

# “Enough” is Not Enough

Arts education is vital to a well-rounded education—  
and to the future of orchestras.

by Jesse Rosen and Heather Noonan

After a ten-year wait, the U.S. Department of Education released data this past spring that paints an incomplete but dismaying picture of the status of arts education in our nation’s schools. *Arts Education in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools: 1999–2000 and 2009–10*, available from the U.S. Department of Education’s [website](#), shows that many of our nation’s students are still being shortchanged by our educational system, even though the arts are defined as a core academic subject in federal law.

The topline figures initially released may have sounded rosy enough to woo some into complacency. More than 90 percent of elementary and secondary schools, the report said, offer some form of music education to their students. This percentage appeared relatively unchanged from what was reported prior to the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act, which has been widely described by teachers, administrators, and local newspapers as squeezing the arts out of the curriculum in favor of reading and math. So do the encouraging results mean that the negative reports from local schools and communities are overstated, or even false? Could our students—by and large—be getting “enough” music education?

The full results of the report tell another story: a story alarming enough to prompt U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan to declare it “an equity issue and a civil rights issue,” and to conclude that “A well-rounded education is simply too vital



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to our students’ success to let the teaching of the arts and humanities erode.” Consider two key points:

- Only 15 percent of elementary schools offered music instruction at least three times per week. The report does not include precise measures of the quality of instruction.
- The percentage of schools offering music education declines as the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch increases. In other words, schools with a higher concentration of students in poverty were less likely to offer music education. Likewise, among elementary schools offering music education, the presence of music specialists declines as the school’s poverty rate increases.

This is sobering news. And it comes just as a separate [new report](#) from the



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National Endowment for the Arts underscores the significant gains associated with high levels of arts exposure for youth of lower socioeconomic status. According to the NEA report, *The Arts and Achieve-*

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*ment in At-Risk Youth*—in which James S. Catterall analyzed four separate longitudinal studies—at-risk students who have access to the arts in or out of school have better academic results, better workforce opportunities, and more civic engagement than at-risk students who do not.

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It is clear that there are critical equity gaps that must be addressed if all students are to have a complete education. And orchestras must be in the chorus of civic organizations that say “enough” is not enough.

The effects of inadequate arts education on the future of orchestras are made abundantly clear in another report, [\*Arts Education in America: What the Declines Mean for Arts Participation\*](#) by Nick Rabkin, published by the NEA in February 2011. Rabkin’s analysis drew some powerful conclusions from the findings of the 2008 [\*Survey of Public Participation in the Arts\*](#). Among them were these:

- More arts education predicts more arts attendance.
- Arts education has similar effects on other forms of arts participation: personal art-making, participation in the arts through media, and additional arts education.
- Children of parents who had arts education or who attended arts events are more likely to take private arts classes or lessons and more likely to attend arts events themselves.
- Arts education has a more powerful effect on arts attendance than any other measurable factor.

So, if orchestras are truly committed to diversifying their audiences and bringing orchestral performances to a broader cross-section of their community, our very best hope likely rests in working to ensure that a complete arts education is available to *all* students.

### **Orchestra Involvement**

The good news is that adult and youth orchestra education programs have been growing in strength and impact. Across the country there are strong examples of orchestra programs that exhibit a depth of engagement, produce real and enduring standards-based learning for students, and are taught by highly qualified and sea-

soned teaching artists in partnership with in-school music educators. The LA Phil’s YOLA Project; the Chicago Symphony’s Institute for Learning, Access, and Training; and the San Diego Youth Symphony’s Community Opus Project are just a few programs that engage students in deep music education programs while also exhibiting a commitment to strengthening the systemic presence of music education in public schools.

We have also seen new strategies in advocacy for in-school music instruction. Just as orchestras are recognizing the value of community partnerships in developing

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education programs that are responsive to local needs, they are nurturing similar advocacy ties with community-based allies.

### **League Involvement**

The League of American Orchestras works to galvanize our field at the national level by representing orchestras before Congress, participating in national forums, and bringing orchestras the latest news on research and policy trends in arts education. By highlighting and reporting on best practices, providing professional development, and hosting convening opportunities, the League also aims to build orchestras’ capacity to carry out music education advocacy in their own communities.

The League is a leader in national efforts to improve federal arts education policy through our coalition partnerships with a range of national arts and education organizations, in both formal and informal settings. Among these coalitions are the Arts Education Partnership and

the Arts Education Working Group. The League also encourages orchestras to coordinate their national music-education advocacy efforts with those at the local and state levels.

### **Education Advocacy as Common Cause**

As part of the League’s strategic planning process in 2007, we surveyed more than 2,700 individuals from a range of orchestra budget sizes and types along with donors, press, business leaders, and others, about the most relevant concerns of orchestras and their stakeholders. When asked to rate external circumstances that might have an impact on orchestras, respondents picked the “decline in music education” as having the most significant influence. The issue ranked higher than the economy, funding patterns, changing tastes of audiences, and public perceptions of orchestras.

In response the League created a collective opportunity for orchestras nationwide to take individual, community-specific action to improve access to music education in schools. This took the form of a statement of common cause, “Orchestras Support In-School Music Education.” Initially drafted by education directors representing more than 50 adult and youth orchestras in February 2007, the document received additional input from the League’s Board of Directors, advisory committees comprising orchestra executive directors, and national arts organizations including The National Association for Music Education and the National Guild of Community Schools for the Arts. The statement was launched at the League’s National Conference in June 2007, and more than 240 orchestras have endorsed the document so far. (Find the statement online at [americanorchestras.org](http://americanorchestras.org) under [Advocacy and Government](#)). The statement publicly articulates orchestras’ commitment to support in-school music education and outlines key principles and strategies for successful local advocacy efforts. In the ongoing endorsement process, all orchestra executive directors are invited

## Orchestra Management Fellowship Program

**\$40,000, travel the U.S.,  
and a year with top  
Executive Directors**

The **Orchestra Management Fellowship Program** is designed for those who specifically aspire to careers as executive directors of American orchestras. The Fellowship year, which extends from June 2013- June 2014, includes residencies at the Aspen Music Festival and School and two host orchestras.

Commitment to the program includes a two-month placement as an orchestra manager at the Aspen Music Festival and School, a seven to eight month placement with a major American orchestra and mentoring from the Orchestra's executive director, and a 2-3 month placement with a smaller budget orchestra.

**In addition, fellows receive an annual stipend, medical benefits, and professional development funds to extend their own executive education.**

*The Orchestra Management Fellowship Program is made possible by support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, alumni of the Fellowship Program, and by host orchestras.*



to sign the statement and adapt it for local use. We also encourage orchestra leaders to review it with their musicians, trustees, volunteers, staff, and patrons, so that music education advocacy becomes a shared responsibility and opportunity for all orchestra stakeholders.

The League has compiled a list of national music education advocacy resources, and asked experienced orchestra advocates to identify effective local advocacy activities. Suggestions include the following:

- Engage your orchestra's ready-made advocates: trustees, musicians, and others who may already be well-acquainted with local education policymakers.
- Review the statement of common cause with community partners and make plans to work together.
- Get to know your state's standards for music education.
- Understand the broader educational issues of concern in your community and the challenges and opportunities facing local schools—and how your orchestra can help.
- Honor local music educators and supportive school administrators at a performance or other public event.
- Actively seek opportunities for key leaders of your orchestra (music director, musicians, executive director, and others) to speak on behalf of in-school music education in the local press, at school board meetings, and in other public settings.

Find additional [\*Sample Actions Your Orchestra Might Take\*](#) on the League's website, [americanorchestras.org](http://americanorchestras.org).

We also invite you to share information about your advocacy activity that can inform further tips for best practices. Examples shared to date include: developing a government relations and advocacy committee or task force to plan,

# Statement of Common Cause: Orchestras Support In-School Music Education

America's adult and youth orchestras are committed to advocating for better music education in our nation's schools. Educational activities in orchestras have grown exponentially over the past 10 to 15 years. Starting from the tradition of stand-alone school-day and family concerts, orchestras now offer small ensemble performances; residencies and long-term partnerships; after-school and summer camps; instrumental instruction; early childhood and teen programs; and a host of other activities. Additionally, there are now nearly 500 youth orchestras in communities across the country. Orchestra programs strive for deeply embedded partnerships with local school systems, and responsiveness to local, state, and national arts and academic standards.

**While these programs provide an opportunity for young people to develop a lifelong relationship with music and with the orchestra, these programs are not capable of replacing a standards-based K-12 music education.**

Research has proven that arts education uniquely provides academic and social benefits, preparing students for success in school, work, and life. The status of music education in our nation's schools has short- and long-term consequences for both student achievement and the future of all our orchestras. America's orchestras are committed to:

## Advocating for In-School Music Education

### *Orchestras believe:*

- A child's education is not complete unless it includes the arts. The arts are a core subject of learning, and music is vital to maximizing a child's full potential. Ensemble music making in schools is an important part of a complete music education.
- Schools are in a unique position to deliver comprehensive, high-quality, systemic music education to all students. Orchestras will serve as a resource in this effort.
- The needs of students should be at the center of education advocacy efforts. Orchestras' education programs are most effective when developed to address the needs of student learners, in partnership with the school leaders (teachers, administrators, parents), local arts organizations, and other stakeholders.

## Being Informed Advocates

### *Orchestras commit to:*

- Understanding the status of in-school music education and advocating for accurate data and accountability about how much and what kind of music instruction students receive.
- Discovering, implementing, and sharing best practices in advocacy for comprehensive, high-quality in-school music education through sustainable partnerships with all advocates in the community.
- Understanding how orchestra resources and strengths can best address student, school, and community needs.

## Taking Action

### *Orchestras seek to improve the status of in-school music education by:*

- Ensuring music education advocacy is a role for everyone in the orchestra family—staff, musicians, trustees, volunteers, and our audiences.
- Advocating for policies that support the presence of in-school music educators and demonstrably improve access to high-quality music education for all students.
- Proactively forming sustainable advocacy relationships with school partners, policy leaders, and community stakeholders to secure the success of every child's music education.
- Participating in forums where local, state, and national education policies are determined by listening to community needs and communicating the benefits of systemic K-12 music education.

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implement, and evaluate music education advocacy efforts; ensuring that music education is a regular topic of discussion among elected school board members and candidates; and forming local music education advocacy coalitions involving a broad range of community partners.

Clearly, our nation's schools should be doing a lot more to support equitable access to a complete arts education. Orchestras can continue doing our part as advocates so that—another ten years from now—we can say that the gaps are closing. **S**

## Resources

The League of American Orchestras offers substantial resources to help orchestras advocate for in-school music education. To learn more about the statement of common cause, which outlines key principles and strategies for successful local advocacy efforts, visit [americanorchestras.org](http://americanorchestras.org) and look for [Orchestras Support In-School Music Education](#).

In addition, the League has compiled a list of national music-education advocacy resources, and asked experienced orchestra advocates to identify effective local advocacy activities; visit [americanorchestras.org](http://americanorchestras.org) and look for [Sample Actions Your Orchestra Might Take](#) to learn more.