

## SPECIAL CURRICULUM DESIGN SEMINAR

*Curriculum Design Part 3: Developing A Rationale for Music Education**Part 3 of a four-part series on Curriculum & Assessment for Music Education*

by Patrick M. Jones

**Introduction**

Welcome to the third article in our four-part series on curriculum design. In the first article of this series we began conducting fieldwork to become more familiar with and understand the communities and musical environments in which our students live.<sup>1</sup> Please continue to collect data on the demographics and musical offerings of the communities your school serves.

The second article was a review of the history of school-based music education in the USA.<sup>2</sup> Having a sense of our history informs us of how the profession reacted in the past and helps us recognize that we have both the power and the responsibility to make things better. As we saw, music education in the US has evolved based on people's responses to social and political factors, pedagogical movements, and influences from the music industry. Our predecessors were fallible human beings whose decisions brought us to where we are today. We are now the ones responsible to move music education further by shaping it to meet the needs of our era and our best-educated estimates of how it can serve the future.

This brings us to the topic of this article, developing a rationale for music education that will guide us in designing curriculum, selecting pedagogical approaches, determining criteria for

assessment, and the methods by which to do so. A rationale, however, should do much more. In addition to guiding the curriculum and practice of music education, a rationale should communicate the values of music education to the general public and sustain us and keep us focused even when conditions around us seem grim and we actually doubt the value of music education ourselves.



Patrick M. Jones

**Need for a Rationale**

Almost all of us have experienced at least one crisis of faith at some point in our teaching careers. We've asked ourselves questions such as: "Is my life's work worth anything?" "Do I make a difference in my community and students' lives?" "How does what I teach have anything to do with the rest of the school curricula and my students' needs?" "Is what I do really music?"

These questions strike at the heart of what we do and who we believe ourselves to be. They are about music, education, service and a life well spent. When faced with a crisis of faith we turn to our core values, our 'philosophy',<sup>3</sup> our rationale for what we do.

Unfortunately, we have not been well served by the two philosophies traditionally proffered and supported by our profession as rationales: utilitarianism and aesthetic education. Instead of finding comprehensive support and guidance from them, we have found dissonance and often felt alienated, devalued, and made to

feel guilty for engaging in pursuits considered un-worthy by aesthetes, or left to question if studying music has any unique value whatsoever when employing the utilitarian philosophy.

Lacking any other language to describe what we do, we regularly employ the vocabulary of both philosophies, claiming simultaneously that music education develops aesthetic feelings and also promotes utilitarian dispositions such as discipline and teamwork. We espouse these things publicly, hoping they are true, even if we can't prove the former and find no musical justification in the latter. This leaves us feeling uneasy and questioning our own worth and the legitimacy of what we do.

It needn't be this way! What we do has value and can serve real needs of our students and communities. What we need is a professional rationale that sufficiently explains and clarifies how music education meets the real needs of students and society, can guide us in our professional practice, and can serve as a rubric against which to measure our work. Developing such a rationale requires us to address both the nature of music and the purposes and roles of K-12 schools. This article will help you do so. However, before drafting a rationale we need to be clear on what a rationale is, have an appropriate understanding of the nature of music, and know the roles and purposes of K-12 schools.

**Advocacy Statements, Declarations, Philosophies, and Rationales**

Rationales differ from advocacy statements, declarations and philosophies in their scope and intended audience and impact.

**Advocacy statements** are directed outward and are intended to influence the general public and decision makers.<sup>4</sup> They are generally succinct statements that make claims about the benefits of music education but do not provide guidance for the profession.<sup>5</sup> Examples of such statements include MENC's "The Value and Quality of Arts Education: A Statement of Principles."<sup>6</sup>

**Declarations**, on the other hand, are directed inward to guide the profession, but are not intended to influence external audiences. They are longer statements that list values and goals of music education in general terms. MENC has drafted two such declarations, the *Tanglewood Declaration* in 1966<sup>7</sup> and the *Housewright Declaration* in 1999.<sup>8</sup>

**Philosophies** are substantive dialogues intended to inform and guide the profession at the intellectual level. They are often misunderstood as concrete positions and misused in advocacy to justify music education. Instead of being concrete positions, philosophies are active scholarly dialogues attempting to answer questions through "critical, logical, and reasoned examination" of fundamental issues.<sup>9</sup> Various schools of philosophy are based on different perspectives and traditions.

There have been three philosophical schools active in US music education: utilitarianism, aesthetic education and praxial music education.<sup>10</sup> A brief review will help clarify them and provide insight on past and current practices.<sup>11</sup>

*Utilitarianism* advocated that music should be taught in schools for non-musical reasons. It held that learning music aided

the "social, physical, moral and intellectual development" of youth.<sup>12</sup> This was the justification for initially adding music to the common school (public schools) curriculum in the 1830s.<sup>13</sup> Utilitarianism served as the sole justification for music in school curricula until the 1950s when various scholars sought a justification for school music based on what they believed to be intrinsic musical values. This led to the development of Music Education as Aesthetic Education, though utilitarianism has continued to be a major influence in the practice of music education.

*Music Education as Aesthetic Education (MEAE)* advocated teaching music in schools for the development of connoisseurship and aesthetic sensitivity to the formal properties of compositions. Aesthetics has its roots in the work of German philosopher Immanuel Kant and holds that a work of music is art only when it serves no useful purpose other than for contemplation of its own formal properties.<sup>14</sup> Charles Leonard and Robert House first introduced aesthetics widely as a rationale for music education through the publication of *Foundations and Principles of Music Education* in 1959.<sup>15</sup> MEAE's emphasis on works of music and listening for formal properties, its de-emphasis of performance, its elevation of Western European 'art' music's values above all others, and its negating the non-musical values and the important contributions of musical participation all made it ill-suited for school music. Many teachers ignored it<sup>16</sup> and scholars began questioning its intellectual validity in the 1990s because it failed to address all musics and new insights gained from psychology, sociology and ethnomusicology.<sup>17</sup> The end result was the development of a new philosophical paradigm for music education known as praxialism.

*Praxial* philosophies of music education emphasize that music "ought to be understood in relation to the meanings and values evidenced in actual music making, music listening, and musical outcomes in specific cultural contexts."<sup>18</sup> Praxialists believe music has many important values, that all musics are valuable and should be taught with respect to their own native contexts and standards, and that music "involves processes and products intertwined."<sup>19</sup> Many scholars have offered praxial perspectives with varying degrees of agreement, with David Elliott and Thomas Regelski having developed the most clearly articulated approaches for music education.<sup>20</sup>

**Rationales** differ from advocacy statements, declarations and philosophies by addressing both external and internal audiences and reconciling the nature and values of music and the roles and purposes of schools. Estelle Jorgensen has argued for music education to develop a rationale by stating that justifying music in schools requires a "political philosophy of music education ... that speaks to the ideas of freedom, democracy, community, and the importance of social values,"<sup>21</sup> and that school music should include both classical and vernacular musics.<sup>22</sup> While she has yet to produce a rationale, MENC has published two of them. Both, however, fall short of giving the profession what it needs.

The *National Standards for Arts Education* document was perhaps intended to be a rationale, but is too large and cumbersome, has rarely been treated in its entirety, and has not been employed to function as a rationale.<sup>23</sup> Instead, it has generally been distilled down to the nine content

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standards, which have been employed by the profession as bullet statements. The existence of the standards has been used as an advocacy tool without consideration of their content or the justification statements included in the beginning of the document, which have been widely ignored by the profession.

Charles Leonhard, however, developed a clear and articulate rationale for music education in 1988, which he called *A Realistic Rationale for Teaching Music*. His intention was to create a statement that was “understandable and convincing to laypersons ... would establish guidelines for the organization and conduct of the music program ... [and was] ... consistent with the unique character of music and the musical experience.”<sup>24</sup> Leonhard drew on both the aesthetic and utilitarian philosophies and addressed intrinsic musical benefits, such as developing students’ musicianship, and extrinsic non-musical benefits, such as developing self-confidence and discipline.

While his work is notable for its clarity and approach, it fails in two critical ways. First, his reliance on the aesthetic paradigm limited his musical values to those of the Western European ‘art’ music tradition instead of a broader understanding of music necessary for music education in a pluralistic democracy. Second, while his list of non-musical benefits is comprehensive, he failed to connect them directly to the roles and purposes of K-12 schools in such a way as to be understandable to school leaders and the general public.

An effective rationale needs to be more inclusive in its un-

derstanding of music and music education and clearly address how music education serves the purpose of K-12 schools. The praxial philosophy of music education addresses the former by broadening our understanding of music and music education. What is needed for the latter is a framework for organizing the rationale in such a way as to directly address how music education serves the purpose of K-12 schools. A recent report by the Center on Education Policy provides an appropriate framework to do so.

### **Purpose of K-12 Schools**

The Center on Education Policy’s 2007 report *Why We Still Need Public Schools: Public Education for the Common Good* lists unique roles public schools fill that “go beyond the purely academic purposes of all schools, public and private.”<sup>25</sup> The report’s author organized the public missions into the following six main themes:

1. To provide universal access to free education
2. To guarantee equal opportunities for all children
3. To unify a diverse population
4. To prepare people for citizenship in a democratic society
5. To prepare people to become economically self-sufficient
6. To improve social conditions

Music education can address each of these as well as the academic mission of public schools. Treating them comprehensively here will help us clarify how music education serves the roles of public schools when we draft our rationale:

**Academic mission.** Music education can meet the academic mission of schools in two ways. First, music education should help students develop their musicianship for personal musical agency

as its primary academic role. This will require revising our offerings in order to develop a level of independent musicianship that has not been the result of many of our traditional offerings. Secondly, music education should help students succeed academically in other subjects across the curriculum. We can no longer ignore this responsibility in an era of global competition, accountability and high-stakes testing. Music teachers can address this while maintaining musical integrity, which I have discussed in two previous *PMEA News* articles.<sup>26</sup>

**1. To provide universal access to free education & 2. To guarantee equal opportunities for all children.** Music education can address these two roles simultaneously. Since creativity has become a new core competency in the US economy, an education that develops it is crucial for all students.<sup>27</sup> Learning music can help students develop their creative potential and a variety of skills they need for success in today’s economy. However, polls and sales figures of musical instruments indicate that there is a growing divide in access to musical instruments based on income levels.<sup>28</sup> Thus, public schools must insure all children have equal access to developing their creativity through music education in an era where it may be directly related to their employment and the success of our economy.

**3. To unify a diverse population.** According to the CEP report, “part of building a common culture involves teaching students from different racial, ethnic, religious, and economic backgrounds to respect each other and get along.”<sup>29</sup> Music education has a crucial contribution to make in this area. Considerable effort has been made to develop cultural

understanding through teaching musics of various cultures.<sup>30</sup> In addition, Frank Abrahams has developed a unique approach to developing cultural understanding and respect through honoring the musical worlds of the students themselves.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to understanding various cultures, music education must also unify our diverse population by helping students develop the kinds of musicianship skills they can use for making music on their own in both lifewide and lifelong settings, thus helping them overcome cultural barriers and find common ground through music. Developing the musical amateurism necessary for this has been a central focus of much of my work and that of Thomas Regelski.<sup>32</sup>

**4. To prepare people for citizenship in a democratic society.** Participation in music can teach citizenship through interaction with others. Several scholars have advocated that music education should focus on the civil dispositions music education can help students develop. For example: Paul Woodford advocates we reclaim the Deweyan sense of democracy and teach toward that in music education;<sup>33</sup> Wayne Bowman has advocated that music education teaches ethical behavior and that educating someone musically should address areas such as moral growth, social transformation, and politics;<sup>34</sup> and J. Terry Gates, writing in *Vision 2020*, stated “people who study music for extended periods learn how and when to be themselves and when to be a good group member.”<sup>35</sup>

**5. To prepare people to become economically self-sufficient.** Music education can help people develop the skills  
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they need for success in today’s economy in which creativity is a core competency, as I have illustrated elsewhere.<sup>36</sup> In addition to helping students develop their creative capital, music education has a responsibility to help inoculate them against being manipulated through the use of music in advertising and marketing, which is a multi-billion dollar industry aimed at convincing them to spend money based on emotional response instead of calculated need.<sup>37</sup>

**6. To improve social conditions.** In addition to improving social conditions through helping students develop skills necessary for employment, engagement in the arts improves neighborhoods in measurable ways.<sup>38</sup> As I have outlined elsewhere, music education can play an important role in improving the communities in which schools are situated by helping students develop musicianship skills, habits, and dispositions for amateur musicing and through fostering musically vibrant communities.<sup>39</sup>

In addition to academics and the six roles listed above, the CEP report states that education “enriches individual’s lives by developing their capacities to think critically, appreciate culture, and maintain a sense of curiosity about the world... [and] exposes children to new ways of thinking.” A music education curriculum that focuses on meeting the six unique roles of public schools and academics as addressed above will surely meet these other goals.

### ***CLOSING: A Rationale for Music Education***

In this article, we have developed an understanding of what a rationale is and how it differs from advocacy statements, declara-

tions, and philosophies; we have reviewed the three philosophies that have been used to support music education in US schools; and we have addressed comprehensively how music education can meet the unique purposes and roles of public schools. It is now time to draft a rationale for music education that is consonant with the nature of music and the purposes and roles of K-12 schools in a way that is understandable to the general public and can guide our curriculum and professional practice. I encourage you to write yours before reading further.

Mine is as follows: *Music is an essential and distinctive form of human expression and engagement. It is one of the crucial ways members of societies interact with each other and through which identities and cultures are created, defined, reinforced, and transmitted. Music educators serve society by helping students develop musicianship skills, self-knowledge, cultural understanding, civic mindedness, creativity and life-skills, critical thought, interdisciplinary understanding, and intellectual curiosity.*

Music educators accomplish this in the following specific ways:

1. Music educators help all students develop their musicianship for personal musical agency in a variety of genres and musicianly roles they can, and in which they will most likely choose to, participate in lifewide and lifelong settings. They also foster a vibrant musical life in the communities in which they live and teach.

2. Music educators foster understanding of different cultures through having students create, recreate, listen to, participate in,

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and perform musics of various cultures in respectful ways. They employ appropriate pedagogical approaches sensitive to the practices and values of each culture and use musical standards that are organic to each tradition. They honor all musics, including those of the students themselves and the communities in which they teach.

3. Music educators prepare students for citizenship in democratic societies by teaching responsible citizenship and ethical behavior through musical interaction with others as members of various ensembles and audiences. They make students aware of the power of music for developing self-value, self-knowledge, a sense of identity, and cultural understanding; and how it is used to express, entertain, inspire, communicate, represent, motivate, validate, manipulate, and foster and sustain society.

4. Music educators help students succeed economically and in life by helping them develop and refine their creativity, excel academically, and develop life-skills such as discipline, focus, and teamwork.

5. Music educators enrich students' lives by helping them develop their capacities to think critically and in new ways, appreciate and participate in cultures, maintain a sense of curiosity about the world, and inspire them to continue learning and musicing throughout life.

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### End Notes

<sup>1</sup>Patrick M. Jones, "Curriculum Design Part 1: Demographics & Ethnography - Part 1 of a Four-Part Series on Curriculum & Assessment for Music Education," *PMEA News* Fall (2006).

<sup>2</sup>———, "Curriculum Design Part 2: History of School Based Music Education in the USA- Part 2 of a Four-Part Series on Curriculum & Assessment for Music Education," *PMEA News* Winter (2006).

<sup>3</sup>I use the term philosophy cautiously here. As Regelski has noted, most teach-

ers use the word philosophy in the 'weak' sense, meaning "taken-for-granted, uncritical, unexamined, or unchallenged belief, opinion or faith." "Philosophy in the 'strong' sense, in contrast, requires familiarity with the discipline of philosophy - that body of knowledge and literature resulting from the critical, logical, and reasoned examination of fundamental philosophical issues over history." From: Thomas A. Regelski, "On "Methodolatr" And Music Teaching as Critical and Reflective Praxis," *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 10, no. 2 (Fall 2002).  
<sup>4</sup>For a history of music education advocacy see Michael L. Mark, "A History of Music Education Advocacy," *Music Educators Journal* 89, no. 1 (2002).

<sup>5</sup>Charles Fowler actually produced book-length advocacy statements for arts education, but that is rare. See Charles Fowler, *Can We Rescue the Arts for America's Children? Coming to Our Senses - 10 Years Later* (New York, NY: American Council for the Arts, 1988), Charles Fowler, *Strong Arts, Strong Schools: The Promising Potential and Shortsighted Disregard of the Arts in American Schools* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>6</sup>MENC: The National Association for Music Education, "The Value and Quality of Arts Education: A Statement of Principles," (Reston, VA: MENC: The National Association for Music Education, 1999).

<sup>7</sup>Michael L. Mark, and Charles L. Gary, *A History of American Music Education*, 2nd ed. (Reston, VA: Music Educators National Conference, 1999), 312-313.

<sup>8</sup>*Vision 2020: The Housewright Symposium on the Future of Music Education*, ed. Clifford K. Madsen (Reston, VA: MENC: The National Association for Music Education, 2000), 219-220.

<sup>9</sup>Regelski, "On "Methodolatr" And Music Teaching as Critical and Reflective Praxis."

<sup>10</sup>For histories of these philosophical schools in US music education see Estelle R. Jorgensen, "Justifying Music Instruction in American Public Schools: An Historical Perspective," *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, no. 120 (1994), and Marie McCarthy, and J. Scott Goble, "The Praxial Philosophy in Historical Perspective," in *Praxial Music Education: Reflections and Dialogues*, ed. David J. Elliott (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>11</sup>This is in no way a comprehensive treatment of each philosophical school. I recommend you read the sources I cite for

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a more comprehensive understanding of each philosophy.

<sup>12</sup>McCarthy, "The Praxial Philosophy in Historical Perspective.", 19.

<sup>13</sup>Jorgensen, "Justifying Music Instruction in American Public Schools: An Historical Perspective."

<sup>14</sup>Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, trans. J. H. Bernard, *Great Books in Philosophy* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2000).

<sup>15</sup>Charles Leonhard, and Robert W. House, *Foundations and Principles of Music Education* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Book Company, INC, 1959).

<sup>16</sup>Michael L. Mark, *Contemporary Music Education*, 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Schirmer Books, 1996)., 59.

<sup>17</sup>McCarthy, "The Praxial Philosophy in Historical Perspective."

<sup>18</sup>David J. Elliott, ed., *Praxial Music Education: Reflections and Dialogues* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005)., 14.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 14.

<sup>20</sup>For various scholars' writing on praxialism see Marie McCarthy, ed., *Music Education as Praxis: Reflecting on Music-Making as Human Action, State of the Art Series* (College Park, MD: University of Maryland, 1999). For Elliott's comprehensive application for music education see David J. Elliott, *Music Matters: A New Philosophy of Music Education* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995). For various scholar's discussion of Elliott's perspective see "Special Issue: The Dallas Papers of the Mayday Group," *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, no. 144 (2000)., and Elliott, ed., *Praxial Music Education: Reflections and Dialogues*. For Regelski's application to music education see Thomas A. Regelski, *Teaching General Music in Grades 4-8: A Musicianship Approach* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004). And for a comparison of Elliott's and Regelski's approaches see J. Scott Goble, "Perspectives on Practice: A Pragmatic Comparison of the Praxial Philosophies of David Elliott and Thomas Regelski," *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 11, no. 1 (2003).

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<sup>25</sup>Nancy Kober, "Why We Still Need Public Schools: Public Education for the Common Good," (Washington, DC: Center on Education Policy, 2007).

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<sup>27</sup>"Get Creative! How to Build Innovative Companies," *Business Week Online*, August 1 2005.

<sup>28</sup>NAMM, "2006 Music USA NAMM Global Report," (Carlsbad, CA: NAMM - The International Music Products Association, 2006).

<sup>29</sup>Kober, "Why We Still Need Public Schools: Public Education for the Common Good."

<sup>30</sup>For a comprehensive treatment of music education's addressing multicultural music education see Terese M. Volk, *Music, Education, and Multiculturalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).e

<sup>31</sup>Frank Abrahams, "The Application of Critical Pedagogy to Music Teaching and Learning" *Visions of Research in Music Education* 6 (2005), Frank Abrahams, "The Application of Critical Pedagogy to Music Teaching and Learning: A Literature Review," *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education* 23, no. 2 (2005), Frank Abrahams, "Critical Pedagogy for Music Education: A Best Practice to Prepare Future Music Educators," *Visions of Research in Music Education* 7 (2006), Frank Abrahams, and Patrick K. Schmidt, "A New Sound for Urban Schools: Rethinking How We Plan," in *Teaching Music in the Urban Classroom: A Guide to Survival, Success, and Reform*, ed. Carol Frierson-Campbell (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2006).

<sup>32</sup>For example, see Patrick M. Jones, "Returning Music Education to the Mainstream: Reconnecting with the Community," *Visions of Research in Music Education* 7 (2006), Patrick M. Jones, "In a World of Musics, How Do You Decide Which Ones to Teach?: A Response to Ann Clements," (Unpublished paper presented at the Pennsylvania Music Educators Association In-Service Conference: Hershey, PA, 2005), Patrick M. Jones, "Music Education and the Knowledge Economy: Developing Creativity, Strengthening Communities," *Arts Education Policy Review* 106, no. 4 (2005), Patrick M. Jones, and Ann C. Clements, "Making Room for Student Voice: Rock and Popular Musics in School Curricula," (Unpublished paper presented at the MayDay Group Colloquium: Princeton, NJ, June 22-25, 2006), Patrick M. Jones, "Music Education for Society's Sake: Music Education in an Era of Global Neo-Imperial/Neo-Medieval Market-Driven Paradigms and Structures," *Action, Criticism & Theory for Music Education* 5, no. 3 (2007)., and Thomas A. Regelski, "Schooling

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<sup>33</sup>Paul G. Woodford, *Democracy and Music Education: Liberalism, Ethics, and the Politics of Practice* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005).

<sup>34</sup>Wayne Bowman, "Music as Ethical Encounter," *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, no. 151 (2001). Wayne Bowman, "The Limits and Grounds of Musical Praxialism," in *Praxial Music Education: Reflections and Dialogues*, ed. David J. Elliott (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005). Wayne Bowman, "Educating Musically," in *The New Handbook of Research on Music Teaching and Learning*, ed. Richard Colwell and Carol Richardson (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>35</sup>J. Terry Gates, "Why Study Music?," in *Vision 2020: The Housewright Symposium on the Future of Music Education*, ed. Clifford K. Madsen (Reston, VA: MENC, 2000).

<sup>36</sup>Jones, "Music Education and the Knowledge Economy: Developing Creativity, Strengthening Communities.", Jones, "Music Education for Society's Sake: Music Education in an Era of Global Neo-Imperial/Neo-Medieval Market-Driven Paradigms and Structures."

<sup>37</sup>Sidney Hecker, and David W. Stewart, *Non-verbal Communication in Advertising* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1988)., and Adrian C. North, David J. Hargreaves, and Mark Tarrant, "Social Psychology and Music Education," in *The New Handbook of Research on Music Teaching and Learning*, ed. Richard Colwell, and Carol Richardson (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>38</sup>Mark Stern, and Susan Seifert, "Social Impact of the Arts Project: Summary of Findings," (Philadelphia, PA: The University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work, 2001), Mark Stern, and Susan Seifert, "Culture Builds Community: Evaluation Summary Report," (Philadelphia: *Social Impact of the Arts Project*, University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work, 2002), Mark Stern, and Susan Seifert, "Culture Builds Community: The Power of Arts and Culture in Community Building," (Philadelphia: *Social Impact of the Arts Project*, University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work, n.d.).

<sup>39</sup>Jones, "Music Education and the Knowledge Economy: Developing Creativity, Strengthening Communities.", Jones, "Music Education for Society's Sake: Music Education in an Era of Global Neo-Imperial/Neo-Medieval Market-Driven Paradigms and Structures."