REPORT

July 6, 2006

Understanding the Linkages Between Music Education and Educational Outcomes

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Introduction

The National Association for Music Education (MENC) has as its core purpose the promotion of music education in the United States. Today's educational environment presents many challenges for music education. As No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has gone from concept to implementation, school districts have focused on making progress on the outcomes that NCLB requires. The result has been less emphasis and priority placed on subjects for which No Child Left Behind does not mandate testing, such as art and music education becoming particularly hard-hit.

MENC has worked hard to advocate the inherent value of music education. Music is a part of history and culture, spurring people to new forms of self-expression. Musical development has been shown to correlate highly with reasoning skills. MENC has forged many partnerships, publications, and programs in its efforts to advance music education and is an important national voice on the subject.

NCLB has created a myopic atmosphere among policy makers, school administrators, and even parents. The current focus in education is squarely on making progress on test scores and increasing graduation rates. MENC realizes music education advocacy must adapt to this reality, and that being able to link the quality and quantity of music education to outcomes measures will help to further music education. Prior to No Child Left Behind budgets were already being cut and in the years after No Child Left Behind districts have been put in a situation where expenditures are being closely aligned to NCLB requirements.

Harris Interactive was asked to develop a survey that would document the link between music education and commonly cited educational success measures. A well-designed and statistically valid poll will help MENC understand this relationship and will also serve as a platform for a public relations campaign that supports music education.

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METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This report presents a summary of findings from research conducted among a random selection of 450 public high school principals and vice principals nationwide. Telephone interviews were conducted between April 14, and May 1, 2006 and averaged ten minutes in length. The margin of error for this survey is ± 4.6 percentage points.

The primary objective of this research was to understand and assess the links between the quality and quantity of a school's music program to known educational outcomes measures for their schools. The survey gauged experience and attitudes related to the school music program, including items such as those related to student participation, time spent in music education, quality of program and teaching, and emphasis placed on the program. In addition, the survey also covered educational outcomes measures, which were gathered from poll respondents themselves, as well as other secondary sources when available.

All surveys are subject to several sources of error. These include sampling error (because only a sample of a population is interviewed); measurement error due to question wording and/or question order, deliberately or unintentionally inaccurate responses, non-response (including refusals), interviewer effects (when live interviewers are used) and weighting.

With one exception (sampling error) the magnitude of the errors that result cannot be estimated. There is, therefore, no way to calculate a finite "margin of error" for any survey and the use of these words should be avoided.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Association for Music Education (MENC) commissioned Harris Interactive to conduct a telephone survey of public high school principals and vice principals nationwide. A total of 450 telephone interviews were conducted between April 14 and May 1, 2006, with a margin of error of ± 4.6 percentage points. Final survey results offered several important findings.

Only 12% of those interviewed indicate their school does not currently have a music program. Among those who do offer a program, two thirds feel their program is of excellent or very good quality. More than a quarter of schools that indicate that they do not have music program also indicate that 50% or more of their student body is eligible to participate in the reduced or free lunch program.

Many public high school principals feel that music education is important for a student's educational success. Even among those who do not currently offer a program, half feel music education is extremely or very important. Further, when it comes to educational outcomes those who have a music program and are core supporters of music education have higher attendance and graduation rates. Further, of those that rated their music program either extremely or very important, all rated their own music program is very good or excellent.

Regarding the impact music education has on students, half of principals interviewed strongly agree that participating in music education encourages and motivates students to stay in school longer and those students are more likely to be engaged in other events and activities in school. Principals in the Northeast, Midwest and those who feel they have an excellent or very good quality music program are more likely to strongly agree that students who participate in music education generally achieve higher grades.

Among those who have a music program, on average principals say about 8% of the school's total instructional budget is allocated to their music program. Additionally, an average of twenty-two percent of the music budget is also funded from outside the school's total instructional budget.

The majority of principals say their music program has grown or remained stable compared to three years ago. Those more likely to feel their music program has grown include those who are music advocates (Feel a quality music education program contributes a great deal to their school achieving higher graduation rates, have a program, feel their music program is of excellent or very good quality and believe music education is extremely or very important.)

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Most music programs are offered as part of the academic program, with many stating they have large ensemble groups. Moreover, principals also state they have large or small ensemble groups outside of school.

Among those who have a large ensemble group, the most popular are a concert band and choir. For small ensemble groups, 85% indicate having a jazz ensemble. Interestingly, when it comes to the quality of the program offered, those who have a large or small ensemble program are more likely to feel that program is excellent while only 18% feel the same about their music classes.

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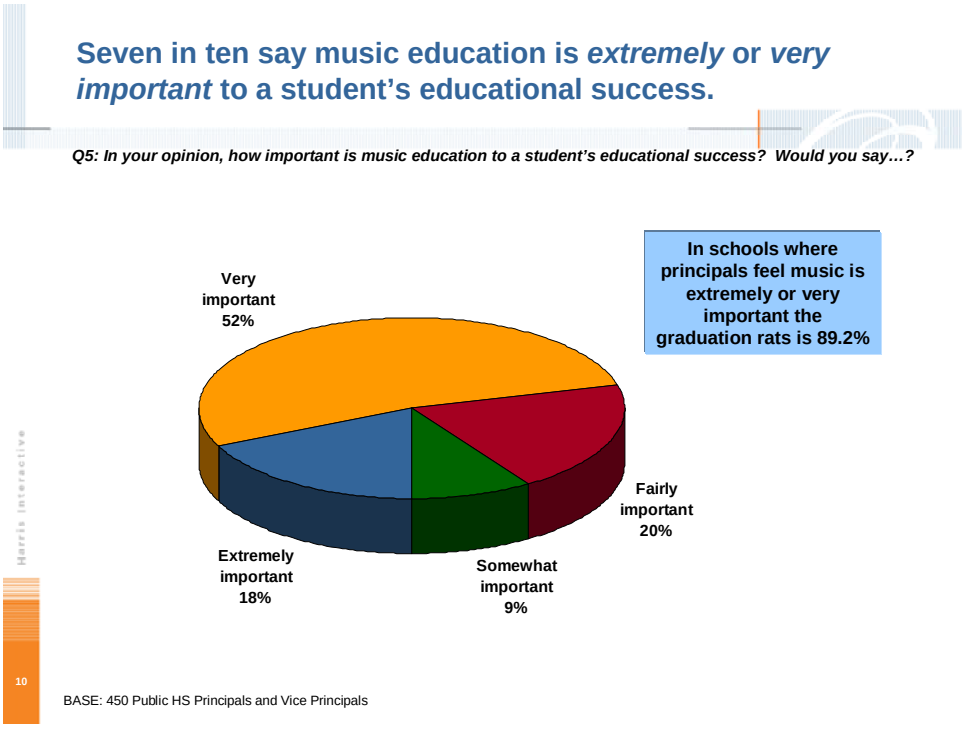
KEY FINDINGS

1. VALUE OF MUSIC EDUCATION

Seven in ten (70%) public school principals feel a music education is extremely or very important to a student's educational success. Principals with a background in music are more likely to feel music education is extremely important to a student's educational success.



In addition, half of principals interviewed strongly agree participating in music education encourages and motivates students to stay in school longer and those students are more likely to be engaged in other events and activities in school.

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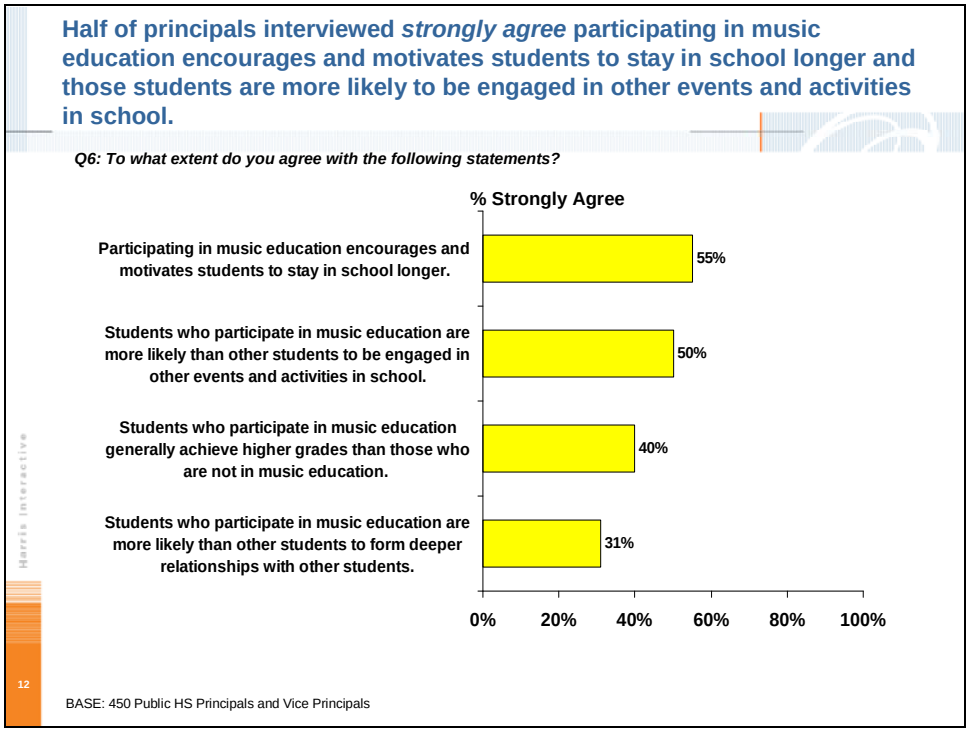

Principals in the Midwest are more likely to strongly agree that students who participate in music education generally achieve higher grades and are more likely to form deeper relationships with other students. Furthermore, those who feel they have an excellent or very good quality music program are more likely to strongly agree that participating in music education encourages and motivates students to stay in school longer and these students generally achieve higher grades. Twenty-five percent of principals interviewed say a quality music education program contributes a great deal to their school achieving higher graduation rates, with those in urban and suburban areas being more likely to indicate this.

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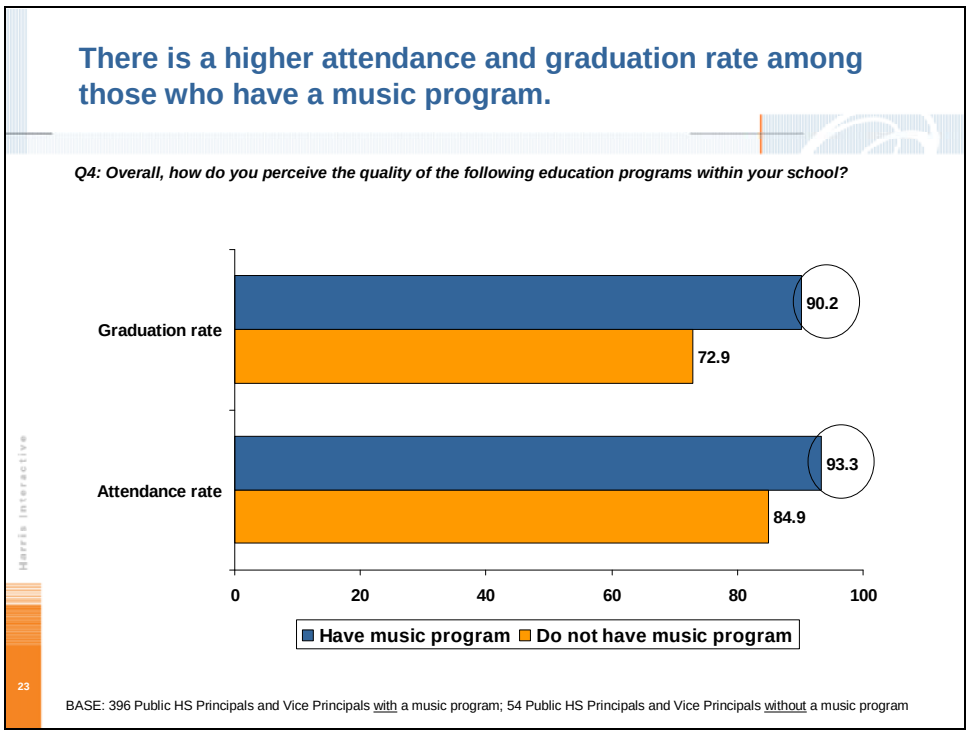
2. MUSIC PROGRAM AVAILABILITY AND QUALITY AS IT EFFECTS GRADUATION RATES

The majority of respondents indicate they have a music program. More than four in ten principals with a program say their music program stability has grown compared to three years ago. There is a higher attendance and graduation rate among those who have a music program.



Among those who have a program, two thirds feel their music education program is of excellent or very good quality. There is also a higher attendance and graduation rate among those who feel their music program is of excellent or very good quality. Those that rate their music program as “excellent or very good” have an average graduation rate of 90.9%. Those that rate their music program as “good” have a graduation rate of 89.9%. Finally, those that rate their music program as only “fair” or “poor quality” have statistically lower graduation rate of 86.0%. Attendance rates show a similar pattern.

Two in three principals say participation in music or other arts course is a requirement for graduation. Principals indicate about a quarter of their students are enrolled in a music class and on average nearly half of the school population will have taken at least one music class before they graduate. One quarter feel that “No Child Left Behind” has had an effect on the quality or scope of their school’s music education program.

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3. TYPES OF MUSIC EDUCATION

Among those we interviewed, most music programs are offered as part of the academic program, with many stating they have large ensemble groups. Those in the Northeast are more likely to indicate they have small ensemble groups and music classes while those in the Midwest are more likely to have large ensemble groups.

Most music programs are offered as part of the academic program, with many stating they have large ensemble groups.

Q17/18: Which of the following types of music classes/opportunities are offered as part of the ACADEMIC/EXTRACURRICULAR PROGRAM within your school?

	Large ensemble	Small ensemble	Music class
Part of academic program	86%	74%	62%
Part of extracurricular program	64%	63%	N/A

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Academic Program (BASE: 396 Public HS Principals and Vice Principals who have a music program) Extracurricular Program (BASE: 450 Public HS Principals and Vice Principals)

Six in ten indicate they offer large or small ensemble groups as part as an extracurricular program. Furthermore, among those who have a large ensemble group, the most popular are a concert band and choir. For small ensemble groups, 85% indicate having a jazz ensemble.

Four in ten (40%) principals feel their large or small ensemble programs are excellent. Additionally, 18% rate their music classes as excellent. Seven in ten say their school offers music classes that follow a clear sequence of knowledge and mastery and their school won awards for specific music classes or performing groups.

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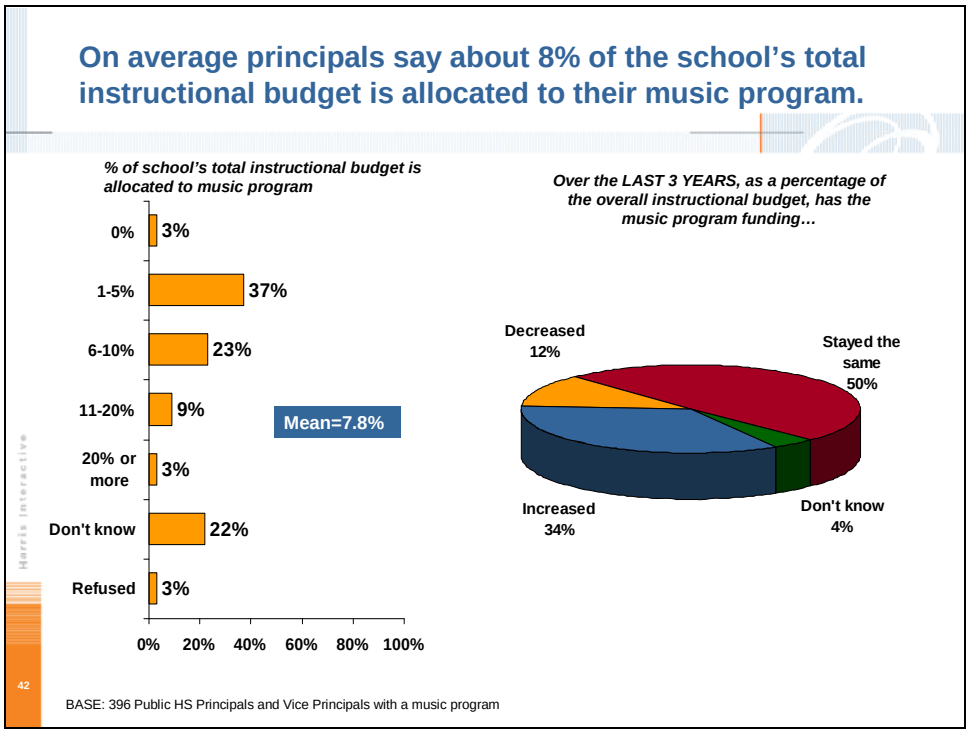
4. **MUSIC EDUCATION FUNDING**

On average principals say about 8% (actual mean of 7.8%) of the school's total instructional budget is allocated to their music program. Principals also sight that approximately twenty-two percent of the music budget is also funded from outside the school's total instructional budget from fundraising and booster clubs. Principals in the South, urban and suburban regions indicate a higher percentage of their music budgeting coming from outside sources.



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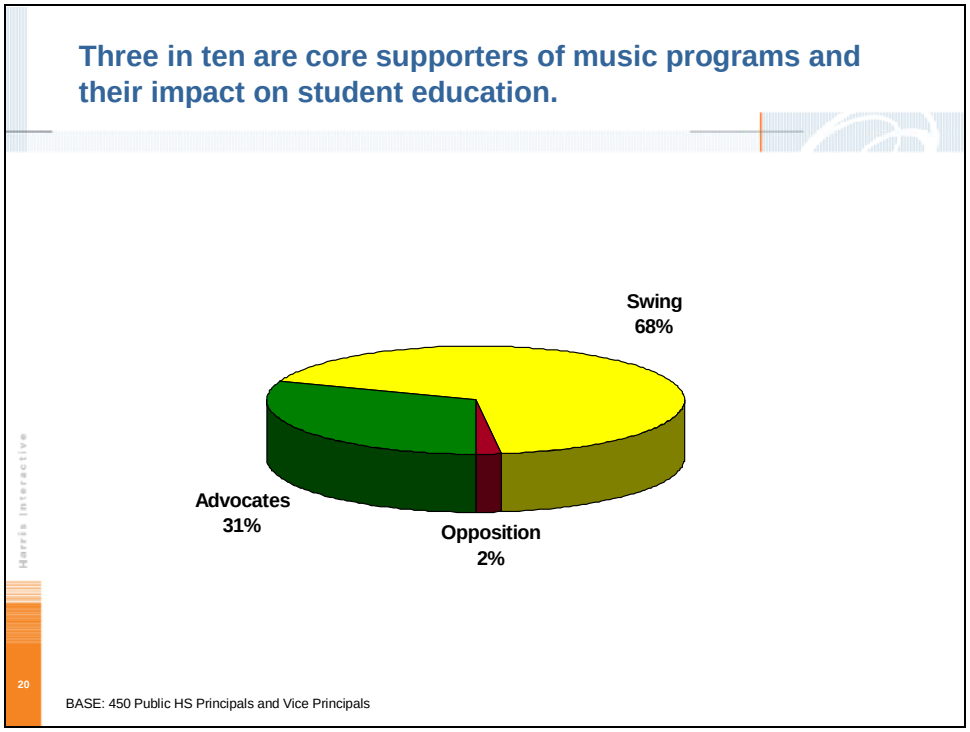
5. ADVOCATES FOR MUSIC PROGRAM

Looking deeper into the attitudes and perceptions by key demographic categories helps us to develop a profile of those schools and principals whose support for music programs are unwavering. To this end, the research identified three basic groups:

- **Pro/Advocates** – These individuals currently form your core basis of support for music education. They are principals and vice principals who say music education is *extremely or very important*, have a music program and feel it is of *excellent or very good quality,* and they took music in high school.
- **Swing** – these are individuals who are on the fence and do not have strongly formed opinions. They are the primary target for communications and can be swayed by the right messaging.
- **Anti/Opposition** – these individuals do not feel music education is important or should be required. Convincing this group of anything positive will require significant resources. They are principals/vice principals who say music education is *somewhat or not at all important*, have a music program and feel it is of *fair or poor* and never took music in high school.



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Those who are MENC's core supportive audience are more likely to be

- Larger schools with 1000+ students (43%)
- In a suburban area (42%)
- Have a higher attendance rate (93.7%)
- Have a higher graduation rate (91.5%)
- Have a higher percentage of seniors that will be attending college (54.2%)

- Those who are MENC's swing audience are more likely to be:
  - Smaller schools with less than 500 students (52%)
  - In a rural area (43%)
  - Have a higher percentage of their students come from minority families (34.9% mean)
  - Have a higher percentage of their students come from low income families (48.3% mean)
  - Have a lower percentage of seniors that will be attending college (40.5%)

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