NASM

FAEM Brochures

Ideas, Decisions, and Music Study
Ideas, Decisions, and Music Study
I support the inclusion of a series on the
foundation for the Advancement of
Education in the United States.

Publications in this series
should focus on encouraging
research and information
on policy matters that
impact education in the
United States.
Ideas, Decisions, and Music Study

Foundation for the Advancement of Education in Music
Music is a central part of basic education, because musical achievement resolves the conflict between order and reason on the one hand and spirit and emotion on the other. It represents a synthesis where order and reason heighten both spirit and emotion. It constitutes one of the highest pleasures mankind has produced in its ceaseless quest for civilization. It has power to shape individuals and societies.
Every day, decisions are made about music study. Some are favorable, others are not; some are made by individuals, others by groups. Unfortunately, many decisions affecting music study are made under circumstances in which the best interests of music are far from the primary concern. For this reason if no other, we in the music community who hope to promote the study of music must understand more about the nature of decision making. Our strategies must be as varied as the people involved and reflect respect both for music as a discipline and for work as a means to individual fulfillment. The substance of our messages, not just the means for conveying them, must be foremost in our thinking.
IDEAS, DECISIONS, AND MUSIC STUDY

A FOUNDATION IN IDEAS

Personal decisions are the foundation of all decision making. But in any large, structured society, the decisions that influence policies for music, education, and cultural development are usually grounded in group action. These groups may be public or private and, like individuals, may be influenced by any number of factors, including prevailing ideas and values, economic conditions, demographic changes, and political expediency. Legislation, administrative action, advertising, and direct funding are among the means often employed to shape the decision-making process and to have an impact on our social, cultural, economic, political, and educational environments.

But those who try to influence decision making without anchoring their efforts in the world of ideas are doomed to fail. Almost every policy decision represents an exercise of values based upon ideas, many of which lack empirical proof. Proof is not the issue; acceptance is. To change an individual’s mind in favor of music study, his or her ideas about its purpose and benefits must be challenged. Many people, for example, including many who make educational policy decisions, believe that music study is “nice” but not basic. Casual experience alone is not enough to change such attitudes. Our rebuttal must be sustained, compelling, and intellectually secure.

The complexity of decision making can lead any of us who care about the future of music study in one of two directions. The first is to decide that these matters are so complex that no amount of effort on our part will be enough to produce sound, workable educational policies. The second is to recognize that our success in promoting the study of music depends on understanding these matters so thoroughly that we can influence how resources are used. Is there any doubt as to which course committed musicians, teachers, and other citizens should choose?

THE COMPETITION FOR ATTENTION

American society is freighted with messages designed to influence individuals and groups. Many bypass reason, relying on appeals to guilt, greed,
The competition for attention that we face in trying to promote music study is especially intense in our demographically fragmented, media-saturated society. Consider message repetition alone: A Fortune 500 corporation can easily spend tens of millions of dollars a year on advertising just to keep the name of one product before the public. If the music community had similar resources, music study would be more secure. But such resources are unavailable and other means must be employed to influence decision making. Our challenge is to learn how to accomplish this effectively.

Consider a current situation. Many ideas in the education reform movement have been generated by policy analysts and theoreticians who are virtually unknown to the general public. Their work has been accepted by key individuals and groups who have the power to make or change educational policies and to garner public attention. Yet much of the music community's advocacy is conducted as though these policy-development relationships did not exist. Significant emphasis is given to mobilizing after legislation has been drafted; too little is devoted to shaping the climate from which legislation springs. This failure is costly. Such an approach emphasizes the reactive protection of interests rather than early advancement of strong ideas and principles to which we can subscribe as a community.

Misplaced faith in public opinion polls represents another challenge to developing sound strategies in support of music study. Polls tell decision makers where those polled stand, not whether that stand is the right place to be, now or in the future. True leadership is accomplished not by following polls, but by creating and encouraging ideas and values of such force that they cannot be ignored. Anyone hoping to promote music study must develop and present such ideas and values if they are to influence those who decide what constitutes a strong general education and how resources will be expended. To do otherwise is to be always on the defensive.

EXPERTISE AND ACTION

Individuals associate with organizations and institutions whose ideas and values are consistent with their own. For many, ideas and values are often formed in the crucible of experience and may not reflect formal study.
Because no one can be an expert in everything, most people in positions to make policy decisions rely on others whom they trust to guide them. They seek both expertise and assurance that their own views are tenable.

Tremendous energy is expended in American society creating images of expertise and trust, particularly as these translate into political, social, or economic power. Over the last twenty-five years, expertise in arts education has been claimed by a wide variety of public and private philanthropies, arts councils, and advocacy organizations. Many of these groups have been organized primarily to influence arts support at local, state, regional, and federal levels. This is in contrast to decades-old organizations of musicians and music teachers who banded together in the cause of professional development and program advancement. We must recognize that if expertise is equated with anything other than professional ability, music and music study lose position to other priorities. Fashion, personality cults, and unilateral pursuit of credit for patronage can come at the expense of effectiveness.

Assuming that we have the necessary expertise in the music community to convey our messages, and assuming that our strategies are founded on strong ideas and values, where should we put our efforts—at the national, state, or local level? The answer is difficult and always evolving, but one thing is clear: Individual commitment and local solidarity are instrumental in preserving broad opportunities for music study worthy of the name. Nationally promoted ideas and programs favorable to music study can only reinforce local commitment, not create it. Where local commitment and solidarity have eroded or are missing altogether, music study looks ornamental and expensive. Nationally promoted programs that favor passive experience over study then become attractive because the image of music in education is provided but at reduced cost. Unfortunately, it is American students and American culture that are short-changed.

**WHAT MUST BE DONE**

First, the music community must develop powerful ideas about music study that command attention and, when actively promoted, that reinforce the distinction between serious programs of study and those that are superficial. Second, we must master the means of influencing policy based on in-depth analysis and sophisticated strategy. Without these capabilities, plans to reach educational decision makers are likely to be random, uncoordinated, reactive, and ineffective.
Both the "what" and "how" - the content and process of promoting music study - are essential. The music community and its committed supporters must pursue this double initiative with intensity, intellectual rigor, and unshakable determination.

Questions for us to consider as we develop our strategies include the following:

- What are some of the most important "sectors of influence" that affect decisions about music study - for example, parents, policy-development networks, the media, and so forth?
- How do ideas flow into and out of these sectors of influence? To whom do these sectors of influence turn for expertise at the local, state, regional, and national levels?
- Which sectors need what kinds of attention? How should basic messages about music study be tailored to reach these various sectors effectively?
- Can the music community influence policy decisions across a broad front? What should be the scope of such an effort given the resources available? How can we best balance short-term and long-term objectives?
- What kinds of coordination and collaboration are natural in the music community as we attempt to influence decision making at various levels? How can other alliances be created, and how long will that take? What kinds of coordination and collaboration are too difficult to be attempted?

Both the "what" and "how" - the content and process of promoting music study - are essential. The music community and its committed supporters must pursue this double initiative with intensity, intellectual rigor, and unshakable determination. No one else, after all, will do this for us. The alternative is unacceptable: to leave the health and scope of music study to chance or, more correctly, to the random actions of isolated individuals. The challenge before us is to maintain a higher level of thought and work about our promotional efforts, a deeper understanding of the nature of decision making, and a more durable commitment to the best artistic, educational, and cultural values. Can the music community rise to this challenge on its own behalf?
The Foundation

• • • •

• A.

•

Future

ion for the

Advancement

of Education in

Music.

This organization was established to fulfill

its primary purpose: to assist the

music industry in its efforts
to broaden public understand-

ing, its importance in music-education which

involves the training of basic

knowledge and skills in both

music and writing settings.

Recognizing that many

music organizations and

educational institutions are

already engaged in

innovations that

further music study, the

Foundation works to provide a

framework of ideas and infor-
mation as a basis on which

long-term promotional plan-
ning and action may be formu-

lated. The program of the

Foundation focuses primarily

on analysis, research, and the

development of recommendations concerning policy issue,

in rounding the promotion of

music study. In this work, the

Foundation seeks to:

• Maintain a forum among organizations and industries

concerned with music study

whereby analyses and recommenda-
tions about policy issues

can be broadly shared and
discussed, and individuals and

groups within the music

community

• Provide ideas and assistance in
criticizing the progress of

music study to music admin-

istrators for use in their ongoing

promotion programs, long-

range strategic planning, and

with their memberships. The

Foundation’s role is non-

competitive in non-directive

The Foundation also distributes

targeted promotional materi-

als directed to a very vari-

able audience that describes

connections between the study of

music and the fullest develop-

ment of full potential.

The Foundation is funded

by the contributions of organi-

zations, companies, educational

institutions, and individual

professionals who are con-

cerned with music study. The

Foundation and its mem-

bership have three objectives:

• To assure that every individual

has an opportunity to study

music,

• To increase the time devoted to

teaching and learning in music,

• To enhance the quality of music

studies

The Foundation gratefully

acknowledges the contribu-
tions of volunteers.

Participants in the Foundation

provided funding and

valuable advice throughout the

course of this project.

Further information about the

Foundation or its particip-

ants is:

Post Office Box 3789

Reston, Virginia 20190

703.860.1001

Office:

Foundation