

# Why teach music?

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The acceptance of music education standards placed our courses on the same field of consideration as all academic subject. No Child Left Behind specifically addresses music equal to the other traditionally considered academic subjects.

But still we have schools making executive decisions the either place music to the background or, in some cases, eliminate it altogether. We have counselors and parents guiding students to choose courses that they consider to be more suited for preparation toward college and lucrative professions. When we look toward our own profession and the Department of Education, it becomes obvious what is considered educationally viable when you look at proficiency indicators such as the ACT & SAT, and state's educational achievement tests.

Even advocacy programs through Arts Agencies and our own MENC portray an educational component that requires contributions to other disciplines. You almost have to begin to ask yourself if our discipline is secondary to "more essential" learnings. Maybe we are extra-curricular?  
Why teach music?

Introduce yourself to someone who is sitting next to you and discuss this question: Why teach music in schools?

1:50 What are some of your reasons for why we teach music in schools?

[audience feedback]

The screenshot shows the MENC website header with the URL <http://www.menc.org/information/legislationpolicy/commission.html>. The MENC logo is on the left, and the tagline 'The National Association for Music Education' and 'Bringing Music to Life!' are in the center. A navigation bar includes 'Home', 'Index', 'Search', 'About MENC', and 'Contact Us'. The main content area is titled 'Take Action—Voice Your Opinion' and contains the following text:

Dear Music Education Supporter,

Your help is urgently needed to inform Congress about No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the importance of the arts in every child's education. Your action today will help to ensure the place of the arts in your schools tomorrow.

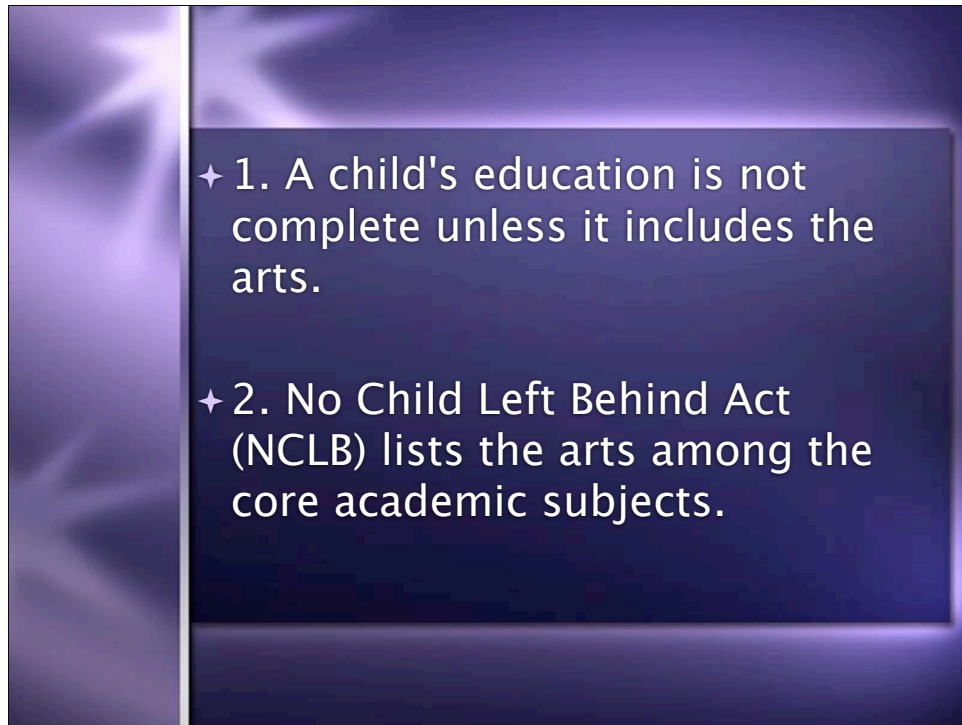
[The Commission on No Child Left Behind](#) is accepting comments through an online portal on their Web site. This bipartisan commission will make formal recommendations to Congress in early 2007. As such, this is a key opportunity for teachers, parents, and community members to offer constructive feedback on the importance of the arts in any kind of education legislation, and specifically NCLB.

It says on the MENC web-site: Take Action—Voice Your Opinion

Dear Music Education Supporter,

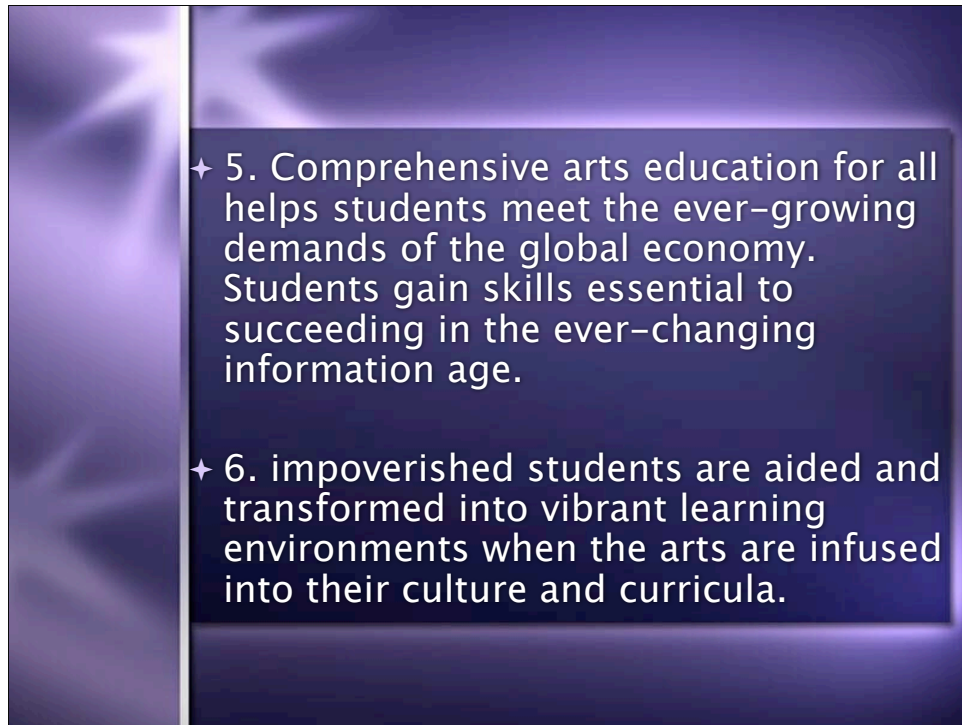
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Later on the site it provides ideas such as:

1. A child's education is not complete unless it includes the arts.
2. No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) lists the arts among the core academic subjects.



5. Comprehensive arts education for all helps students meet the ever-growing demands of the global economy. Students gain skills essential to succeeding in the ever-changing information age.

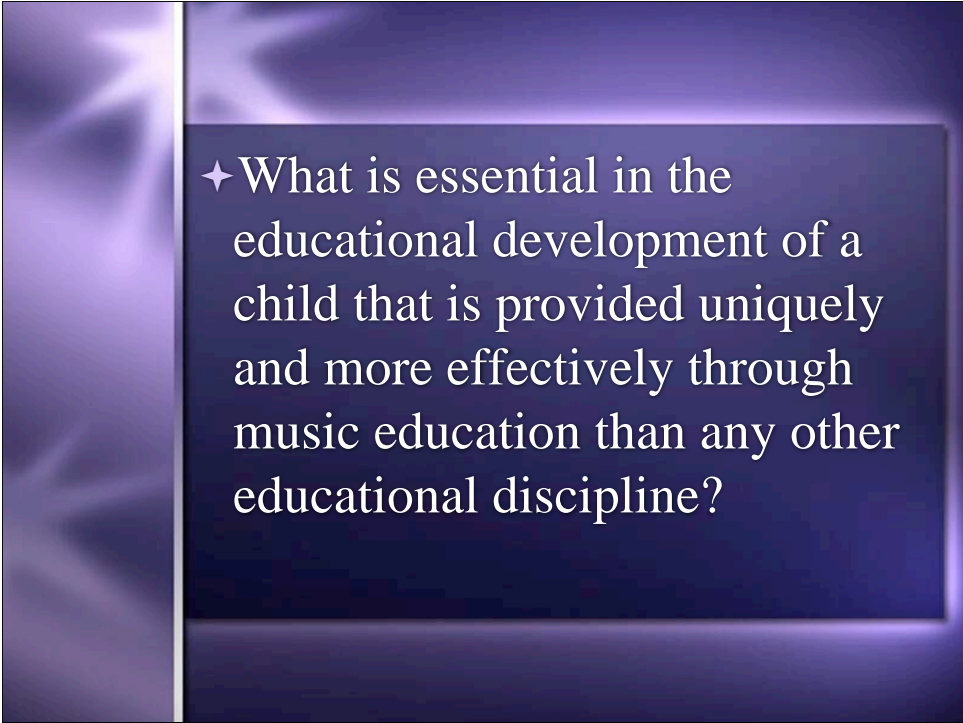
6. impoverished students are aided and transformed into vibrant learning environments when the arts are infused into their culture and curricula.



✦ 8. Public schools have the responsibility for providing a complete education for all children.

8. Public schools have the responsibility for providing a complete education for all children.

I am going to ask you to discuss this issue in small groups for about 5 minutes. (this time more than two) The question I would like you to explore is this:



✦ What is essential in the educational development of a child that is provided uniquely and more effectively through music education than any other educational discipline?

What is essential in the educational development of a child that is provided uniquely and more effectively through music education than any other educational discipline?

We have some very important contributions mentioned that music provides to children. If music is to be a viable aspect in schooling, then our purposes must fit into the ultimate purpose of schools.

Lets brainstorm some of the overall goals for education, then we will get back to how music fits into these goals. Why do we have schools?

## Why do we have schools?

- ✦ Prepare for the workforce
- ✦ Prepare enhance a global and technological society
- ✦ Understand the natural world
- ✦ Communicate using the symbol systems of our culture
- ✦ Understand self and appreciate the world around us

### Audience discussion

Discuss how music education contributes to each of these goals?

Prepare for the workforce

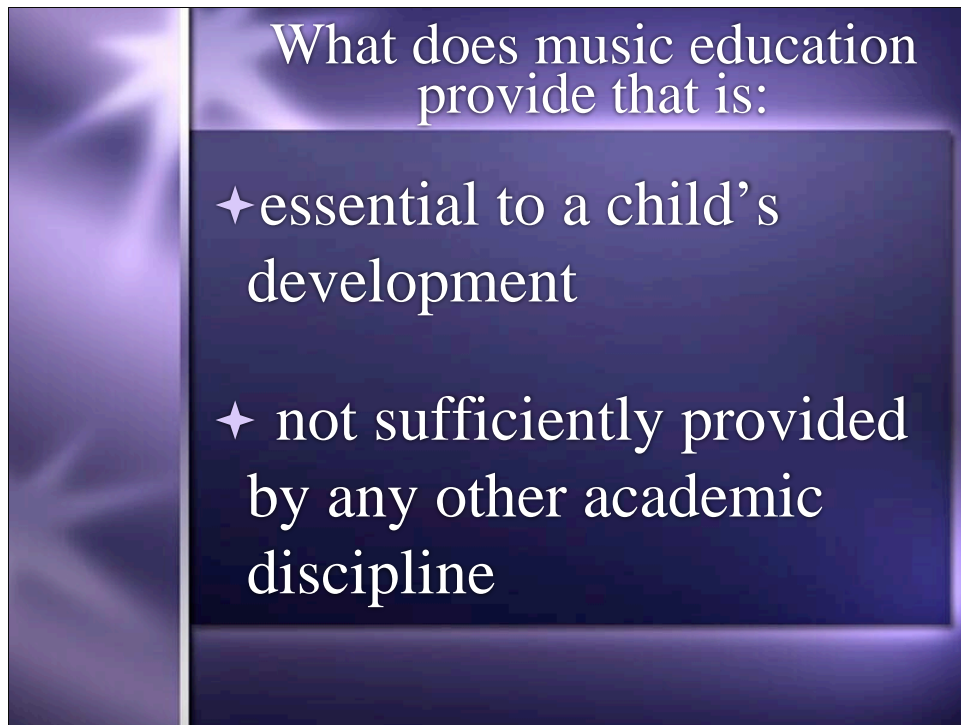
Prepare for a global and technological society

Conceptually understand the natural world

Communicate using the symbol systems of our culture

Understand self and appreciate beauty





Here is that difficult question to answer, but should be fluent in our conversation: What does music education provide that is essential to the development of a child and is not sufficiently provided by any other academic discipline in school?

[audience discussion]

To discover the essence of what makes us human, FEELING.

To teach to future generations one of the unique communication tools developed by humanity. The vehicle to express feeling.

Eunice Boardman, last year's recipient of MENC's prestigious life service award said it better than anyone I have ever encountered:

The purpose of education is to help the young become competent in the use of their own and other cultures' symbol systems so that they can share knowledge, absorb wisdom, and gain the power to use these symbols in ways that allow them as individuals to go beyond the information given to think new thoughts--ideas never before conceived--and thus to create meaning and to use that meaning to guide their actions as functioning members of a global society.

Grand Masters Series

AUTHOR: EUNICE BOARDMAN

TITLE: GENERATING A THEORY OF MUSIC  
INSTRUCTION

SOURCE: Music Educators Journal 88 no2 45-53 S 2001

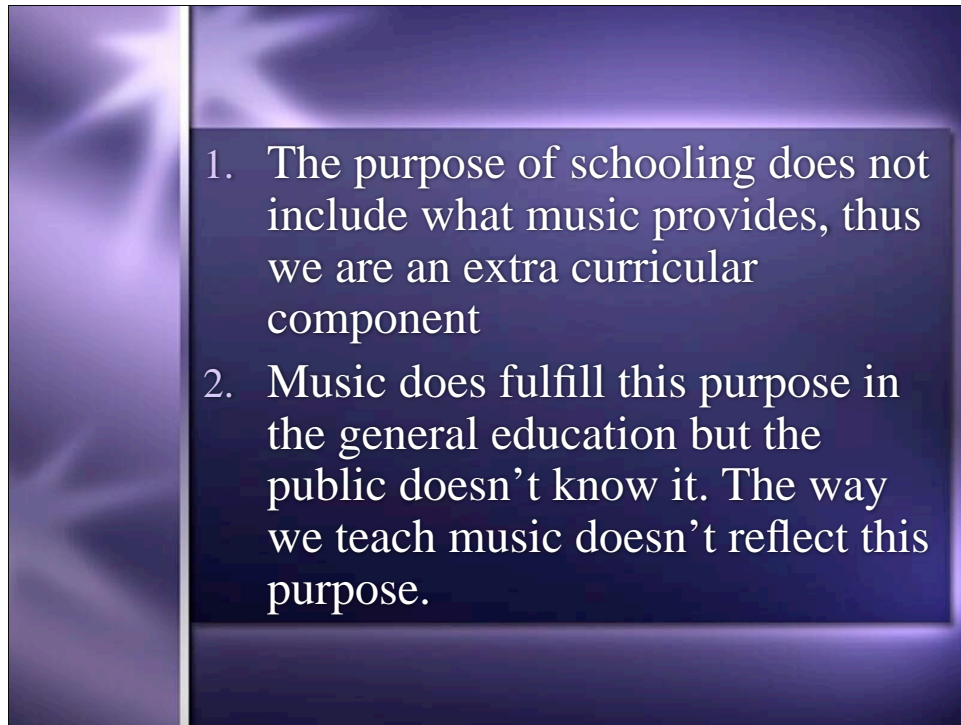
\* The purpose of education is to help the young become competent in the use of their own and other cultures' symbol systems so that they can share knowledge, absorb wisdom, and gain the power to use these symbols in ways that allow them as individuals to go beyond the information given to think new thoughts--ideas never before conceived--and thus to create meaning and to use that meaning to guide their actions as functioning members of a global society.

If the purpose of education is to initiate the young into the symbol systems used within the culture, then the purpose of music education must be to introduce the young into the musical symbolic system so that they can use this system as performers, creators, and listeners and, thus, become skilled in the use of music as a vehicle for giving voice to the inner life of feeling--to:  
"express the inexpressible"

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Sound's pretty important, doesn't it? So why isn't music education, our bands or choirs, considered equally academic in the development of a child as, lets say, math or reading?

[audience response]

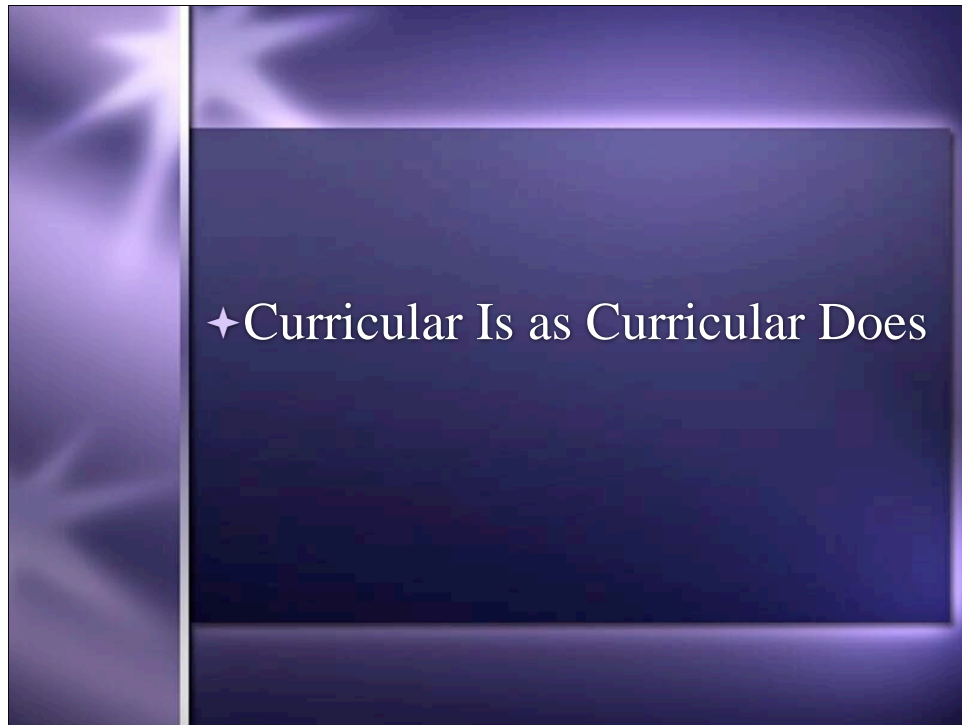


I can only think of three reasons, either:

1. The purpose of schooling does not include what music provides, thus we are an extra curricular component
2. Music does fulfill this purpose but the general public doesn't know it
3. Music does not reflect this purpose in how it is taught

Who is responsible to alter (develop) affirm the understanding of music as curricular?

An what is the most effective way to alter the perception of music as curricular?



Curricular Is as Curricular Does –What is meant by this statement?

How do we make music academically viable?



### How do we make music academically viable?

It is in our philosophy of why we teach music. Now I am not talking about your written philosophy that you wrote in college or you might have been required to give to your principal for a curriculum document. I am talking about the philosophy that we see in action. You see it doesn't matter what is written on a piece of paper, and it doesn't really make any difference what you say. What ultimately matters is what actually happens in your classroom.

- If we say music is an essential element for all students but only have music opportunities for students who choose to play an instrument in our band or sing in our choirs, then our philosophy is music not essential for all.
- If we say that the value of music education is the development of sensitivity and responsiveness to music test only skill proficiency, then our philosophy is that the value of music education is vocational.
- If we determine the success of our band or choral program by group ratings at contests or festivals, then we are an extra-curricular group activity, a sport, rather than an academic subject.
- If our students receive grades in our classes based on attendance and behavior rather than on individual achievement to specifically stated standards, then we are an activity and not viably academic.
- If we agree with the National Standards but mostly, or only performance is reflected in our daily class activities, then we do not support what our national organization outlines as viable music education.

### How do we make our music courses academically viable?

- Know and be able to communicate why we teach music. This is your philosophy.
- Act like an academic discipline: prepare, purposefully teach, & document/assess student progress
- Our classroom must reflect our philosophy.



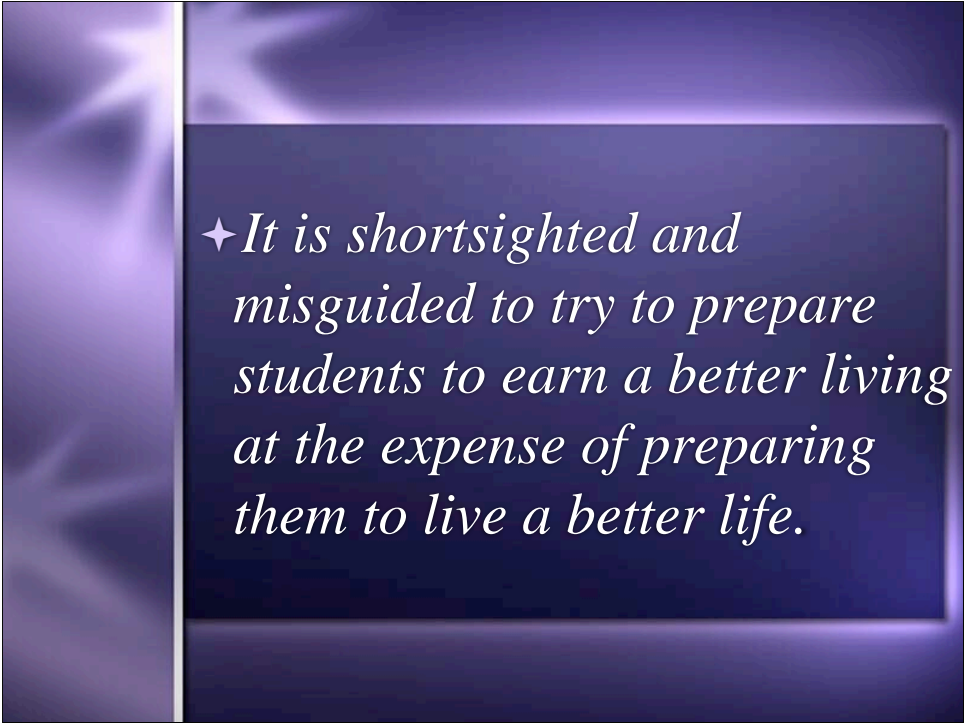
★Curricular Is as Curricular Does

If you take only one thing out of this symposium, I hope it will be this: curricular is and curricular does!

Create a living philosophy that reflects your classroom and a classroom that reflects your philosophy.

Then be able to support your decisions when is needed, (which will probably not be needed if your philosophy of why you teach music is aligned with the purpose of schooling).

It might be that what we need to address is not only why we teach music, but why we teach at all. Why we have schools.



✦ *It is shortsighted and misguided to try to prepare students to earn a better living at the expense of preparing them to live a better life.*

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Special efforts will be necessary in the future to humanize and personalize our technology-saturated environment if we're to restore the warmth and sensitivity that are found only in human relationships, that are necessary to our emotional health, and that are developed so effectively through the arts.

But special efforts must also be made so that our music classroom, even the performance courses, reflect the National Standards and the rigor expected in all academically viable subjects. There is no one answer to how this is to happen, but it all begins at one place. This is your honest philosophy of why you teach music.

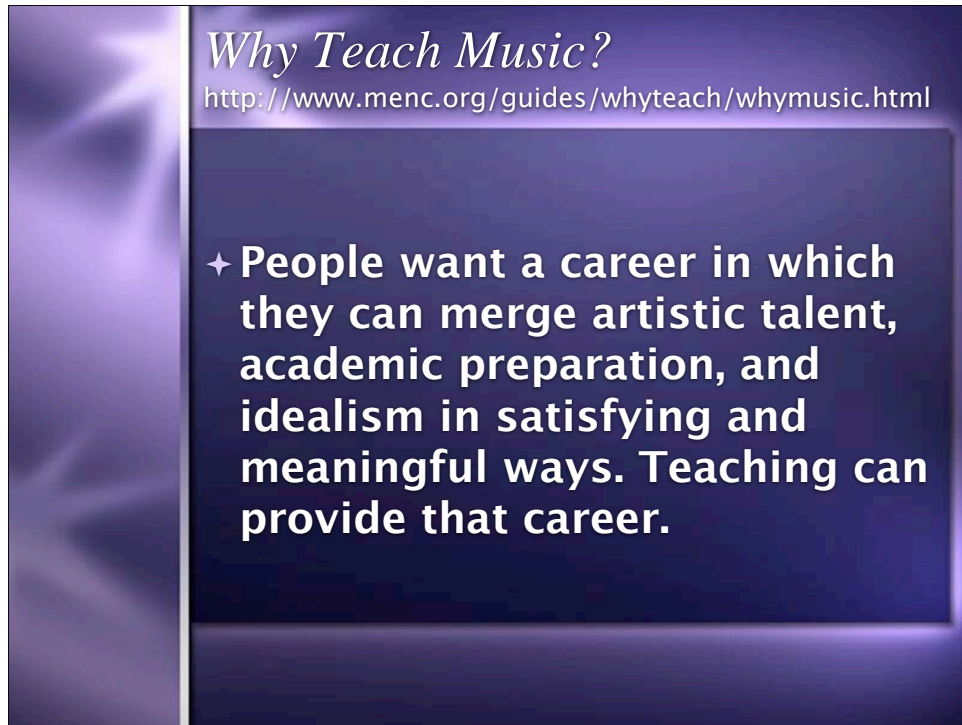


## *“A Personal Philosophy of Music Education”*

- ✦ First, examine what you see as the “why” of formal education, or “schooling” (total curriculum, not just music). what do you believe are the underlying assumptions as to the ultimate value and purpose of education?
- ✦ Second, examine these same questions as they apply specifically to music education. How does your music classes fit into the assumptions above?

Let me leave you with this suggestion. Think about the American schooling system and your individual school and explore the purpose of schooling as it fits with your situation. Then consider that “if this is the purpose of schooling”, then how does your program fit into this purpose. You may find after an honest look at your school, your teaching and your program that your program might have to be enhanced to fit in with their definition of academic. You probably will also see a narrowness of purpose in your educational system that needs your influence.

Either way, this is the step that we need to take in our schools to support and enhance music education.



Do we teach music because we love music? MENC says, in their a web-site titled “Why Teach Music”:

**People want a career in which they can merge artistic talent, academic preparation, and idealism in satisfying and meaningful ways. Teaching can provide that career.**

<http://www.menc.org/guides/whyteach/whymusic.html>



**Teaching offers many kinds of satisfaction. A teacher can:**

- ✦ **continue lifetime study and practice of his or her chosen discipline**
- ✦ **experience the thrill of sharing thoughts and feelings with others and seeing others learn**
- ✦ **enjoy time for recreational travel and professional development**

It continues saying:

**Teaching offers many kinds of satisfaction. A teacher can**  
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**chosen discipline**  
**experience the thrill of sharing thoughts and**  
**feelings with others and seeing others learn**  
**enjoy time for recreational travel and**  
**professional development**

Professional development! That is what we are doing here. And of course vacations during summer and holidays are great. You can't beat that.

Well, these may very well be the reason most of us originally went into music education. We wanted to do what we like, MUSIC! And this is a good reason to go into music because we should have an aptitude and desire for music if we teach it. But although good for the first step, it's a bit self-serving and doesn't support the purpose of music in schools, nor does it support the longevity as a teacher because most teaching doesn't involve our personal making of music.



## *Why Teach Music?*

So lets go back to the original question, **why do we teach music?**

In today's educational system it is becoming increasingly important to understand, communicate, and demonstrate why music is essential to a child's educational development.