

# Inspiration

Newsletter of the Arts Network of the National Association for Gifted Children

## From the Chair

There has never been a more exciting time for those interested in arts education for gifted children. Many might question the sanity of this statement. Certainly gifted education is under attack from many quarters, as is arts education in general. Budget cuts, a gloomy economic situation, and attacks on the field have left many dispirited and discouraged. In reality, those most passionate about gifted education and the arts rise to the challenge. Indeed, the best advocates for gifted education and the arts are those whose fervor is grounded in love for the field and an almost missionary zeal for promoting arts education for these children.

Arts education has too long been seen as an add-on to the general education curriculum. Certainly it is convenient to leave visual art, music, dance, and theatre instruction to specialists who work with children once or twice a week. This setup, however, frequently changes in times of budgetary cutbacks. While unfortunate, weekly sessions with special teachers also ignore that gifted students need exposure to the fine arts *all* the time, not just during selected sessions. Although the optimal situation allows special teachers time to plan and implement arts instruction with

regular classroom teachers and gifted education specialists, this does not have to happen for arts instruction to occur. Many aspects of the curriculum, including English/language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science, can be augmented and improved through inclusion of the arts.

The many fine sessions offered by the Arts Network this year attest to the many ways that arts instruction can be incorporated into the daily curriculum. From ways of identifying artistically and musically talented children, strategies to include the arts in language arts and mathematics instruction, and research documenting the value of arts instruction, the Arts Network is providing an abundance of valuable and rich information that can help gifted education classrooms and programs nationally. Kudos to Bess Worley for her fine job in putting together such a comprehensive and wide-ranging program of sessions.

Advocating for arts education, or gifted education, is potentially scary. It is, however, also rewarding, worthwhile, and ultimately best left in the hands of those who care about it passionately and are willing to do so without fee or other remuneration. The chair of the Arts Network, Lou Lloyd-Zannini, is an exemplar of this. His dedication, drive, and devotion to providing all

gifted children access to the arts is a testament to what a single individual can do. If all members of the Arts Network advocate for their charges even half as well as Lou, we can transform gifted education programs to provide multiple portals for artistic creation and appreciation. As a subject matter, art, even as defined by content standards, allows teachers and their charges the possibility of transformation. Art allows the learner to “envisage things as if they could be otherwise and posits alternatives to mere passivity” (Greene, 1988, p. 16). A curriculum can be crafted that explores art in a manner that is appropriate for learner needs while also being true to the discipline’s finer tenets. We must do this, at every opportunity and to the best of our abilities. The children we serve deserve nothing less.

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## Considering the Gift of Music

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In his 1972 report to Congress, Commissioner of Education S. P. Marland helped to establish the need for services for “gifted” students in America. Since then, the field has been faced with the challenge of defining who those students are, how they are to be identified, and how best to meet their needs. The current federal definition, available in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, targets students who show “evidence of high achievement capability” and require special services to develop that capability (Title IX, Part A, Section 9101(22)). Areas of giftedness articulated in that definition include general intellect, academic ability, creativity, art and leadership.

Identification of students and service in these areas look very different, and districts with limited resources are often forced to address only certain types of giftedness. In a significant majority of districts, this means that intellectual or academic talents are typically addressed, while others (music, creativity, leadership) are more often left to the happenstance intervention of a parent, teacher or mentor (Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted). In an economic climate in which even historically strong programs are rapidly disappearing, it seems increasingly wishful to suggest broadening identification and service to target these marginalized talents.

Gifted students and their diverse array of needs, however, will always be in our classrooms, and until those educational needs can be met in the regular classroom, special services for these students must be advocated. Furthermore, the deconstruction of existing programs and increased demand for accountability provide both the justification for, and the freedom to, reconsider the focus of our services for gifted students. As Kris Kristofferson says in his song *Bobby McGee*, “freedom’s just another word for nothing left to lose.” This article focuses on a curricular area of educational and cultural importance indicated in the federal definition of giftedness: music.

### Music and Gifted Education

The role of music in gifted education is murky for several reasons. Initially, giftedness and talent in music can draw from multiple areas of ability and be realized in many different forms. Since giftedness in music may or may not align with exceptional abilities in more commonly identified domains (general intellect or specific academic ability), we will make a tentative distinction between musical giftedness and these more popular domains, which we will refer to hereafter as “traditional” giftedness. It is important to recognize, of course, that students may exhibit either or both. Dual questions then arise: 1. How do we support the development of musically gifted children?, and 2. What is the role of music in the education of students who are identified as gifted through IQ or achievement tests? After discussing approaches to musical giftedness, we will make recommendations for addressing these questions in the context of school systems that generally do not consider either question.

### Defining Musical Giftedness

Defining musical giftedness is not a clear cut proposition. While some make a case for a specific set of characteristics that designate a person as being “musically gifted”, being musical draws upon many combinations of skills and abilities which vary according to the nature of the particular musical activity. Winner and Martino (2000) frame musical giftedness narrowly, based primarily on sensitivity to and ability to process aural information, and the desire or motivation to work creatively with sounds. Gardner (1983) also provides a narrow characterization of musical thinking when he identifies music as one of his original seven intelligences. While not as specifically defined as by Winner and Martino, musical intelligence involves sensitivity, processing, and representation of sound as a core aspect. However, Gardner acknowledges that musical activities draw upon multiple cognitive abilities beyond musical intelligence. When he discusses musical intelligence, he generally discusses composers, yet when he discusses musical performance, he discusses it in the context of kinesthetic, rather than musical, intelligence (1997). Reimer formalizes this view that musical intelligences vary by type of musical activity by proposing specific types of musical intelligences. While it is plausible that the core ability to think in sound is a core component of musical intelligence (and musical giftedness), this ability does not fit neatly into the field of musical activity, as other abilities are required, depending upon the type of engagement with music.

McPherson and Williamon (2006) also propose a model of musical giftedness that draws from multiple domains, adapted from Gagne's model of giftedness and talent. This model defines musical giftedness as natural abilities possessed by the student and musical talent as the realization of those abilities through the catalysts of intrapersonal contextual factors. The natural abilities in this model are drawn from a variety of domains, including Intellectual, Creative, Socio-affective, and Sensori-motor. These abilities are realized in musical talents in a broad range of skills, including performing, improvising, composing, arranging, analyzing, appraising, conducting, and music teaching. For educators and parents, this model is powerful, as it recognizes that a wide range of giftedness can be realized in a multitude of ways. Individual examination of musical giftedness, combined with the individual's intrapersonal characteristics, can be helpful in selecting which types of musical skills and experiences will best serve the individual student.

### Identifying Musical Giftedness

Given the complex nature of musical giftedness, it should not be surprising that it is not easily identified. Individual observation by teachers and parents of students in a musical context remains the primary means of initial identification. While it is important to identify musical giftedness so that it be nurtured and developed into musical talent, the lack of formal definitions and identification is perhaps less troubling since such a procedure, if it did exist, would not determine access to instruction as it does for aca-

demic giftedness.

Serving the needs of musically gifted students can be a challenge for school music teachers. Large classes and limited instruction time can make differentiating instruction a challenge. This is especially true in performance ensembles (i.e. band, choir, and orchestra) where a large part of the curriculum (the works being performed) is determined by the mean performance abilities of a particular group. It is important for teachers to provide supplementary learning opportunities that may include additional performance development, compositional assignments, and leadership opportunities within the ensemble. Even with these efforts, the primary form of nurturing musical giftedness usually involves private study outside of the school setting. Toward that end, it is the teacher's responsibility to serve as a liaison between gifted students (and their parents) and resources in the broader musical community. While these resources are typically local artists, community music schools, and universities, technology is increasingly eliminating the geographical limitation of access, which is a boon for students in remote and isolated communities (Dammers, 2009).

Music study inside and outside the public schools in the United States typically focuses on developing performance skills (i.e. taking lessons on an instrument or voice). While this is rich and rewarding study for many students, care should be taken that performance is a good match for the strengths of the particular student. For students whose particular strength is in 'thinking in sound' and being creative, a focus on composing and improvising may be more rewarding, either through composition lessons or through studying with a performance teacher who is capable of integrating this aspect of study. Advances in music technology provide multiple environments for exploring these aspects of music, either through study or informally at home (Schroth, et al, 2009). In addition to matching the type of musical study to the students' abilities, care should be taken to find an instructor whose instructional style, musical focus, and personality fit well with the individual student.

### **Music and the Academically Gifted**

Fortunately (and perhaps unfairly), most students with extraordinary academic or intellectual talents do not face the challenges outlined above. Following the launch of the Soviet satellite Sputnik, America was ready to put into place a system to identify and develop those young Americans who could keep the nation ahead of what was perceived to be an imminent threat. As a result of the development which followed, programs for the academically gifted, while currently in decline, are still common in one form or another throughout the United States (Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted, 2009). Of course, students with both academic and musical talents inherit the challenges associated with both domains.

What is the value of music to a student with advanced academic or intellectual capabilities? An accurate response to such questions involves some assumptions about both the definition of "academically gifted" and the nature of available music programs. Nevertheless, some relevant themes are present in the literature on gifted children.

### **Multiple Gifts**

First, it is important to note that while Gagné's Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT) offers a framework for defining musical giftedness, it does not actually speak of specific types of giftedness (Gagné, 2004). Instead, it proposes four domains of potential which combine through development to give quicker and deeper success in a set of talent fields. A student identified as academically gifted could possess any of a variety of combinations of these domains depending on the discipline, the philosophy of the educational setting and the procedure for identifying talent. Similarly, while McPherson and Williamson suggest combinations of Gagné's domains which might be relevant to musicality, the domains themselves are non-specific.

As all areas of giftedness spring from the same four domains in the DMGT, it stands to reason that there is a possibility of overlap between the foundations of traditional and musical giftedness in this model. When an academically gifted student appears to lack exceptional musical talent, this could reflect the lack of *identification* of musical giftedness as a latent trait rather than its absence. One reason, then, to pursue music with an academically gifted student is to allow for the development of related potential in musical expression. She could, in fact, be another Mendelssohn in waiting.

### **"He's No Mendelssohn"**

That being said, there are plenty of students who are advanced in academic capabilities but not musically gifted. Imagine a brilliant problem-solver or mathematician who cannot sing a recognizable "Happy Birthday" or shuffle in time to James Brown. To such students, music might seem a waste of time. However, there are some things we think we know about students with high intellectual ability which dovetail nicely with participation in music.

Dabrowski, as part of his theory of positive disintegration, introduces the idea of psychic over excitabilities (OEs). The theory has found a comfortable home among gifted educators due to the belief that OEs occur at higher incidence among the gifted (Tieso, 2007). Among the OEs is the sensual OE, which is characterized by extraordinary "delight in beautiful objects, sounds of words or writing styles, music, color, and balance" (Ackerman, 2009). If such an awareness is more prevalent in the academically gifted, then such a student may deserve an introduction to the making of music for the possible revelation it may hold.

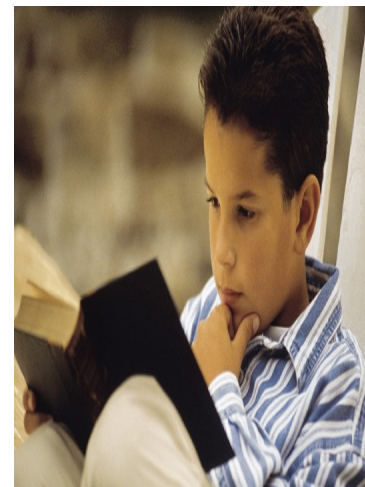
In addition to the personal benefit, there is also a social angle. In his 1972 report, Marland (p. 28) proposed that the gifted are often ostracized due to their developmental mismatch with peers. Playing or singing as part of a musical ensemble typically mandates collaboration regardless of ability or perspective, and it gives a common goal to all participants. This, in turn, can provide an alternative context for developing the cognitive structures necessary for working with others. . In her 2007 book *American Band*, Kristen Laine provides a compelling illustration of an academically gifted student who finds the school marching band a critical

component in the development of his leadership skills, personality, and ultimately, an important source of support in difficult times. School music ensembles serve not only as a means of musical study, but also as a vehicle for developing social skills, personal identity, and social belonging within the school. While it is clear that not every student with exceptional intellect is a social misfit, the intellectual differences so often emphasized in other classes are addressed through common experience in musical ensembles.

Finally, while some academically gifted students find challenge exciting, others lack the ability to face challenge specifically because their high academic ability has kept them from experiencing that challenge. As a result, resiliency can be low among the academically gifted. For students who are academically but not musically gifted, musical study and performance may be one of the few places in which success does not come easily, resulting in a renewed appreciation and capability for recognizing limitations and working to develop skills.

### Conclusion

Deciding whether to include music in a gifted program or carve out time for music in the life of a talented child depends on desired outcomes. Music for the academically gifted may unlock a new potential, or it may simply be a beautiful way to learn social competence and gain the ability to face challenge. Either way, the benefits are both personal and pragmatic for the student identified as gifted under an academic or general intellect model. Additionally, the rationales for music study for the general population apply to gifted students as well. A quote attributed to the jazz drummer Art Blakey (among others), puts this rationale nicely: "Music brushes away the dust of everyday life." Given the specific demands and needs of gifted students (of all sorts), music is an important aspect in their development and the enrichment of their lives.



**“While some academically gifted students find challenge exciting, others lack the ability to face challenge specifically because their high academic ability has kept them from experiencing that challenge”**

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## The Underexposure of Appreciation: Gifted Children's Need to Interact with Exemplars

The notion of appreciation, as developed through exposure to artistic exemplars, is a complex one, fraught with contradictions, exceptions, and unexpected rewards. The importance of affording children exposure to exemplars of art is obvious. Exposure allows children to build a developing depository of images and compositions from which to ground their lifelong appreciation of the visual and performing arts. If a child leaves school with a deep introduction to exemplars of the visual arts and music, it should follow that the child will be able to make a reasoned decision as to how or if he or she will continue to engage with the arts throughout life. As a result, many parents, teachers, and others concerned with children's development in the arts readily accept the conclusion that exposure to the fine arts is valuable in and of itself.

Nonetheless, this conclusion is made more difficult by the dearth of schools that provide curricula that allows students ample opportunities for exposure to the fine arts over the course of their K-12 experience. There are many reasons for this:

- A lack of curricula that includes sequencing appropriate to develop the skills and attitudes necessary for exposure leading to lifelong appreciation on the arts;
- An overemphasis on skill development that is separate from appreciation activities;
- Teachers' inability or lack of desire to give up control of instructional experiences; and
- A deficiency of instructional time that permits students to engage in a comprehensive aesthetic education that includes skill acquisition *and* familiarity with canonic images and compositions.

This essay will consider three ideas. First, the importance of appreciation through exposure will be discussed. Second, categories of appreciation will be briefly described. Third and last, the role of appreciation in the development of the gifted child will be considered.

### The Importance of Appreciation through Exposure

To have a better sense of why appreciation through exposure is important as well as what makes it distinct to previous curricular movements in the fine arts, it is helpful to reflect upon the general trends that affected the development and implementation of curriculum in the visual and performing arts in public schools during the latter part of the twentieth century. These developments have shaped how the fine arts are presented in today's schools and also have affected greatly teacher preparation. As administrator and parental expectations are also shaped by what has occurred before, general trends of the past sixty years continue to reverberate today.

The greater majority of fine arts programs in the United States emphasize performance activities (Byo, 1999; Orman, 2002). This is understandable insofar as a central part of "doing" music and art consists of the ability to perform or produce. So too, lifelong participation in the arts assumes that an individual has different avenues through which to participate (Pitts, 2005). The overemphasis of performance and production, however, especially prevalent in the performing arts, often affects the ability of individuals to continue performing after leaving school (Jellison, 2000). Unless students have been exposed to iconic and influential works when learning about their discipline, they often struggle to move to levels of performance and creation that demand understanding of prior works.

During the late 1960s and 1970s various curricula were created that emphasized aesthetic education (Reimer, 1989; 2003; Smith 1986; Smith, 1994; Reimer & Smith; 1992). These initiatives were powerful. The ideas that were used to ground aesthetic education within the disciplines of music and the visual arts were an offshoot of the work Jerome Bruner (Bruner, 1960). The result of this work was, along with disciplines such as physics and mathematics, music and art were deconstructed in order to establish the central concepts that defined the discipline. Children, mostly through listening and performing, were guided to learn the central concepts that guided professional practitioners in the field, such as performers, conductors, artists, and sculptors.



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The curricula in music and art classrooms focused upon teaching these concepts through the general notion of the spiraling curriculum (Bruner, 1960, 1966). That is, students revisited the central concepts of a discipline throughout their schooling through creation, performance and description or through study of history and criticism (Boardman, 1989, 2002; Wygant, 1993). The examples used and experiences in which students engaged become more complex and sophisticated as students aged.

In the late 1980s competing movements that emphasized production and performance were introduced (Elliott, 1995, Wygant, 1993). Although these programs were seemingly more comprehensive in their approach to engaging with the arts, the epistemological foundations of these ideas imply that the ability to produce or perform is the primary form of “knowing” valued by the visual or performing arts. For instance, if a child is able to play a piano sonata, then advocates for these newer approaches may argue that the child understands music by his or her demonstration of an appropriate performance (e.g., technical and stylistic aspects). At first blush, this seems reasonable, as there is certainly something to be said for “doing” as an indication of “knowing.” Nonetheless, part of what advocates assume constitutes understanding is the ability for a child to make a distinction between the same concepts in which students were introduced in traditional aesthetic education curricula. Thus, the curricula that originated during the 1960s and continued to the current day appear different, but are similar to such a degree that any differences are so indistinct as to be unimportant.

This distinction without a difference is important when considering the notion of appreciation. That is, it allows one to consider what appreciation could be..

Individuals can grow in their understanding of art through looking and listening to artistic exemplars;

- Artistic exemplars speak for themselves; and
- Appreciation through exposure is an end unto itself.
- Each of these assumptions are of particular importance. On the one hand, listening and viewing activities that focus upon concepts afford children the ability to deconstruct music or visual art exemplars (e.g., the music or visual art is a means to an end). Appreciation through exposure, on the other hand, assumes that the exemplars, and the experiences children derive from regular engagement with exemplars, are ends in and of themselves. In other words, a child need not engage with artistic exemplars for any purpose other than experiencing the exemplar.

Conversely, appreciation does not require:

- Lessons in which students must identify concepts as a central means of justifying listening and/or looking in the classroom; or
  - Experiences that demand that students possess a great degree of technical facility in the genre.
- The notion that listening to music and viewing art for the aural and visual enjoyment it can provide apart from necessary outcomes is not new. During the heyday of the aesthetic education movement, Osborne argued for experiencing art apart from any instrumental purpose and rather to allow individuals to focus upon the sensuous elements of a composition or image (Osborne, 1970). It is not necessary for an individual to share his or her impressions or thoughts and, even if one chooses to do so, he or she does not require specific language or concepts of art or aesthetics to engage in this sharing (Osborne, 1970).

### Categories of Appreciation

If appreciation through exposure to artistic exemplars is an end in and of itself, and if exposure means providing children with regular experiences with exemplars, then there ought to be a way to organize the exemplars to assist children, parents, and teachers. There are three categories that might assist in organizing artistic exemplars: by artist/composer/performer; by genre; and by historical period. Some form of organization is necessary insofar that doing so allows children the opportunity to be deeply immersed in related, but distinct, exemplars.

#### By artist/composer/(performer)

Exemplars that are organized by artist, composer, or performer allow children to experience music and visual arts as grounded through a personality. In other words, if the child demonstrates an interest in Bach or Dalí, then the parent, teacher, or child can research and collect examples of the exemplar’s work. This is the most common way that a child identifies with exemplars. It does not matter if the exemplars cover the complete oeuvre of the artist, composer, or performer. Rather, what is essential is that the child is introduced—through repeated viewing or listening—to a wide range of compositions. In the case of a preferred performer, the child should be introduced to the widest range possible of that performer’s recorded output.



In doing so, the child will be introduced to many different styles and genres. Parents and teachers can assist the child in selecting music with which he or she is unfamiliar, but may have an interest. For example, if the child has mentioned an interest in Mozart, Beethoven, or Thelonius Monk, the parent or teacher can access materials from the library. Different recordings of the same composition are a useful way of introducing children to the variety of interpretative choices made by a performer.

#### *By genre*

Introducing exemplars to children by genre is an excellent way to solidify interest that may have been established through immersion with a composer, artist, or performer. Once a child has had ample opportunity to listen to or look at a wide range of exemplars, he or she may be interested in focusing in on a particular portion of an artist's output. This focus does not require and, in fact, should actively resist, using the range of compositions or images as a means to teach *about* concepts in music or the visual arts. Rather, the child should have the opportunity to be immersed in sights and sounds that have some level of unity between creations.

#### *By historical period*

When a child is allowed to explore creations by an artist, composer, or by genre, it often becomes the case that the child develops preferences. These preferences may be premised upon color, subject-matter, instrumentation (e.g., chamber music, orchestral music, opera, jazz, big band), or a variety of other aspects. By expanding the range of offerings, and grouping these by historical period, the child will have the chance for further immersion in creations of interest while expanding the range of possible exemplars.

By expanding the range of offerings with which a child interacts, the central aspects of appreciation mentioned previously may develop. A child may, for instance, grow in his or her understanding of art through engaging with exemplars. The works, regardless of grouping will speak for themselves since there is no requirement for further "conceptual development" apart from the deep enjoyment immersion with exemplars can bring.

#### **"Exemplars of" and the gifted child**

Although it is difficult to substantiate in the current educational environment, with its emphasis upon standards, assessment, and outputs, exemplars speak for themselves. The lack of instrumental purpose of this immersion is such that there is no desire on the part of the child or teacher to select "exemplars of x" prior to the initial engagement. Rather, the central criterion for selecting exemplars is, and must be, interest. Thus, if a child mentions that he or she has heard, or has enjoyed, or "thought x was cool", the teacher ought to begin with that composition or image. A classroom full of images may also provoke a child to ask questions that can result in the teacher allowing the children to look at the image and well as the introduction of images by the artist.

As the child indicates continued interest in an artist, composer, genre, he or she should be allowed to find other artists, composers, genres, and so forth that are also of interest. While it is the case that exemplars do indeed "speak for themselves," one way in which children may share their developing familiarity with exemplars is through talking about their experiences with peers, parents, and teachers. If a child does this, one should be careful to not try and use the conversation as a "teachable moment" (e.g., to inform the child of when the piece was written or how the artist manipulated form within the image). Rather, general questions like, "What did you see or hear that was so interesting?" or "What colors or sounds did you find of particular exciting?" are appropriate. As previously mentioned, the purpose of exposure is to afford children the time to immerse themselves in an artwork. If the child wants to learn more about the composer or artist, genre, or historical period, that is fine. It is not, however, the purpose of the engagement.

Experiences like these are important for all children. Children with identified talent in the visual and performing arts are more ordinarily identified in terms of their abilities as a performer or creator. The advanced technical and aesthetic skills demonstrated by a gifted child may easily trump the importance of affording the child exemplars from which to ground his or her developing practice.

Identified talent, appreciation and understanding of the field (standards of practice as determined by professionals), and the requirements of the discipline or domain all must be met in order for the gifted child to continue his or her growth over time (Gardner, 1993). Put differently, if a child is only supported in continuing to produce or develop technical facility without ample introduction to the standards of practice or the requirements of the domain or discipline, then the child's progress will only go so far. Thus, supporting the gifted child requires that he or she has ample chance to immerse him or herself in a variety of genres in order to learn standards of practice (e.g., style) within a domain.

Gifted children especially benefit from exposure to artistic exemplars in the classroom. Gifted children's needs are often overlooked by teachers, administrators, and others in charge of school programming (Bruner, 1960; Callahan, 2001; Schroth, 2010). Certainly groups other than merely the gifted will benefit from exposure to artistic exemplars (Callahan, 1982; Tomlinson et al., 2008; Treffinger, Isakesen & Stead-Dorval, 2006). Providing gifted children with exposure to artistic exemplars, however, allows them to make the connections to other disciplines (Renzulli, 2003; Sternberg, 2003).

Providing gifted children with opportunities to engage with exemplars has tremendous benefits for them as they may become passionate about a subject based on this exposure (Helfer & Schroth, 2008a; 2008b; Tomlinson, 2003). Such exposure may occur in a variety of settings—be it pull-out, push-in, or part of the regular classroom schedule (Renzulli & Reis, 2003; Tomlinson et al., 2008; Treffinger, 2000). Exposure to exemplars may also be conducted as a separate activity or integrated within the regular curriculum (Helfer & Schroth, 2008a; 2008b; Smutny & von Fremd, 2009; 2010; Tomlinson et al., 2008). Occur, however, it must.

*Conclusion*

Nurturing and developing gifted children's appreciation of art is one of the most important contributions teachers and parents can make to their child's sense of well-being (Helfer & Schroth, 2008a; 2008b; Smutny & von Fremd, 2009). Exploring artistic exemplars allows students to make personal connections with content areas, encourages discovery, and permits originality and individuality in thinking (Smutny & von Fremd, 2009; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). A sense of appreciation for artistic works permits higher-level thinking and depth of learning while also allowing greater exploration of interdisciplinary connections and sources (Feldman, 1999; Smutny & von Fremd, 2009). Teachers and parents less confident in their own abilities to encourage and develop creative thinking in children can use a variety of approaches, many simple to implement, with children (Helfer & Schroth, 2008a; 2008b; Smutny & von Fremd, 2009). Emphasizing how appreciation can augment the curriculum will broaden horizons for gifted children both today and in the future. Parents and teachers who take the time to encourage gifted children's artistic appreciation will be thrilled by the results.

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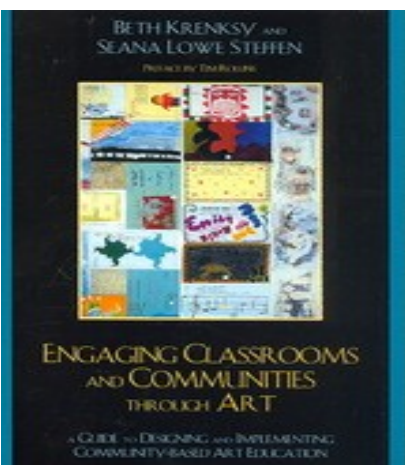
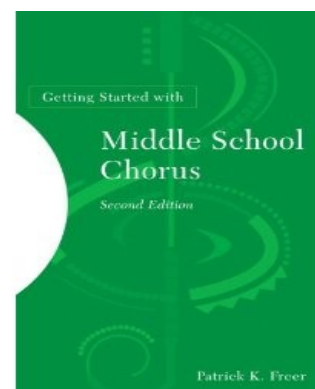
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## Book Reviews J. K. Lanfair, Knox College

Freer, Patrick K. **Getting started with middle school chorus**. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Rowman & Littlefield, 2009. 119p bible afp; ISBN 9781607091639

It is a dream of many new teachers to conduct their own chorus. Seen through the perspective of a teacher who recently received a teaching assignment in a middle school, the information and perspectives presented are beneficial to teachers at any period in their career. The text focuses on the building, running, and continued improvement of the middle school choir. Other topics covered include budgeting and acquiring equipment, scheduling, recruiting, rehearsal planning, developing teaching strategies and performing and the assessment of the young adolescent voice. This book complements in many ways Charlene Ryan's *Building Strong Music Programs* (2009). This powerful contribution is masterfully written and accessible making it a necessary component to all collections dedicated to practice and pedagogy.

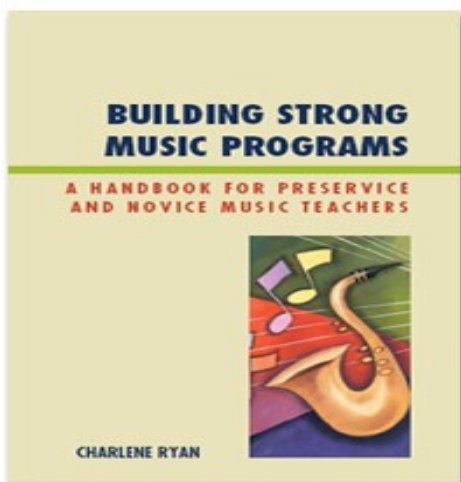
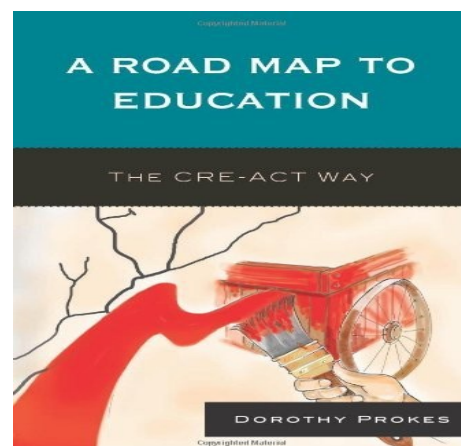


Krensky, Beth. **Engaging classrooms and communities through art: a guide to designing and implementing community-based art education**, by Beth Krensky and Seana Lowe Steffen. Rowman & Littlefield, 2009. 188p.

Advocates for the visual arts instruction agree that it has the power to inspire and create a better future. Krensky (Univ. of Utah) and Steffer (Mapleton Public Schools) promote community based art instruction (CBAE) as a means of creative practice and as an efficient teaching method. Krensky and Steffer provide both theoretical knowledge and practice-based methods to support the goals of art creation and community building. The first section, *Understanding Community Art*, provides the theoretical background necessary to understand a constructivist approach to social change, community building, making art and individual change. The second section, *Modeling the Practice of Community Art*, utilizes examples of various types of CBAE such as: murals, photography, graphic posters, billboards, video, and dance. Case studies are included that explore the context of specific projects, the background of the art form utilized, the essentials for the process and, in detail, describes the experience one

Prokes, Dorothy. **A road map to education: the CRE-ACT way.** University Press of America, 2009. 142p

Those who support arts education have constantly hailed its benefits. Those who seek guidance on how to start, improve and expand programs within a K-6 school setting have often been deprived of adequate resources, with particular regard to theater or dramatic arts. Prokes provides her model for CREative ACTing, an inclusive way of creating a school wide dramatic arts program while increase students' sense of personhood. The book is arranged into four sections, "Curtain Raiser," "Production," "Performance," and "Implications for the Future." Within each section, theoretical and practical suggestions are provided for those seeking to set up similar programs. Included in these suggestions are how to conduct rehearsals, tie work to other curricular areas, and scale grade appropriate performances. Particular emphasis is placed upon the development of individual child needs and talents. Photographs and examples of student work assist the reader in furthering their understanding of implementing the program.

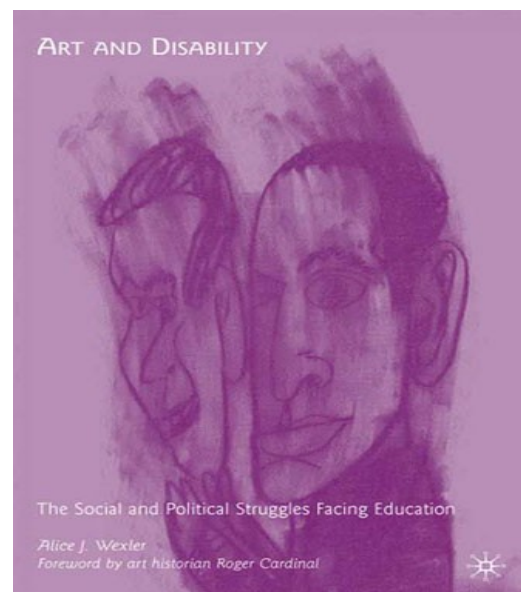


Ryan, Charlene. **Building strong music programs: a handbook for preservice and novice music teachers.** MENC: The National Association for Music Education/Rowman & Littlefield, 2009. 107p

New music teachers often face the typical fears of finding a job, teaching, selecting repertoire and organizing concerts. With all of this to worry about, rarely do they consider the importance of gaining support from parents, students and administrators in order to successfully sustain a program. Ryan (Berklee College of Music) provides a useful and informative guide to the creation of a substantial, successful and strong music program. The seven chapters: *Your First Job*; *Friends and Allies*; *Students*; *Performances*; *Courses*; *Publicity*; and *Final Thoughts* each provide practical suggestions beneficial to any teacher. The book provides wonderful breadth and insightful depth to assist new as well as veteran teachers. The book is especially helpful for those music teachers who will be solely responsible for programs in their own building.

Wexler, Alice J. **Art and disability: The social and political struggles facing education.** Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. 248p

The most recent restatement of the Individuals with Disabilities Education ACT (IDEA), has led to regular classroom teachers more frequently serving students with special needs. Wexler (State University of New York, New Paltz) addresses many of the challenges faced by those with the duty to educate students with disabilities through examining how attending to the artistic and sensory learning needs of these students can provide for a rich and full educational experience. Chapters focus on specific disabilities, including autism spectrum disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, learning disabilities, emotional disturbances and behavioral disorders, blindness and visual impairment, and traumatic brain injuries. Each chapter describes the disability, place it in context through vignettes regarding individuals with the disability and examples of their artistic creations and examines the educational settings in which they are served. Well written, insightful, and filled with passion, Wexler provides an essential complement to works such as *Points of Contact: Disability, Art and Culture*, ed. by Susan Crutchfield and Marcy Joe Epstein (2000). While maintaining practicality, a tone of optimism and enlightenment, Wexler's work stands as a useful resource for teachers, administrators and scholars.



## Websites

[www.kids.gov](http://www.kids.gov) This site has lots of fun learning activities and games. Kids can explore various career options and different fields to find out what they want to be when they grow up.

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture> This website has a lot of current articles with a wide variety of topics, from examples of pumpkin carving stencils to the birthplace of Superman. There are also games & puzzles.



[http://www.si.edu/Encyclopedia\\_SI/History\\_and\\_Culture/Music\\_History.htm](http://www.si.edu/Encyclopedia_SI/History_and_Culture/Music_History.htm) This Smithsonian website allows students to explore the history of music and musical instruments. More resources are available on exemplar musicians as well.

<http://www.pbs.org/art21> This website contains full episodes of the PBS series Art:21 which features contemporary artists. Some of the videos may contain features on art pieces with mild adult themes, so prior screening is recommended for K-8 teachers. The Education section provides learning resources for educators.

<http://www.nea.gov> This website would be better-suited for parents and educators interested in learning about various grants and National Endowment for the Arts initiatives. Students could use this website for resources about individuals granted lifetime honors by the NEA as examples of influential exemplars in Jazz, Opera, etc.

<http://www.bls.gov/k12/music.htm> This website allows kids to explore various professions within the fine arts, including accounts of what the professions entail and statistics pertaining to income and job growth. Students can use this website for information about careers in arts and music, as well as in many other categories such as science and social studies.

[http://www.smithsonianjazz.org/class/jc\\_start.asp](http://www.smithsonianjazz.org/class/jc_start.asp) This website allows students to explore influential exemplars of Jazz. It provides information about the history of Jazz. Teachers can find lesson plans and other resources here too.

<http://www.loc.gov/performingarts/index.html> This Library of Congress sponsored encyclopedia of the performing arts allows students to explore Music, Theater and Dance. featured special presentations on topics such as the affect of music on the brain are interesting. Students might be interested in exploring podcasts and the LC Concerts radio series.

[http://www.si.edu/Encyclopedia\\_SI/Art\\_and\\_Design](http://www.si.edu/Encyclopedia_SI/Art_and_Design) This website is a great encyclopedic resource for children to explore various aspects of art history by region and medium. Kids can create online art, make a viewfinder, or learn about George Washington by looking at his portrait.

<http://www.nasa.gov/audience/forstudents/index.html> The students section of Nasa allows kids to take advantage of current opportunities such as youth art competitions. Students can also view image galleries and even upload an image to be flown aboard a space shuttle.

<http://www.photonhead.com/beginners> This website offers a beginners guide to the basics of photography. Features include basics about the camera, flash, printing, and operational strategies. Other features include a beginners guide to the concepts of exposure, shutter and aperture, film speed, and the universal stop.

<http://www.metmuseum.org/explore/index.asp> This website provides a wealth of historical resources pertaining to the visual culture of ancient societies. There are also neat articles about Cezanne and Van Gogh and downloadable publications for families and kids.