

**THE ROLE OF THE MUSIC DEPARTMENT
IN EMPHASIZING THE ARTS AT
AN INNER CITY SECONDARY SCHOOL**

BY

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THE ROLE OF THE MUSIC DEPARTMENT IN EMPHASIZING THE ARTS AT
AN INNER CITY SECONDARY SCHOOL

A Research Paper
Presented to
the Graduate Council of
Austin Peay State University

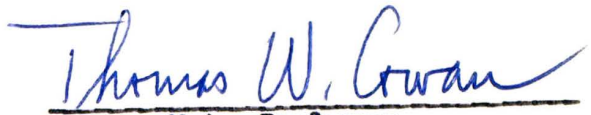
In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in Education

by
Donald Francis Santa-Emma

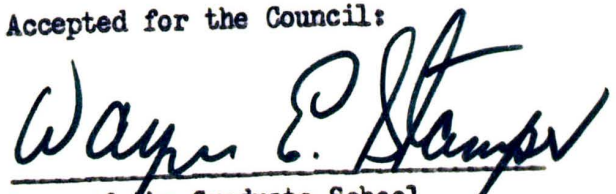
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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Research Paper written by Donald Francis Santa-Emma entitled "The Role of the Music Department in Emphasizing the Arts at an Inner City Secondary School." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Education.


Major Professor

Accepted for the Council:


Dean of the Graduate School

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

The role of the arts in the school, particularly the inner-city school, has been the topic of much discussion among professional educators. In many school situations the arts are still classified in the "frill" category.

With the advent of Sputnik, in the late fifties, there was a great panic at the thought that a foreign power was more advanced in scientific technology than the United States. There was a great outcry for the schools of the United States to become more efficient in the teaching of science and mathematics. Great amounts of money were allocated for science laboratories and mathematical equipment. Students were asked to spend more time in classes of a scientific nature. There was a great premium placed on a student's time while he was at school. Suddenly, the arts had to justify their inclusion in the modern day curriculum. Some educators feel that any subject matter completely divorced from technology is "frill" and non-essential to the education of young people.

Today, with the scientific emphasis somewhat lessened, the trend seems to be toward vocational education. This trend is particularly evident in the inner-city where government sponsored programs are being inserted in an attempt to stem the high dropout rate. Many of these programs that have been placed in the schools have caused an increased financial burden on the taxpayer. Because of public resistance to

increased taxation, many of our nation's schools are in financial trouble. When cuts must be made from the educational program for reason of financial austerity, administrators usually rank the arts high on their list of items to be deleted from the program. But there are many who feel, as this writer does, that the arts can be a powerful ally in the learning process of the young, particularly the disadvantaged youth. How can we deal with the arts in a functional and utilitarian sense? As Kathryn Bloom stated, the problem was how to reach youths by using "the arts as a lubricant in the learning process."¹

The music department in any school can be a powerful force in exploring the arts. Bands, orchestras, choruses can be used as vehicles in which the destination of greater musical understanding will be reached through performance.

Problems of the inner-city music department are many. Usually the facilities are poor. Often the equipment is out-dated and insufficient in quantity. Many of the youths, because of their economic status, home life, and general environment, have serious social problems.

In spite of these many problems, the inner-city music teacher must call upon all his resources and present the arts as an important part in the learning process of inner-city students.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to make some observations concerning the role, function, and operative process of the music department in an inner-city secondary school. The writer believes that sensory and

¹ Judith Murphy and Ronald Gross, The Arts and the Poor, United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1968), p. 8.

symbolic discrimination (shapes - objects - words - sounds) as described by Dr. R. Louis Bright², can be taught through the use of objects and experiences which are familiar to youths who attend poverty area schools.

Teachers trying to teach the arts to the disadvantaged are faced with the problem of a youngster's inability to make discriminations. Mastery of these skills through instruction in the arts will not only aid a student in meeting with success in academic areas but also to more advanced work in the arts themselves.

One example Dr. Bright cited came from the field of music. There is some evidence which supports the idea that if a child is taught how to discriminate between different tones, he will be able, with practice, to produce those tones. One could teach by this technique the recognition of many different fundamental structures in music, such as chords and harmony.³

The answers to the following questions posed by Dr. Bright might well be the keys for further justification of the arts as an important segment of education for the culturally disadvantaged.

Could composition in the visual arts be taught so that the student might learn to discriminate between good and bad composition, and eventually paintings by expert and non-expert artists? Could the student learn to appreciate the excellence of Shakespeare's poetry and dramaturgy by viewing two different presentations on videotape--one of a scene from Shakespeare and the other from a lesser dramatist? Or could he learn, through videotaped performances, to appreciate the characteristics of acting and production excellence by watching different theatre groups--an amateur community theatre, say, and a top professional company--perform the same dramatic scene?⁴

²Ibid., p. 24.

³Ibid., pp. 24-25.

⁴Ibid., p. 25.

Discriminatory capacities which middle-class children develop as a matter of course never come to fruition in many disadvantaged youngsters. Since discrimination is basic to the tasks they are asked to master in school--such as reading, computation, and writing--these children experience unremitting failure. The house of learning must be built on the foundation of sensory and symbolic discrimination.⁵

BACKGROUND AND IMPORTANCE OF STUDY

The importance of this study is derived from the instructional activities of the writer who is chairman of the music department of a large junior-senior high school located in the inner-city of Cleveland, Ohio.

The arts, as they have been traditionally presented, have little or no meaning to the troubled youths of the city. Educators must find a more effective process of developing the disadvantaged youth's ability to discriminate.

METHODS OF PROCEDURE AND SOURCES OF DATA

Library research techniques represent the principal method of procedure used. An examination was made of numerous publications and current articles located in the Austin Peay State University Library. Additional information was secured from other schools; such information included curriculum guides and unit lesson plans. Reports of experimental programs were examined using the library facilities of George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, Tennessee. Many pamphlets of the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare provided the writer

⁵Ibid., p. 24.

with valuable information. The personal experience of the writer of having grown up, and now teaching in the inner-city, will be called upon frequently.

CHAPTER II

The purpose of this chapter is to give some background information on the youths and neighborhoods of the inner-city. The writer feels that teachers who work with disadvantaged youths must be aware of the environment in which their students live. The teacher who makes a daily trip from the suburbs to the inner-city cannot be successful if he concerns himself only with the problems within the school building and divorces himself completely from the inner-city community. The teacher must become thoroughly familiar with the traits, characteristics, and habits of inner-city youths and neighborhoods if he is to make learning relevant, realistic, and authentic.

YOUTHS OF THE INNER-CITY

Inner-city youths possess a culture of their own, with many positive characteristics that have developed out of coping with a difficult environment. The term "culturally deprived" refers to those aspects of middle-class culture--such as education, books, formal language--from which these groups have not benefitted.¹ The following list of positive characteristics of disadvantaged learners is taken from an original paper by Eugene McCreary, supervisor of teacher education in the School of Education, University of California, Berkeley.

Practical Knowledge. Many socially disadvantaged youths display a wide-ranging practical knowledge in many areas of public practice and private living. Sometimes their knowledge relates to the sordid and the

¹Frank Riessman, The Culturally Deprived Child (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962), p. 3.

ugly; usually it relates to the practical and the mundane. Their understandings are more often economic than aesthetic. Although typical experiences of many socially disadvantaged youths do not encourage or develop intellectual interests or academic ambitions, they do nourish realistic know-how and responsible, adaptive behavior in difficult practical circumstances. The inner-city boy may be able to repair cars and trucks or to fix electrical equipment. He is likely to have had some practice in simple mechanics and some development of manual dexterity and physical coordination.

More Experience With Life. A large number of disadvantaged youths have had first-hand experiences in meeting dangerous or threatening individuals, whether delinquents, criminals, angry parents, intoxicated relatives, or hostile gangs. They know something about the realities of our economic and social institutions--or at least the more seamy side. They usually know something about illegitimacy, adoptions, divorce laws, and alimony.

The experiences which disadvantaged young people have had with social disorganization, human failing, psychological and economic dependency, welfare programs, law enforcement do not necessarily lead to cynicism, but they do build up an awareness and sophistication which are likely to be more realistic, poignant, and immediate than the treatment of social problems in school textbooks. Probably many such youths have more understanding and know-how about some social realities than middle-class youths or many teachers.

Strong In-Group Feelings. The "down-and-out often have a very deep and sincere fellow-feeling expressed in pervasive mutual aid. The peer associations of the poor differ from those of many middle-class

children in being much less formal and much less under adult direction or guidance. Peer associations are the matrix of the values and attitudes of socially disadvantaged youths, and a core value is loyalty to the group. This peer-group loyalty may focus hostility and resistance to the standards and authority of a school if the latter fails to accord opportunities for expression, recognition, respect, and success for the disadvantaged.

Self-Reliance and Autonomy. Because of the less firmly structured patterns of family life characteristic of many socially disadvantaged, because of the absence of reliable father figures in many homes, and because of the autonomous nature of many youthful peer associations, many of the socially disadvantaged develop early in life a great reliance upon themselves and a sense of autonomy and independence. This sense of autonomy and independence displayed by disadvantaged youths may lead to clashes and conflicts with school attempts to control, supervise, and direct youth activities. Here again, however, wise and far-sighted teachers and administrators can capitalize upon the relatively greater independence and autonomy of working-class youths by providing constructive channels for their self-sufficiency and independence.

Appreciation of the Value of Education, if Not the School. Many parents and children of deprived backgrounds initially have a positive attitude toward schooling and recognize that it represents for most the only channel for improving one's lot in modern society. Most parents hope and expect their children to apply themselves in school and to benefit from as much schooling as they can obtain. Early in the school careers of many socially disadvantaged youths, teachers notice an eagerness, a very great responsiveness to new experiences and especially to

the kindness, personal attention, and assistance that some teachers give. But for too many, the early responsiveness to affection and to learning is destroyed by experiences of failure. Teachers need to find ways to strengthen and maintain the initial enthusiasm for school characteristic of many disadvantaged children by providing continuing opportunities for success and recognition.

The writer feels that an effective presentation of the arts to disadvantaged youths can help them realize success and recognition through accomplishment and achievement, and thus acquire the confidence necessary to develop a sense of worthiness. There is no doubt in the writer's mind that the improvements in sensory and symbolic discrimination gained from the arts will enable the disadvantaged youth to discriminate more effectively in the classroom learning situation.

Below are listed some of the characteristics which differentiate the typical middle-class child from the disadvantaged child. These characteristics are very important in determining the experiential background of the inner-city student.

Middle Class Children

Ability to communicate is common.

Learn to talk freely with other people.

Know shape, color, and size of objects.

Have hi-fis, radios, musical instruments, dancing lessons, etc.

Have books, magazines, newspapers, toys often having educational value, pencils, crayons, paper, etc.

Disadvantaged Children

Questions and discussion are discouraged.

Typically respond with silence upon meeting strangers.

Lack concepts of time, size, shape, and color.

Watch television.

Few, if any, reading or other educational materials.

Have time and place to study.

Lack definite time or place to study.

Go to zoos, parks, museums, sporting events, etc.

Trips in the city are limited often only to immediate neighborhood.

Parents are interested in and attentive to their children.

Often no one at home to meet them; no one to share their triumphs or troubles.

Parents are actively engaged in school affairs and pupil progress in school.

Parents engage in little, if any, school activities. Leave matters completely to school.

It should be emphasized that the characteristics noted above do not belong exclusively to either middle-class children or to the disadvantaged children. Any one or more of the characteristics listed under the disadvantaged child could be applicable to middle-class children and vice-versa. This comparison does serve, however, to set the stage for the type of pupils a teacher is likely to meet in an inner-city school.²

INNER-CITY NEIGHBORHOODS

Inner-city neighborhoods are remindful of the athlete who is past his prime but is still trying to persuade his body to perform as it once did in his past years of greatness; a worn-out automobile performing with only a fraction of the efficiency it once possessed; the once-glamorous movie star whose youthful beauty has given way to features which are characteristic of old age.

Buildings and houses of the inner-city which were once proud and well-kept structures are now containers which do little more than

²Prepared by James N. Jacobs, Director of Program Development (Department of Instruction, Cincinnati Public Schools, 1965), pp. 2-12, 21-22.

attempt to protect their inhabitants from the elements of the weather. Once well-manicured lawns and gardens are now receptacles for trash and litter. Large houses which were once the spacious living quarters for fortunate families have been divided into crowded facilities for many disadvantaged families.

Most inner-city neighborhoods contain a sediment from various social, religious, and ethnic backgrounds who adhere to the middle-class American image--educated, upward-aspiring, and good citizens. The vast majority of the residents, however, move about in a pattern of discrimination and deprivation well known to those who are hemmed in by the walls of the inner-city. Hence, in spite of the few islands of positive community life and a slight sense of social cohesiveness, it is a locality whose outstanding features lean more toward deterioration, stagnation, helplessness, waste, and hopelessness. The police are the enemy of the people; the businessmen, the exploiters; the welfare agency, an easy way of survival.³

The effects of living in the inner-city are obvious. Children who live in the crowded housing of the inner-city often lack the opportunity to develop the techniques needed to make effective sensory and symbolic discriminations. In a home devoid of art objects this can hardly occur. It is this thought which has prompted the writer to investigate the means of encouraging inner-city youths to develop artistic discrimination by participating in an educational program in which the arts play a vital role.

³Lester D. Crow, Walter I. Murray, and Hugh H. Smythe, Educating the Culturally Disadvantaged Child (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1966), pp. 32-33.

CHAPTER III

Education of the disadvantaged or culturally deprived has been the concern of educators for many years, but only recently have the complexities and urgency of the problem begun to receive long-needed attention.

There are those who argue that merely training the disadvantaged for a job should be the primary function of the school; that stress should be placed upon communicative and quantitative skills which are essential for making a living. Merely enabling these young people to make a living, however, will not significantly change their lives unless they are also exposed to influences that make living exciting and meaningful.¹ "Neither an outstanding nation nor a worthy individual can be intellectually mature and aesthetically impoverished."²

According to noted psychologist Abraham Maslow, humanistic psychologists are discovering "that the human being has higher needs, that he has instincts--like needs, which are part of his biological equipment--the need to be dignified . . . and to be respected, and the need to be free for self-development."³

Maslow refers to moments of creativity as peak experiences and has conducted studies on what effects these experiences have on people. Some of the after effects of these experiences are listed below:

¹Naomi Armstrong, "Music Education for Culturally Deprived High School Students," The High School Journal, LII (November, 1968), p. 63.

²Ibid., p. 63.

³Ibid., p. 64.

They can change the person's view of himself in a healthy direction.

They can change his view of other people and his relations to them in many ways.

They can change more or less permanently his view of the world, or of aspects or parts of it.

They can release him for greater creativity, spontaneity, expressiveness . . .

The person is more apt to feel that life in general is worthwhile, even if it is usually drab, pedestrian, painful or ungratifying, since beauty, excitement, honesty, play, goodness, truth and meaningfulness have been demonstrated to him to exist.⁴

Further justification for aesthetic education for the disadvantaged can be found by again quoting ideas of Maslow.

In our investigation of peak experiences we found many, many triggers, many kinds of experiences that would set them off. It looks as if any experience of real excellency, of real perfection, of any moving toward the perfect truth, of perfect beauty, of great excellence, of perfect justice, and so on, tends to produce a peak experience. . . . It happens that music, and rhythm and dancing--this kind of trigger, this kind of stimulation, tends to do all kinds of things to our nervous systems, our different glands, our feelings, and our emotions. . . . This is a path, one of the ways that we try to teach self-actualization--the discovery of identity.

Education in music, education in art, education in dancing and rhythm, are far closer to intrinsic education, that is, of learning your identity, than other parts of education. If education doesn't do that, it is useless. Learning to grow, learning to grow toward, learning what is good and bad, learning what is desirable and undesirable, learning what to choose and what not to choose--it is in this realm of intrinsic learning and intrinsic education that I think the arts, and especially the ones that I have mentioned, are so close to our psychological and biological core, so close to this biological identity that rather than think of the arts as whipped cream, we ought to think of them as fundamental.⁵

⁴Ibid., p. 64.

⁵Ibid., pp. 64-65.

On a more practical level, today's society is placing a premium on people who, although they possess an education heavily stressed with technology, can speak intelligently of the arts. Lack of cultural experiences can be a serious handicap for advancement in today's world.

Modern advancements have given man more leisure time than he has ever had before. The amount of leisure time will increase as technology continues to advance. Awareness in the arts will permit a citizen to make use of much of his leisure time by permitting him to take part in many community activities which would otherwise be shut off to him if he was completely void of any previous aesthetic experiences.

Modern communications have opened the door for everyone to a wealth of artistic accomplishments. It is unpardonable that any man not be able to enjoy these accomplishments simply because he is artistically unaware.

CHAPTER IV

An inner-city school presents many problems for the teacher which are unique to the inner-city school. Besides the many social and cultural problems which have already been discussed, the teacher finds himself with the additional problems of out-dated equipment, poor facilities, erratic student attendance, and if he is employed in a large city system, the process for getting something repaired, purchased, or borrowed is often so involved that all but the most determined teacher gives up in despair.

The writer can state from his own experience that it is not uncommon to find instruments of pre-depression vintage being used in some of the public schools of Cleveland, Ohio today. Playing a musical instrument which is properly adjusted and in good playing condition presents enough problems for the student without being further complicated by an instrument which is not in good playing condition.

Often students do not have the financial means to purchase musical accessories such as reeds, oil, and music. The inner-city music teacher must be understanding of such situations and not reprimand the student for not being prepared to play.

A teacher in a deprived area must be extremely flexible. Often, home conditions will force a student to have erratic attendance at school. A student might have to watch younger children while the mother works or maybe the parents have disappeared for a few days, and the young person of junior high school age might be the sole authority in the household until the parents, or more often, parent, returns.

It is of critical importance to select a proper teacher for the culturally disadvantaged student. This is hardly the place for the teacher who refuses to make any adjustments in his method of teaching. The person who works with these students, in addition to being musically capable, must be able to achieve a high degree of rapport with them, to treat them with respect even though they cannot always look attractive and clean or be in the best of spirits, and are frequently indifferent or antagonistic to him and everything he tries to do. He will probably be very frustrated if he is unyieldingly determined to produce and promote the finest bands, orchestras, and choruses. Certainly his students' performances should be musically sensitive, accurate, and alive, but they must not be achieved by the high pressure methods that so often squelch interest and enthusiasm. In other words, he must be dedicated to teaching students through music instead of just teaching music to these very special students.¹ The challenges presented in this kind of situation indicate a great need for creative teaching, requiring the teacher to be imaginative, willing to experiment, inquisitive, receptive to new ideas, and flexible in adapting to learning situations.²

Colleges and universities must soon realize that some changes must be made in their teacher preparation programs. There is no appreciable difference in the training of a person who is to become a teacher in the most affluent suburb or the person who will work in a

¹Ibid., p. 69.

²Ibid., p. 69.

poverty-stricken urban ghetto. Teacher-preparation institutions must acknowledge the fact that each situation has special problems and that young teachers must be prepared, and hopefully be able to find solutions to some of these problems.

In her excellent article on "The Preparation of Music Educators for the Culturally Disadvantaged," Frances Andrews offers a number of specific suggestions. Such teacher education should include

- a. The development of an understanding of the depressed conditions in which many of the culturally disadvantaged exist, conditions that may create not only complete indifference to the musical values, accepted musical experiences and materials.
- b. A heavy emphasis on the properties of music as a common means of expression that has always existed in many cultures and at many levels.
- c. A teacher commitment to the business of opening up understanding of music in the hearts and minds of children who are poorly cared for . . . inadequately housed, clothed, and fed.
- d. An emphasis on learning by doing, by making much music . . . the musical experiences offered must be extremely rich.³

It has been determined that the arts can be a powerful ally in the total educational process of the culturally disadvantaged. Many disadvantaged students can achieve success in the arts. It is hoped that this success is helpful in developing a student's confidence which will help him meet with success in other areas. The arts must be considered a necessary and important part in the education of the deprived; not as a "frill" or an unnecessary extra in preparing youth for today's world.

³Ibid., pp. 69-70.

The problems of teaching in the inner-city are numerous and complex. Often times it is very easy to become discouraged and wonder if the problems of our troubled youth can ever be solved. But when an inner-city teacher reads the following comments by world-acclaimed soprano, Dorothy Maynor, he realizes that every minute of time and every ounce of energy spent teaching in the inner-city is probably the most worthwhile contribution he could make to education.

. . . What we are counting on, and in some small ways our hopes are bearing fruit already, is that a lad who seems to have little or no purpose, who has never been taken very seriously by his parents or by the other kids on the block or even by his teachers in the public schools, that such a boy or girl might, just by learning to concentrate on mastering an instrument, or in the blending of colors . . . in some way this child may be taught to dream and to realize that dreams are quite real. And if this is kept up for a while, that the child will one day look in the mirror and see something that he never saw before--the makings of a real human being.⁴

⁴Ibid., p. 70.

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