



NASM

FAEM Brochures

Ideas, Policy, and Education in Music

*I*DEAS, POLICY, AND EDUCATION
IN MUSIC



FOUNDATION FOR
THE ADVANCEMENT
OF EDUCATION
IN MUSIC

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*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.*

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

*I*N SOME RESPECTS, THE VALUE OF MUSIC IN AMERICAN SOCIETY IS QUITE CLEAR. BILLIONS OF DOLLARS ARE SPENT ANNUALLY IN THE PURCHASE OF MUSIC PRODUCTS AND SERVICES IN ALMOST EVERY SECTOR OF OUR ECONOMY. FOR MILLIONS OF INDIVIDUALS, MUSIC PLAYS A CENTRAL ROLE IN THEIR DAILY LIVES.

YET WHILE MUSIC IS HIGHLY VALUED IN GENERAL, IT IS SIGNIFICANTLY UNDERVALUED IN EDUCATION. AS POLLS REPEATEDLY SHOW, PUBLIC AFFIRMATION OF MUSIC (AND THE OTHER ARTS) DOES NOT TRANSLATE INTO ACCEPTANCE OF MUSIC AS A BASIC SUBJECT. IN FACT, MUSIC RANKS NEAR THE BOTTOM IN EDUCATIONAL PRIORITIES WHEN MATCHED AGAINST OTHER DISCIPLINES. THIS BROCHURE CONSIDERS WHY THIS SITUATION HAS COME ABOUT. IT EXPLORES MANY OF THE IDEAS THAT SHAPE OUR MUSIC EDUCATION POLICIES, AND CONSIDERS WHAT CAN BE DONE TO CREATE CHANGE FOR THE BETTER.

IDEAS, POLICY, AND EDUCATION IN MUSIC

How can more people be brought to value music in educational terms? Many answers have been proposed over the years; none have produced a fundamental change in the public's attitude. Music teachers, music organizations, and the music industry have not effectively argued the case for music study beyond its value in helping students attain either technical or social skills. This should not be read as an indictment against our best efforts to date. It does suggest, however, that for all the excellence of music teaching in the United States, too many people—including those with high levels of education and even a fondness for music—do not understand why music study is basic. Apparently, convincing more people of the worth of studying music is different from promoting its availability and enjoyment.

The distinction between valuing music in educational terms and appreciating music in general is critical when deciding how to promote music study. Too often, the approach, style, and content of promotional activity obscures the educational message. Emphasizing music as fun and recreation, for example, can return hauntingly and destructively when policy makers “get serious” about educational priorities or when parents decide whether or not to pay for private lessons. The challenge is to build on the public's positive attitude toward music in general in ways that strengthen the case for strong, sequential programs of music study in particular. Making distinctions, clarifying differences, and promoting the sturdiest values related to music seems the most productive path.

This task is complex. The role of music in leisure and entertainment must be recognized and supported, for example, while at the same time we assert that music merits being studied with as much sense of purpose as science, mathematics, history, English, or foreign languages. To imply that music is not as challenging or important as these fields is to undermine any argument that music study deserves substantial investments of time and money.

Would the problem be solved if everyone agreed, in principle, that music is basic to education? Unfortunately, no. While this precept is the

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1. **What would happen if this position were the prevailing influence on public and private decisions about music study? What would be the effect on content of music instruction, availability of sequential music study, choice of settings for music study, promotion of music study, economic conditions in the music-teaching community, and musical culture.**
2. **In what basic ideas is the position grounded? What are its philosophical, political, social, and historical origins?**
3. **Who are the position's proponents and what is their relative power—their ability to convince other people to follow them?**
4. **What are possible counter-arguments and counter-strategies?**
5. **What changes or conditions—political, technological, intellectual, etc.—could either enhance or decrease the influence of this position?**

cornerstone of efforts to strengthen the position of music study, the wide range of ideas about the *purpose* of education in music both enriches and complicates the debate. These ideas are often expressed through linguistic shorthand that fails to clarify which of any number of positions is being advocated. Thus, an individual with a “moderate” view of competition in music study may unknowingly support a position quite contrary to his or her own, simply because the word “competition” conveys other meanings to other people.

In order to consider this condition more carefully, a list of ideas is presented below that figure prominently in policy discussions about elementary and secondary education in music. This list has been annotated to show the three most commonly held positions for each idea—expressed here as “*Position A*,” “*Position B*,” and “*Position C*.” Even if the reader does not agree with every characterization, a review should demonstrate that the music community needs the deepest thinking and the most careful structuring of its messages and actions if it is to move more people to value music in educational terms.

I D E A S

Before beginning, we should establish what the music-teaching community generally regards as characteristic of a strong education in music.

Active work is the foundation of musical literacy and fluency. Performing, composing, listening, and basic musicianship studies are all considered central to the development of the musical mind, although the emphasis on each will vary from one educational situation to the next. Knowledge of the history of music is a worthwhile goal, but not at the sacrifice of actually making music itself. Implicit in these attitudes is the belief that the ancillary benefits of music study, including understanding its relationship to other disciplines, are best realized and appreciated when music is first learned as a discrete discipline.

Each of the twenty-seven positions characterized below has a potentially different impact on the music-teaching community. Putting each position to the test of certain questions helps to clarify what that impact might be:

- I. What would happen if this position were *the* prevailing influence on public and private decisions about music study? What would be the effect on:
 - Content of music instruction

- Availability of sequential music study
 - Choice of settings for music study
 - Promotion of music study
 - Economic conditions in the music-teaching community
 - Musical culture
2. In what basic ideas is the position grounded? What are its philosophical, political, social, and historical origins?
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 4. What are possible counter-arguments and counter-strategies?
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ONE: CREATIVITY AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Position A: The primary purpose of all arts education is to provide individuals with the joy of their own creative expression and response. Disciplined learning of facts and skills is incompatible with this objective; in fact, such learning often destroys creativity and joy in aesthetic activities. Music should be a relief from the rigors of other lessons.

Position B: Both an enhanced understanding of creativity and positive personal development are ancillary benefits of music study. By developing musical knowledge and skills, students are able to explore and understand the nature of creativity as it relates to personal expression and as a driving force in the development of artistic communication.

Position C: Creativity and personal development are not matters that should overly concern music teachers because creativity is essentially hereditary and personal development is an individual responsibility. The purpose of education in music (as in anything else) is to give each student the strongest set of intellectual and physical tools, which can then be applied to personal development and creative activities as the student matures in music and other disciplines.

TWO: EXPERIENCING PROFESSIONAL ARTISTRY

Position A: The experience of professional performance offers students the best fundamental education and the best introduction to the excitement and mystery of music. The artistic personality is usually attractive to the K-12 age group, and thus the artist is the preferred teacher and introducer to his or her

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craft. Experience, not study, is what captivates students and creates incentives to be music consumers. When regular music instruction is not available, exposure can be a valuable substitute.

Position B: The experience of professional performance is an important element in regular music study. Professional performance both stimulates and confirms learning and inspires continued effort. The ratio of study to experience will vary according to the individual and the location, but each augments the other, in whatever measure.

Position C: Exposure to professional artistry is widely available in the market and is not a responsibility of the formal teaching process. Artists-in-school programs have done more harm than good by highlighting and promoting the entertainment aspects of art rather than educational content. Schools and private lessons are for the acquisition of knowledge and skills, not for the provision of celebrity role models.

THREE: ENTERTAINMENT

Position A: All music is entertainment. Different kinds of music simply provide different experiences for people with varying backgrounds and tastes. Quality is purely a matter of personal taste.

Position B: All music, from the simplest folk song to the most complex orchestral piece, has the power to be entertaining. However, a large body of music goes far beyond entertainment. A serious education in music not only recognizes music's powers to create immediate appeal but also enables students to broaden and deepen their knowledge of various repertoires and to become discriminating on the basis of quality.

Position C: Music associated primarily with entertainment has little or no value in an educational setting. To bring such music into education, particularly youth-culture music, is to destroy the basis for teaching music as an art. Popular culture needs no support from education; music as art, on the other hand, cannot survive without an educational foundation.

FOUR: COMPETITION

Position A: Competition is the primary driving force in music study. It creates support from parents and others who react positively to "winning." Since most music students will not be professional musicians, and since competition is an important element in life and livelihood, total immersion in musical competition both prepares students for life and presents an educational agenda that

participants, supporters, and policy makers can understand.

Position B: Competition is a valuable tool for intensifying educational activities and for creating energy, excitement, and a sense of purpose among students. It should be used but with great care.

Position C: Competition should be severely curtailed or banned altogether in settings where music study is addressed to the general public. Competition is particularly dangerous when it places winning ahead of the continual acquisition of musical knowledge, skills, and repertoires.

FIVE: TECHNOLOGY AND TECHNIQUE

Position A: Technology and technique are not just part of the future; they *are* the future. Music and music study should be transformed as quickly as possible to take advantage of new technological developments and the public faith in technology. Computerization of K-12 music instruction is the most urgent priority. Students will be attracted in droves, and educational decision makers will be convinced of music's importance.

Position B: Technology and technique are central aspects of music and music study, but they are not everything. Music and music teaching should use technology and technique as means to artistic and educational ends, and a good education in music should provide insights into their limits as well as their importance. These principles should be explained to policy makers.

Position C: Music and music study are not fundamentally technical, but artistic and intellectual, being human and not machine-centered. Music and the other arts are important antidotes in a technological world. To lose this distinction is to lose one of the most powerful appeals of music study and the basis for supporting its presence in educational settings.

SIX: THE HUMANITIES

Position A: For most students, music should be studied as a humanities discipline, with an emphasis on appreciation. All arts should be taught as part of general intellectual and cultural history, and both performance and musicianship – useful only for the talented – should be de-emphasized in the music portion of the curriculum.

Position B: It is valuable to study music from the perspective of the humanities, particularly when such historical and theoretical study is either concurrent with, or based on, the acquisition of musical knowledge and skills. As a subject with a long intellectual tradition, music has many connections

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to other humanities disciplines; the history of ideas in particular has been affected by musical developments. However, there are important distinctions between the arts and the humanities: outcomes and modes of work and inquiry, for example, are quite different. Students should become increasingly aware of these connections and distinctions, the role that the arts and humanities play in the development of culture, and the power of each to enhance our enjoyment and understanding of the world.

Position C: The distinction between the arts and humanities is so great that the gap cannot be bridged in the general education of children and youth. From kindergarten through high school, music study should focus on applied studies in performance and musicianship, which should be developed to a high level. Trying to combine this agenda with any other only undermines both. What's more, support for music study depends, in part, on the evidence of accomplished performances. The humanities connection should be made in general history courses or postponed until the college years.

SEVEN: CULTURAL PLURALISM

Position A: Changing demographics and world conditions demand that equal emphasis be given to the value and viability of all musical cultures. To accomplish this, Western traditions have to be de-emphasized. Western classical, or "high art," music must be placed on a par with the achievements of other cultures, not above them.

Position B: Music study invariably reflects cultural biases, since education in any society emphasizes the dominant culture. However, many trends in the United States and the world underscore the importance of broader knowledge of, and respect for, the musical legacy of other cultures. In the spirit of open inquiry and intellectual curiosity, curricula should be adjusted to address this need, emphasizing cultures that have contributed to the shaping of America.

Position C: The plea for cultural pluralism in music study obscures the distinction between education in music as a discipline and education in the social sciences. To deny, at worst, any hierarchy among works in a culture, much less across cultures, is to destroy the very concept of excellence. The first purpose of public education is to create a common culture within each society as a basis for continued cultural achievement and the civilized conduct of life. Further, cultural pluralism in music education is meaningless when most people have little specific understanding of their own culture and only the vaguest idea of what "culture" means.

EIGHT: MULTIDISCIPLINARY ARTS EDUCATION

Position A: For the general student, all the arts should be taught together in general appreciation courses. Music should be taught in equal proportion to the visual arts, theatre, and dance, at the very least. The goal is an orientation to the arts, and particularly to works of art as artifacts. The connection between appreciation and future patronage is critical and must be maintained.

Position B: Music is one of several fine arts, each of which entails substantially different content, orientation, and technique. Therefore, although the fine arts are related at some levels, the study of any art discipline, including music, should be discrete, particularly in the K-12 years. Multidisciplinary approaches are notorious for masking superficiality under the guise of comprehensiveness.

Position C: Music is, and should be, preeminent among all the arts disciplines studied during the elementary and secondary years. This position has been gained through the initiative and perseverance of the music-teaching community, which must be vigilant if the music study is not to be diminished through the imposition of multidisciplinary arts education.

NINE: POLITICAL ACTION

Position A: A primary purpose of music and other arts disciplines is to support movements that address the great political issues of the day, in a world in which every action is essentially political. Music study is useful to the extent that it orients individuals to the political nature of human experience and raises political consciousness. For example, studies might focus on how artistic endeavor and reward have been driven by the interests of ruling elites. At their best, the arts are a force for political change and a spur to conscience.

Position B: Music study can develop understandings that influence the evolving political positions of individuals. For example, performing with others teaches lessons about leading and following: at times one's part may be dominant and at others subordinate, all in support of a unified achievement. The history of music also presents connections with political ideas and expressions that range over the spectrum of human thought and emotion. These connections deserve attention as part of each student's cultural legacy.

Position C: Art should be as separate as possible from politics, particularly in elementary and secondary education. The purpose of music and other arts

instruction is to build a base of knowledge and skills, and this is difficult enough to achieve. To attempt any political connection is to impinge on a student's freedom to develop individual political positions as he or she grows older. In addition, politics often teaches dissatisfaction and cynicism, which undermines a student's self-confidence and motivation.

THE STAKES

Why is it important for the music-teaching community to be concerned about these ideas and values? How do they bear on the day-to-day business of teaching students, making and selling instruments, managing a music store, or directing a music program?

The answer is that debate on these positions defines the strategic ground on which policy is developed. School board members voting on a school music program, parents deciding about lessons for their children, and music teachers developing the content of their instruction all make decisions on the basis of choices among these various positions. Both public and private music instruction are affected, whether institutionally or individually offered. Any shift among the positions outlined above influences the kinds of music study offered and the extent to which that study is grounded in musical knowledge and skills.

At present, the music-teaching community is neither a vigorous nor a skillful player in the national educational policy debate; others have been far more active in promoting their agendas and often have access to powerful policy makers to do so. As a repository of great expertise and skill, the music-teaching community must become a more forceful presence if it is to preserve and promote music-centered values in the marketplace of ideas.

This is particularly important now because national calls for substantive educational reform, and public concern about the limits of what students know and can do, have turned up the heat under efforts to establish each discipline as an educational priority. Many people are justifiably concerned about the status of reading, mathematics, and science education, for example, and the debate about how to improve education in these subjects is lively and well-publicized. Concern about the status of music study is muted by comparison.

The music-teaching community should be finding ways to present powerful ideas regularly both to policy makers and the general public. For example, the engine of international economic competition may yet

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become the driving force behind education reform. More people need to realize that cultural productivity, the life of individual minds, and the fullest development of our creative potential are tightly intertwined with economic growth and well-being. The other arts are not just decorative desserts that follow the meat and potatoes of economic imperatives.

The professional community concerned with education in music often debates at a disadvantage because its time is primarily consumed with work in the discipline. Very little attention is paid to “big picture” strategic analysis and action. Even if it successfully marshals its considerable resources to respond to a crisis, the field subsequently retreats to its private garden of musical ideas, events, and enterprises, leaving the larger world of ideas and values untended until disaster looms again. Music teachers, the boards and staffs of professional associations, publishers, instrument manufacturers, retailers, and the higher education community are all very busy at their basic tasks. This is as it should be. But they and others concerned with music cannot afford to be unaware of, or inactive in, the broader debate. Less knowledgeable people are always ready to fill any policy vacuum.

Our society expects those who are influential in a field to use the privilege of their success to help advance higher values that serve the community as a whole. Theirs is the responsibility to exercise an active and purposeful leadership that goes beyond immediate personal interests. Such leadership is characterized by strong adherence to viable principles, a desire to learn, openness to new ideas and insights, an ability to formulate the most appropriate and helpful questions, and more concern about accomplishment than credit. Leadership also requires a vision of the common good, a passion for the work at hand, and an ability to negotiate wisely among many different interests and positions in service to a common program of action based on substantive content.

Granted, our society also encourages us to value autonomy, the pursuit of self-interest, and individual competition. But as John Gardner observes in his book *Excellence*, “A pluralism that is not undergirded by some shared values, that reflects no commitment whatever to the commonweal, is pluralism gone berserk. . . . The price of that treasured autonomy and self-preoccupation is that each institution also concern itself with the common good. That is not idealism; it is self-preservation. If the larger system fails, the subsystems fail. . . . The war of the parts against the whole is a hazardous undertaking.”

The music-teaching community must find the interest and the will to formulate, articulate, and press for strong music-centered ideas and positions. The existence of music in society is not itself at stake; music will continue to be valued in a general way by the public.

- These wise words return us to our twenty-seven positions. If wise choices are not made among them, unnecessary and corrosive oppositions develop. Instead of mixtures and balances that support a common cultural advance, entertainment wars against education, creativity against knowledge and skills, social action against music study, technique against art, knowledge through words against knowledge through sound, sight, and movement, process against content, and the ordinary against the excellent. In countering such negative conditions, the following questions seem basic and urgent:
- What content and values should the music-teaching community promote through music study?
 - How should these values and content be expressed as policies and in promotional efforts?
 - How can common ground be established on which to develop implementable strategies in support of music study that influence policy makers and the general public in favor of substance?
 - What strategies will help the music-teaching community participate more fully in policy discussions related to education in music?
 - How can the music-teaching community develop and promote a more widely shared vision of its work, its role, and its values?

To do nothing—to abdicate leadership by treating the world of ideas and policy as unimportant or belonging to others—is to surrender the future of music study. The music-teaching community must find the interest and the will to formulate, articulate, and press for strong music-centered ideas and positions. The existence of music in society is not itself at stake; music will continue to be valued in a general way by the public. What *is* at stake is the scope and depth of our musical culture, and all that education means in terms of ideas, opportunities, individuals, and civilization. These are high stakes indeed.

The Foundation for the Advancement of Education in Music was established to fulfill a single purpose: to assist the music community in its efforts to increase public understanding of the importance of education in music—education which stresses the acquisition of basic knowledge and skills in both public and private settings.

Recognizing that many music organizations and companies are already engaged in programs and campaigns that promote music study, the Foundation works to provide a background of ideas and information as a basis on which long-term promotional planning and action may be formulated. The program of the Foundation focuses primarily on analysis, research, and the development of recommendations concerning policy issues surrounding 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 recommendations about policy issues can be broadly shared and discussed.
- Encourage the development of common ground on policy issues, thus establishing a basis

for increased cooperation and collaboration among groups and individuals in the music community.

- Provide ideas and assistance concerning the promotion of music study to music organizations for use in their ongoing promotional programs, long-range strategic planning, and with their memberships. The Foundation's role is noncompetitive and nondirective in nature.

The Foundation also distributes general promotional materials targeted to a variety of audiences that describe connections between the study of music and the fullest development of human potential.

The Foundation is funded by the contributions of organizations, companies, educational institutions, and individual professionals who are concerned with music study. The Foundation and its members share three objectives:

- To assure that every individual has an opportunity to study music,
- To increase the time devoted to teaching and learning music, and
- To enhance the quality of music instruction.



