges, and risks are involved in taking a hard look at the possibilities of creating an approach to support P–12 music study that is focused on what you and your faculty think is right for your institution and local situation now?

Policy Positions of NASM

NASM and its member institutions have worked for eight decades to advance the cause of substantive music study for children and youth. Its policy is to continue this effort. With regard to standards for music teacher preparation, the Association has always focused on function to be served rather than methods to be employed. In its accreditation role, it has been and remains open to experimental programs as long as they have reasonable objectives, the structure and resources to meet their objectives, and program titles consistent with content. For NASM, the fact that teaching and learning is occurring comes before the specifics of location or approach. Music study for the P–12 age group is too important to let a particular set of adverse conditions in one or more locations be the cause of general disillusionment. Multiple approaches have long been in evidence under the frameworks of NASM standards. Situations are so diverse that the wise course seems to be to encourage local initiative, especially with regard to efforts that collegiate-level schools and departments can undertake or expand alone or by working with others. NASM continues to encourage and support creativity. There are urgent needs to address the public school music teacher shortage and to serve more students in the P–12 age group. NASM will continue to work with its members and with other organizations to meet these needs. But NASM will also continue to seek deep, strategic analysis as the basis for national and local action. There is no single way forward, no grand program, but rather the need to support and increase the number of local efforts that, though disparate, are effective in leading P–12 students to musical competency and fluency. The resources we have individually and collectively are large. To use them positively, we must not let anything distract us from our mission.

This paper was prepared by Samuel Hope, Executive Director, at the request of the NASM Executive Committee. It does not necessarily reflect the personal opinions of the principal writer or other members of the NASM Executive Committee. The section “Characteristics of a ‘Basic’ Discipline” is based on a portion of a talk by the principal writer at the DaVinci Institute of Oklahoma City in May 2002. The section “Survival and Health” is adapted from a text of the same title in “Art Education in a World of Cross Purposes,” *Handbook of Research and Policy in Art Education*, Elliot W. Eisner and Michael D. Day, Editors, National Art Education Association and Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publications, 2004.