

SIDEBAR: MAKING MUSIC WORK FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

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Much has been said about the science that supports the importance of music for learning in general. Research that is reported in popular media continues to raise the general public's expectations of the impact of music in public education. Yet little is being done to support teachers and parents who wish to put research about the positive effects of music into practice at their public schools...

Why are policy-makers not considering cost-effective approaches to bringing comprehensive music programs into our schools?

Some arts educators and researchers argue that the arts should be taught only for their own sake, perhaps only for the talented few, and not for the added value they contribute to math and reading skills of children. Yet most parents and administrators, impatient with philosophic squabbles over the correct rationale for music in schools, have found they cannot justify music's inclusion in schools *without* looking at the benefits of music for the general education of all children.

But why should evidence of music's "extra-musical" effects on academic skills be mutually exclusive to its worth as a subject in and of itself? Surely reading and math are not taught in schools without regard for their influence on other skills...

Furthermore, if musical studies promote independent work habits, collaboration, and the intrinsic motivation to learn

that are associated with high standards of academic achievement (as many researchers in other arts-in-education programs have found) then why not bring music into schools for these reasons as well?

Making music work for education thus relies on the quality of each program's design and breadth of application. The effort to mobilize musical resources for public schools requires a concerted effort from many institutions that will require continuous evaluation and further research focused on the quality of program implementation over time. Such work is under way at New England Conservatory and will be discussed at a conference entitled "Making Music Work in Public Education: Innovative Programs and Research from a National Perspective," that will assemble partners from the worlds of theory and practice to move this enterprise forward.

We must work to establish school programs that show how music can be grounded in contemporary educational practice; the success of these programs will be determined by rigorous, ongoing evaluation of its implementation in public schools. Only then will we be able to convince skeptics of music's role in education and answer with new conviction the challenge raised by Aristotle long ago: "What we must first seek to answer is whether music is to be placed in education or not, and what power it has of the three we raised questions about: whether as education, play, or pastime."¶

music into academics, including what the potential impact of new kinds of music programs might be on public school policy; why music has not been supported more in the recent past; and what the best case for supporting new music programs is in the context of school reform. The conversations reported here

should prove very interesting for all of us. This second volume of *The New England Conservatory Journal for Learning Through Music* will make these thoughts available on a broad scale, not simply nationally but also internationally. I very much look forward to what new ideas and practices will arise as a result.¶

**WE CAN HELP CREATE A
VIABLE AND FEASIBLE
WAY TO IMPROVE
ELEMENTARY EDUCATION
IN THIS COUNTRY.**
