

# *Sounds of Learning*

## *The Impact of Music Education*

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September 1, 2005

Dear Friends:

Music education is one of the cornerstones of a well-rounded and quality education. For much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, children schooled in U.S. public schools had access to quality, sequential music education. It was integral to an education that grounded students in skills for productive work and lives.

In the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, music education came under threat and was marginalized in the school curriculum. This threat was realized in the elimination of thousands of programs and substantial cutbacks of qualified and certified music educators.

It is believed that music education is a subject with intrinsic cultural and artistic value and a skill-based activity that nurtures developmental and cognitive aspects of every child. However, only recently have the benefits of active participation in music been quantified through scientific research. Also only recently, new information provided by this research has informed the education policy debate.

This growing body of research data has helped define music education's benefits as part of a complete education and has provided baseline arguments to move music education back into the core curriculum. The latter remains a long-term goal for genuine renewed access to music education for every child in every school. In the short term, these research-based arguments have helped restore programs, stemmed the tide of some program cut backs and underpinned arguments for music and art education in the language of education policy and legislation.

The "Sounds of Learning" initiative seeks to expand the body of research about music education's intrinsic and extrinsic benefits. It is hoped that the initiative will yield new knowledge for the field of music education. Ultimately, we look to these research outcomes along with other research to fuel ongoing policy debates about what constitutes a meaningful and quality education for our nation's children.

The Foundation wishes to express its deepest appreciation to the skilled and inspiring Steering Committee of the "Sounds of Learning" initiative and to our partnering supporters, the Fund for Improvement of Education at the U.S. Department of Education and the Grammy Foundation. It also expresses deep gratitude to our founding and on-going affiliate, NAMM, the International Music Products Association.

Sincerely,

Mary Luehrsen  
Executive Director

International Foundation  
for Music Research

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## **FOREWARD**

Kristen Madsen  
Grammy Foundation

The mission of the GRAMMY Foundation is to cultivate an awareness, appreciation and advancement of the impact of music on American culture. In our efforts to achieve that objective, the Foundation has developed a wide range of music education and advocacy programs. Historically, the importance these programs—and music education programs nationwide—has been asserted in large part through passionately articulated anecdotal evidence of the positive impact of music education. The Sounds of Learning Project endeavors to sponsor and collect statistically significant evidence on the perceived positive benefits of music education. Utilizing a consistent and systematic evaluation process to reveal actual causes and links from the impact of music education, an expanded repository of research will be available on the subject.

Developing a blueprint of all the results that derive from music education will not only validate effective music instruction already established and inspire the creation of innovative curricula, but also inform the dialogue with policy makers and funding providers of education programs nationwide. The GRAMMY Foundation is proud to be a partner with the International Foundation for Music Research in funding the Sounds of Learning project.

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# 1.

## THE SOUNDS OF LEARNING PROJECT

Donald A. Hodges

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Sounds of Learning: The Impact of Music Education is a major research initiative designed to examine the roles of music education in the lives of school-age children and to expand the understanding of music's role in a quality education. Sounds of Learning (SoL) is an initiative of the International Foundation for Music Research (IFMR), with additional funding provided by the Fund for Improvement of Education from the U.S. Department of Education and the Grammy Foundation. A major goal of the project is to examine music education's influence on:

- (a) Achievement and success in school,
- (b) All aspects of a child's growth and development,
- (c) The uses and functions of music in daily life, and
- (d) Home, school, and community environments.

A unique feature of this project is that significant funding is available to support research designed to advance our understanding of the impact of music education.

SoL is guided by the following Steering Committee:

Edward P. Asmus, Professor of Music Education and Associate Dean, University of Miami Frost School of Music

Paul A. Haack, Professor of Music Education, University of Minnesota School of Music

Donald A. Hodges, Covington Distinguished Professor of Music Education; Director, Music Research Institute, University of North Carolina at Greensboro School of Music

Mary Luehrsen, Executive Director, International Foundation for Music Research

Kristen Madsen, Senior Vice President, The Grammy Foundation

Debra S. O'Connell, Postdoctoral Fellow, University of North Carolina at Greensboro School of Music

Patricia E. Sink, Graduate Advisor for Music Education, University of North Carolina at Greensboro School of Music

David J. Teachout, Chair, Division of Music Education, University of North Carolina at Greensboro School of Music

Biographical descriptions of Steering Committee members can be found in Appendix A.

During an initial organizational meeting, the Steering Committee organized the Sounds of Learning project into three phases, with the following timeline:

#### Phase 1

—2005—

February 11-13: initial Steering Committee meeting

March 3: Phase 1 Request for Proposals (RFPs) announced

May 1: announcement of research award recipients

July 1: *SoL Status Report* drafts due

August 1-3: second Steering Committee meeting

September 1: release of first draft *SoL Status Report* and Database; dissemination to selected reviewers for review and commentary

#### Phase 2

September 1: Phase 2 RFPs announced

October 1: deadline for reviewers to return critiques

November 1: deadline for submission of Phase 2 RFP proposals

December 3-4: third Steering Committee meeting

December 5: announcement of Phase 2 RFP recipients; release of second draft of *SoL Status Report* soon thereafter

—2006—

January 3: Final Reports of Phase 1 research projects due

Feb. 18-19: Steering Com. meeting and Research Awards Conference with Phase 1 & 2 RFP recipients

#### Phase 3

September 1: Phase 3 RFPs announced

December 1: Final Report of Phase 2 research projects due

—2007—

February: publish revised *SoL Status Report*, including a compendium of all funded research

February: Sounds of Learning national summit, Washington, D.C.

## PHASE 1

Phase 1 included the previously mentioned Steering Committee meeting, announcement and contracting for initial research proposals, and release of the *SoL Status Report* and Database.

### **Phase 1: Request for Proposals**

Three Requests for Proposals (RFPs), conceived as short-term research projects, were advertised during March 2005. The application deadline was April 15 and several proposals were received for each of the following RFPs:

#### ***RFP1: The Impact of Participating in School Music Programs on Standardized Test Results***

Proposals are requested to conduct a short-term quantitative research study of the impact of participating in high or low quality school music programs on standardized test results. Specifically, the proposed study should be designed to investigate the relationship between fourth- and eighth-grade students' end-of-grade test scores and their participation in school music programs recognized as either high or low quality programs. The successful proposal should include a description of: (a) methods by which schools will be differentiated in terms of quality music education programs, (b) process of obtaining end-of-grade test scores as well as other data necessary to produce valid and generalizable results, and (c) methods of data analysis. Additionally, the proposal should include a timeline and a budget, and evidence of prior experiences in executing the procedures to complete the project successfully. The final report is due January 3, 2006.

#### ***RFP2: The Importance of Music Education in the Lives of Teenagers***

The purpose of this project is to determine the importance of music education in the lives of teenagers based on a content analysis of 1,500 essays. Collected for another project, these essays were written by middle and high school students from all over the United States as they

expressed their thoughts and feelings on music education. In particular, we are interested in making connections to the four primary themes of: (a) achievement and success in school, (b) all aspects of a child's growth and development, (c) the uses and functions of music in daily life, and (d) the home, school, and community environments. The proposal should indicate how the researcher intends to conduct the analysis, and should include a timeline and a budget; supporting materials should provide evidence of prior experience using content analysis techniques. The final report is due January 3, 2006.

***RFP3: The Impact of a Quality Music Program on K-12 Education***

The purpose of this project is to perform short-term qualitative research within a school district recognized for its musical quality. We are interested in obtaining a creative proposal that can identify the primary student achievement and success outcomes caused by music. The study would look at the breadth of possibilities of how music impacts children in elementary and secondary schooling as exemplified in one school district with a quality music program. The study should provide a sorted list of the major outcomes that can be used to focus future research. The supporting qualitative evidence for each outcome's rating must be provided. Summer 2005 is to be used for planning the implementation of the study. The research is to be implemented during Fall 2005. The final report is due January 3, 2006.

**Phase I Awards**

Christopher M. Johnson, Professor of Music Education and Music Therapy from the University of Kansas, was chosen to conduct RFP1: *The Impact of Participating in School Music Programs on Standardized Test Results*. Patricia S. Campbell, Donald E. Petersen Professor of Music at the University of Washington, was selected to conduct RFP2: *The Importance of Music Education in the Lives of Teenagers*. Final reports on these two projects are due January 3, 2006.

Although several proposals were received for RFP3: The Impact of a Quality Music Program on K-12 Education, ultimately it was decided not to fund this project.

### **Phase 1: SoL Status Report and Database**

The second part of Phase 1 was to prepare a document that would provide the background and context for SoL. This Status Report is accompanied by a Database that will be described subsequently. Following the introductory chapter, the next five chapters (with their authors) are related to the main themes: 2: The Impact of Music Education on Academic Achievement (Hodges & O'Connell), 3: The Impact of Music Education on All Aspects of a Child's Growth and Development (Teachout), 4: The Impact of Music Education on the Child's Self (O'Connell), 5: The Uses and Functions of Music as a Curricular Foundation for Music Education (Haack), and 6: The Impact of Music Education on Home, School, and Community (Asmus). The purpose of these chapters is to review the relevant literature and to discuss implications for learning, for future research, and for policy makers. These review chapters are followed by 7: A Research Agenda to Investigate the Impact of Music Education (Hodges).

A unique feature of the review chapters is that details of relevant research studies are not included in the paper itself, rather they may be found in a Database available at <http://www.uncg.edu/mus/soundsoflearning.html> or on the IFMR website at [www.music-research.org](http://www.music-research.org). The advantage of this approach is that the review chapters are focused more on broad conclusions than on supportive detail. This should facilitate understanding for policy makers and others who are interested in the broad conclusions of relevant research. Those who are interested in the specific aspects of particular research studies can find those details in the Database.

The SoL Database is a fully searchable relational database that includes a complete citation for each study (author(s), title, journal, volume, issue, pages), as well as an abstract, and coding with respect to the four major areas of emphasis (e.g., achievement and success in school, etc.). Abstracts have been prepared by chapter authors, their research assistants, or by Dr. O'Connell. Published journal articles and unpublished dissertations are included; data entry is ongoing.

Chapter 7: A Research Agenda to Investigate the Impact of Music Education synthesizes the findings of the previous five chapters. From that synthesis, a research agenda was developed to provide a broad overview of research needed to improve our understanding of the impact of music education. Finally, seven Requests for Proposals were created based on the SoL research agenda. These RFPs are being presented to the music education research community in an effort to recruit experienced researchers to conduct specified studies. Funding from the IMFR, Department of Education, and Grammy Foundation will support these efforts.

## **PHASE 2**

Based on the *SoL Status Report* and Database, and particularly the research agenda, a second round of RFPs was announced on September 1, 2005. Proposals should be submitted by November 1 and research award recipients will be announced December 5, with most final reports due December 1, 2006. A few projects may be given longer timeframes to allow for longitudinal studies or data gathering that may take more time. For complete details, see the concluding section of Chapter 7 or go to <http://www.uncg.edu/mus/soundsoflearning.html> or <http://www.music-research.org>.

Concurrent with the recruitment of researchers to conduct studies from Phase 2 RFPs is the dissemination of this document for review and commentary by a panel of selected music educators, including:

David Circle, President of Music Educators National Conference: The National Association for Music Education; Coordinating Teacher for Blue Valley (KS) School District

Charles A. Elliott, Director of the School of Music, University of Southern Mississippi

Clifford K. Madsen, Robert O. Lawton Distinguished Professor of Music, Coordinator of Music Education/Music Therapy/Contemporary Media, Florida State University

Gary E. McPherson, Zimmerman Professor of Music Education, University of Illinois

Wendy L. Sims, Director of Studies in Music Education, University of Missouri

Peter R. Webster, John W. Beattie Professor of Music Education and Technology, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research, Northwestern University

These experts were asked to provide independent oversight, to identify missing studies in the review chapters, suggest wording changes to more accurately reflect understandings on broad issues, and to nominate items for the research agenda. Suggested RFPs are also welcomed, and these may be added to the third round of RFPs (September, 2006). Their reviews will be included in the second draft of this document.

Following the submission of final reports, all research award recipients from Phases 1 and 2 will meet with the Steering Committee (February 18-19, 2006). This will be a time of information sharing of both completed and in-progress research. Ensuing discussions will focus on integrating this new information into the existing knowledge base as synthesized and analyzed in the SoL Status Report and Database. Also, the group will discuss topics to be included in Phase 3 RFPs.

### **PHASE 3**

Phase 3 RFPs will be announced September 1, 2006. Phase 2 Final Reports are due December 1. Based on these completed studies, a new version of the SoL Status Report and Database will be prepared. This will include a compendium of all the funded research to date that not only provides complete details of the research projects, but also includes a synthesis of this

knowledge. Wherever appropriate, broad conclusions will be developed and an updated status report on the impact of music education will be made available. In particular, specific recommendations for policy makers will be emphasized. The compendium will be presented at a Sounds of Learning Summit to be held in Washington, D.C. in February 2007.

### **CONCLUSION**

As stated at the outset, the primary purpose of the SoL project is to determine the impact of music education. Beyond this is the desire to provide policy makers with rigorous, data-based information that will inform decision making. Since the time of Lowell Mason in the early 1800s music educators have been engaged in nearly constant struggle to justify a rightful place for music in the school curriculum. Throughout that time there have been thousands of dedicated music educators who have impacted hundreds of thousands of children in profound and positive ways. Yet, too often music is still marginalized and rarely recognized for the powerful role it should play in a quality education. It would be naïve to assume that the publication of this document will solve all these problems. Nevertheless, there is strong belief that high-quality research, particularly research focused on core issues, will be a significant step forward in placing music in its rightful place in the curriculum.