

Support Notes

Advocating for Music Using Core Musical Values ISME 2018, July, Baku Azerbaijan

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Prelude

Conversation at a social gathering where you are not known well:

Peter: “Hi, my name is Peter.”

Sally: “Hi, I’m Sally, do you have a boat here at the Marina?”

Peter: “Actually yes, over on slip 301.”

Sally: “Wow, great! Do you work around here?”

Peter: “Yep, I’m a professor over at USC.”

Sally: “Really, what do you teach.”

Peter: “I’m over in the music school.”

Sally: “What instrument do you play?”

Peter: “Well, for years I was a trumpet player, but these days I work more often on the academic side of music.”

Sally (a bit perplexed): “What does that mean?”

Peter: “I like to tell folks that I am a music learning scientist. I study music teaching and learning and help to prepare teachers to teach music in the schools and in other places in the community.”

Peter Continues: (before Sally makes a hurried exit to the cocktail bar). “I have a strong belief in music as a powerful human experience that changes lives. I like to help people understand and teach music to as many others as possible. I am a deep believer in music and other arts in schools as way to educate a complete person. I also work with teachers on creative thinking in music and music technology.”

Depending on what is said next, Sally may make that hurried exit for a glass of California red, or she become intrigued about what Peter explains.

This presentation is designed to offer some options for how this conversation might continue.

Core Belief in Advocacy as a Professional Value

Advocacy is a collection of acts that are designed to support a cause. If we agree that a philosophy of what we do professionally is vital for our health and success, then it follows that advocacy work to promote our philosophy is valuable (West & Clauhs, 2015). This is especially true for the role of arts in one’s education because it is through the arts that we explore the depths of human feeling in what we hope to be positive ways. There are many different ways to know the world and the arts provide a major pathway (Eisner, 2002). We need to explain this

more completely, even though it can be hard to do, whether at a cocktail party or in front of major stakeholders in funding education and community engagement.

I believe that we need to develop more diverse ways to talk about why music is important in schools in the lives of our community members at large. Because advocacy for music teaching and learning is often justified solely on non-musical, utilitarian bases which often are overstated or clearly fallacious, our noted music education philosophers and research have often considered advocacy efforts by well-meaning supporters of music in schools as suspect and potentially harmful to our cause.

Although some empirical evidence IS emerging for music and certain non-music skills and characteristics (Hallam 2010, 2015), more arguments are needed that go to the core of music as art. “We need to go beneath the surface and discover what underlying cognitive and social skills are imparted to students when the arts are taught well,” Winner, 2006. And I would add, how music works to touch our core human feelings in ways other disciplines in school cannot do.

I also believe that advocacy should be based on the powerful stories people tell us about how much music has effected them. Advocacy comes from the words and actions of children themselves (Lindeman, 2005; Elpus, 2007; Barrett, 2017).¹

Need for and Importance of Advocacy in Music

Awareness of the need and importance of advocacy in music was recognized by the international ISME community in 2005 with the publishing of a special issue of the *International Journal of Music Education* on advocacy edited by Linderman. Seventeen authors contributed short essays on advocacy, an ISME Mission statement was included, together with a moving set of children’s comments on music’s importance in their lives (Lindeman, 2005). The issue announced the formation of a Standing Committee on Advocacy which has been maintained in some form in ensuing years. In 2010, Hallam published in the *Journal* an important review article on what credible evidence we had to date for music and its impact of intellectual, social, and personal development of children (Hallam, 2010) which was followed her major report to the Music Education Council of the UK (Hallam, 2015).

In terms of the United States, the late Michael Mark wrote:
“Because many important developments, curricular and otherwise, result from public policy— laws, government policies, and regulations—advocacy is indispensable to music education. For as long as music has been a curricular subject in the United States, its direction and focus have been subject to controls imposed by public policies created by local school boards, state education agencies, and the federal government. Advocacy must ensure that such policies are crafted by informed judgments based on knowledge.” (Mark, 2002)

In this article, Mark summarizes the major efforts of then MENC (now NAfME) to take a leadership role in working with both national and state leaders as well as individual members to advocate for music generally and to work for legislative and funding imperatives. He concludes his article by stating:

¹ The ideas here are not necessarily those of the official ISME Standing Committee on Advocacy which I chair currently, but are my own thinking at this point in time.

“Advocacy does not drive the profession; rather, it reflects music educators’ beliefs, purposes, and accomplishments. In this way, advocacy has continually informed the nation of the value of music education and has been responsible—at least in part—for the continued success of the profession. Advocacy helps us fulfill our role in the democratic process—ensuring that we have the opportunity to inform policy makers of why they should sustain their support of music education.” (p. 48).

It should be noted, however, that the advocacy efforts of NAFME in more recent times have also drawn comment from many scholars however, offering concerns that the claims made on behalf of music education overstep and misrepresent the known shortcomings of the empirical evidence.

Ways to Effectively Advocate for the Arts

Clearly there are many ways to advocate for music teaching and learning across the globe, apart from maintaining the view that music is important for its own sake. Much depends on the country and its socio-cultural and economic frameworks. We have little credible evidence of the effectiveness of various global efforts for advocacy.

Alrostegui (2016) offered results of some credible evidence of the decline of music education globally and cites ineffective advocacy as a potential cause. He based his results on an email poll of selected leading music educators globally as well as documents from the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development. Four problems emerged in his data that might lead to the conclusion that music education is in decline in schools:

1. Curriculum models that prioritize the STEM subjects to the detriment of the rest
2. Excessive concentration on qualitative measurement as the only way to determine school outcomes
3. Lower number of recourses available, time and money
4. Wrong advocacy approaches too focused on “traditional practices, thus ignoring both curriculum demands of the policy reforms implemented and students youth cultures.” (p. 101).

One respondent to his email poll stated the following regarding “wrong advocacy,” coming from an American perspective:

I am afraid that we [music educators] are our own worst enemy when our only vision of music education is marching a band around a football field [in the USA]. Yes, music ed has been marginalized more and more— but I am afraid at least some of it is our own fault. We are so tradition-bound. We tend to keep our head in the sand (as a profession) and often miss the forest for the trees. So many music teachers shy away from technology, popular music, non-Western music, jazz, etc., finding out about the music their students listen to and value. We perpetuate the same required lists of repertoire and never wonder where the kids are coming from. But we have our festivals and people get recognition from their peers who value the same things. They don’t compose or improvise with their kids—or do anything that makes space for students’ musical ideas, ideas about music, interpretations.” (p. 99-100).

Another recent book on policy, edited by Schmidt and Colwell, offer perspective by authors globally about the relationships between advocacy and policy and, in turn, offer some perspective on the work to improve both in an effort to advance the status of music education internationally (Schmidt & Colwell, 2017).

Possible New Approaches

Given the backdrop of current writing on the state of music education globally and the efforts for advocacy that is addressed in policy, philosophy, and empirical evidence, there is ample room for new thinking about this topic.

Justifying music largely on the basis of its effect on non-musical outcomes, whether defensible or not, does not offer a solid perspective that recognizes music for its inherent power to affect us as humans. Older conceptions of “music for music’s sake” were perhaps well intended a century ago but can suffer from an elitist perspective that may honor only certain kinds of traditional music. Approaches that draw on some of this background but focus more on the unique and powerful ways music touching our humanness should be considered more actively.

I offer two important approaches that may be worth considering. They grow from music’s core.

Studio Thinking and Habits of Mind (Hetland and colleagues)

I always have been impressed with the way art educators work with students in schools. From the very start of art education, children make a **variety of art**. Art educators accomplish this while also integrating the background of artistic work historically with attention to social, economic, and political settings. They also make every effort to link the artistic product to the expression of human feeling. Given the visual aspect of much of what art educators do, they also are able to display student artistic work in dramatic ways for all to see.

This has led me to consider how curricular efforts by art educators (and their work as advocates for artistic work) might be studied for clues to how music educators might think of their work with students and their efforts to advocate.

Louis Hetland and her colleagues offer one powerful example of how, in visual art education, one might work to make the benefits of arts education manifest (Hetland, Winner, Veenema, and Sheridan, 2013). From this example one can quickly determine how it might apply to music.

In explaining the motivation of this effort in a recent interview for the *Phi Beta Kappan*, Hetland responded to a question about either choosing arts for art’s sake or beneficial side effects, helping students become more successful across the curriculum?

“I would choose a third way: My argument is that the arts are essential tools for thinking and communicating. Keep in mind that the arts have been created and appreciated in every culture dating back to the earliest days of homo sapiens. This suggests that they are part of our basic human equipment, allowing us to express things that can’t be expressed otherwise. So I think it’s a false dichotomy to choose between “arts for art’s sake” and art for instrumental purposes. I prefer the phrase “art for *our* sake,” as my colleague Ellen Winner and I put it in an article that we wrote for the *Boston Globe* several years ago. People hunger for art because it allows them to connect the rational with the intuitive, the brain and the body...It allows them to express a sense of the whole human being. But I’m not saying that art is more important than other subjects. I agree with people who say that schools need to do more to prepare students academically so they can succeed in college and careers. It would be irresponsible and elitist to say otherwise. But there also has to be time in school to teach people to be fully human, which includes teaching

them to “read” works of art and to create new ones. If we don’t do that in school, then we produce impoverished citizens — and an impoverished society.” (Heller, 2017, p. 15-16)

Hetland’s work is based on a desire to come up with a language that teachers could use to talk about what they wanted art education is meant to accomplish. She interviewed and videotaped established art teachers at work. Eight dispositions emerged or “habits of mind”:

1. developing craft
2. engaging and persisting
3. envisioning
4. expressing
5. observing
6. reflecting
7. stretching and exploring
8. understanding art worlds.

Also identified were core structures (strategies) that teachers used:

- 1 demonstration-lectures
- 2 making (students-at-work)
3. critiquing
4. exhibitions of work

As Hetland describes the details of this structure, they make clear that the work the art students do is uniquely centered on artistic, feelingful thinking while at the same time relates to thinking about other aspects of life.

(See Figures 1 and 2) from Hetland, et. al (2013).

It is fascinating to image how this can be applied to music and how it relates nicely to the National Core Arts Standards.

Power of Stories

Inspiration here comes from the emerging work in narrative as qualitative evidence of learning (Connekky, & Clandinin, 1990; Carter, 1993) and from the power of children’s own words ((Lindeman, 2005; Elpus, 2007; Barrett, 2017). Personal accounts of how music effects the human condition abound.

Some examples I have in mind are the published accounts of the work of music educators in prisons and numerous other sites in the community such as hospitals and social centers. Many of these efforts are documented in the *Oxford Handbook of Social Justice in Music Education* (Benedict, Schmidt, Spruce, and Woodford, eds., 2015). Each section of this handbook contains examples of the power of music and offer exciting opportunities for advocacy.

Other sources of stories come from less formal sources, often appearing as stories in the media.

Examples:

Musicians on call <https://www.musiciansoncall.org/>

(musicians working in hospitals)

Sing for Hope <https://www.singforhope.org/>
Pianos on the streets of New York City

Students that you teach that share their work in the community such as this story about a flash mob experiment in Oakland California:

It was early December 2015 and the location was the center of downtown mall in Oakland California. A few months prior I received permission from the manager of the mall that my high school choir and chamber orchestra to present “flash mob” that day. There were some family members and couples walking by as we began the flash mob. Matthew, a senior brought a chair in the middle of outside downtown mall. A shy but good cellist, Caleb walked toward the chair with his cello and began playing “O Come All Ye Faithful” by himself. Karolina, whose dad asked me to tell her to reduce her music practice because she cannot stop practicing singing at home, curiously watched the cellist and walk toward it and joins him in energetic voice singing the chorus. On the right side of the mall, Christian walked down the stairs and respond the first “O Come, Let Us Adore Him” while Joel on the left side of the mall walks toward Karolina responding to the second “O Come, Let Us Adore Him.” One by one, singers join them with more chairs for other cellists.

Once our 1st flashbob song was over, I asked the audience to request their favorite Holiday songs and Christmas songs. We sang, we clapped, and we laughed for good 30 minutes. Families with small children, teens, young and older couples, and friends all seemed to enjoy the bonding experience of singing. As I thanked people for joining us and that it’s time for us to depart one gentle man of African American descent, in the crowd shouted, “This is what Oakland is about.” And he said “Last night right here where you gave us the gift of music, we protested against polices who killed an innocent black boy a year ago. Oakland is not about killing people. Oakland is about creating a good community.”

Stories are important for advocacy.

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