

Teaching Music in Illinois – 2005

A Summary of the Results of a Survey of the Teachers of Illinois

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*"I find my students a place to shine, to be.
They use what I give them forever."*

"I love children and music with all my heart."

In 2003-04, 2,093,614 children received music education from 4,441 music teachers while enrolled in Illinois public schools. It is a remarkable accomplishment and a great tribute to their efforts that so few are able to accomplish so much. From the thousands of concerts annually performed in communities throughout Illinois to the breathtaking performances at the IMEA all-state convention, the evidence is abundant that much good work is taking place in the school music programs in Illinois.

Meanwhile, the educational landscape in which music educators work is shifting. Budget cuts, a predicted teacher shortage, state and national standards, the No Child Left Behind Act, popular idioms in music, technology, inclusion and diversity of students are among the forces precipitating this shift. Although there is much anecdotal evidence, it was unknown how music teachers are faring in school today. To better understand the impact of these and related changes on the music teaching profession, the Illinois Music Educators Association undertook a survey of our state's music teachers.

Guiding Questions

Four questions guided the design of the survey.

- 1) *What is the scope of responsibility of music teachers in Illinois?* Questions were designed to find out areas in which teachers work; number of children they teach; their non-musical responsibilities; numbers of concerts produced each year; time spent teaching outside of class; scheduling issues and related issues pertaining to the day-to-day responsibilities of teachers.

- 2) *What is the education and experience of music teachers, and to what extent are they involved in continuing professional development?* This set of questions focused on the degrees, certification, and continuing education of teachers. We wanted to know if music teachers are certified and, if so, in what areas. We also wanted to know what music teachers are studying and thinking about with respect to their personal professional growth.

- 3) *How involved are music teachers with music teacher education?* These questions were designed to determine music teachers' present involvement along with their willingness to play a larger role in preparation of future generations of teachers.

- 4) *Are changes in education policy, school demographics, music culture, and music funding affecting the work of music teachers?* This set of questions is perhaps the most revealing because it examines such issues as teachers engagement with music standards, curriculum development, changes over the past five years, areas of curricular emphasis, and work with children with special needs. These questions also reveal teachers' perceptions of the challenges and positive attributes of teaching music.

Method

The survey was developed and field-tested² during the summer and fall of 2004. It was mailed to 25% of the 4,441 public school music teachers listed by the Illinois State Board of Education. Recipients of the survey were selected randomly from throughout the state in numbers proportional to the elementary, junior high and high school teachers working in vocal and instrumental areas. Teachers' identities were kept confidential. The return rate was excellent: 46% percent of music teachers responded for a total of 468 returns. In short, we can be *confident in our results*. An overview of the findings follows.

¹ A full copy of the final report is available at www.ilmea.org. In addition, special reports, prepared by content area specialists in band (John Grashel), chorus (Robert Sinclair) and general music (Glenda Cosenza), are also available for download.

² Special thanks to Drs. Sam Reese and John Grashel from the University of Illinois for their help in designing the project; and to Dr. Glenda Cosenza from Northern Illinois University and Dr. Charles Menghini from VanderCook College of Music for permission to field-test early versions within their graduate classes.

Findings

1. Music teachers impact the lives of hundreds of children at multiple grade levels.

- More than half of all music teachers work with children in a combination of elementary, middle and high school levels.
- One out of four (27%) teachers work with 400 or more children each week; 55% work with 200 children or more per week.
- About a third of all music teachers work across music sub-specialties, e.g., band and chorus.
- Between 15 and 20% of music teachers also teach or tutor in non-music areas, e.g., reading, math, other fine arts classes.

2. Music teachers present an estimated 30,000 live performances each year throughout our state for our communities and their families.

- Live performances are most frequent at the high school level but occur at all levels. Average live performances per year are:
 - High school - 17.23
 - Middle school - 4.53
 - Elementary school - 2.94

3. Music teachers provide thousands of hours of meaningful before and after school teaching to thousands of children.

- Music teachers direct ensembles and give lessons an average of two to five hours before or after school each week.
- Some teachers actually teach (not planning or grading) as many hours before and after school as during the regular school day.

4. Music teachers bring a professional level of expertise to our children.

- Music teachers possess an average of 14.78 years of teaching experience.
- 92% are certified music teachers. The others hold music endorsements on another certificate.
- 2% are National Board Certified Teachers
- Nearly all have pursued some form of professional development. The top ten areas are:
 - Technology - 56%
 - Subject-area methods - 48%
 - Curriculum development - 44%
 - Special education - 42%
 - Assessment - 42%
 - Classroom management - 41%
 - Conducting and rehearsal techniques - 37%
 - National & state standards - 34%
 - Music of other cultures - 27%
 - Applied instrument - 24%
- 88% feel that their professional development effort has improved their work and 1 in 4 believe their teaching has improved "a great deal."

5. Music teachers contribute to the overall educational process undertaken by the school.

- 58% of music teachers assume non-music, non-administrative, non-teaching responsibilities.
- In addition to serving on school committees, music teachers help with a myriad of responsibilities such as bus duty (18%), lunchroom monitor (13%), hall monitor (12%), study hall (8%) and "Other" (21%) such as playground duty or detention monitor.
- 7% of music teachers hold an administrative position, usually as a chair or head of fine arts or music, and usually in a high school.

6. Music teachers have the know-how to provide standards-based, curriculum-driven instruction in music to our children.

- 80% of music teachers report that their curricula are aligned with state standards
- 78% create their own curriculum working either alone or with other music teachers.
- When asked to describe the emphasis they are placing on various trends and teaching areas, the areas receiving most emphasis (moderate to heavy) were the traditional areas of reading and notating music (91%), performing on musical instruments (84%) and singing (71%).

7. Many music teachers comfortably integrate diverse children into music classes and, when possible, music ensembles.

- 44% have experienced an increase in the cultural diversity of the children they teach.
- When asked, 83% reported that they are comfortable or very comfortable including children with special needs in their music classes and ensembles.
- This appears to be true even though only 29% of music teachers often or always have an aide available to help them.
- The following percentages of teachers work with at least one child with one of the following disabilities:
 - ADD or ADHD - 90%
 - Learning disability - 89%
 - Behavior disorder - 69%
 - Hearing impairment - 52%
 - Emotional disorder - 51%
 - Physical impairment - 46%
 - Cognitive impairment - 40%
 - Visual impairment - 37%
- In addition, 38% of music teachers work with at least one child identified as gifted and talented.
- 13% teach special classes for advanced placement or honors students.
- 40% of music teachers have experienced an increase in the number of children with special needs in their classes.

8. Music teachers are doing more with less money.

- Music teachers are working in more complex educational environments.
- Over half (52%) of music teachers have seen their budgets decline over the past five years.
- 47% have observed an increase in the number of children they teach
- 33% have experienced an increase in the number of classes they teach.
- 31% (nearly one in three) music teachers are frustrated with the limited time and scheduling problems within the school, often precipitated by a lack of funds.

9. Music teachers are often frustrated by a perceived need to advocate constantly on behalf of their program.

- 50% feel more pressure than ever before to advocate on behalf of their music program.
- Over 30% of music teachers cited the need to constantly defend their program as one of their greatest challenges as a teacher.

10. Music teachers love their work and are inspired by helping children grow as musicians and creative, expressive human beings.

The words of music teachers best express these sentiments:

"Students see music as a window to their soul and as a creative expression of their being. It gives them joy, comfort and a sense of accomplishment."

"I make a difference in what I do --I teach children."

Music Makes the Difference

Recommendations

Support funding for your local music teacher and music program

Each year:

- Music teachers present an estimated 30,000 live performances throughout our state for our communities and their families.
- Every day tens of thousands of children come to school early or stay late to participate in music ensembles and classes.
- Music teachers work with more children than ever -- 27% work with 400 or more different children each week.
- Music teachers work with children at every grade and age level.
- Nearly 100% are engaged in continuing professional development.

Nonetheless, music budgets are declining and music programs are routinely under siege. One of the most demoralizing challenges cited by over 30% of our state's music educators is the need to constantly defend their program to parents, administrators, counselors and fellow teachers.

When music teachers are overwhelmed by the magnitude of their responsibilities, they forfeit years of education and abandon the profession early.

Support the Illinois Arts Alliance's recommendations for change.

The arts are necessary. They are one of the six fundamental learning areas. The Illinois Arts Alliance has developed eight powerful recommendations for change. Each may be addressed at state, district and local levels.

Supporting this initiative will bring real policy change that will assure that the arts remain part of the core of the education received by children in Illinois. We lose too much when we lose the arts.

Find a copy of *Arts at the Core: Every School, Every Student* at www.artsalliance.org. Also see www.illinoiscreates.org.

Insist on a standards-based, sequential music program in the core curriculum in the school.

The goal of standards-based music education is to promote life-long engagement in the arts. It is a sequential, step-by-step process for **all** children.

Insist that your child receive step-by-step instruction as part of the core curriculum of the school. There's only one chance for each generation. The results last a lifetime.

- Music education provides a meaningful use of leisure time or an engaging career.
- Music mirrors our emotional lives and accompanies us in times of celebration and sorrow, love and loss.
- Music is one of our nation's largest exports.
- Parents bond with children through music. Social identity grows through music.
- Music builds emotional health, stability and happiness.
- Music helps create school and home environments conducive to learning.

Strive to build music programs that meet MENC guidelines.

Children will not learn in threadbare programs. MENC, The National Association for Music Education, is a source of detailed guidelines for school music programs. Built upon best practices, they provide guidance in areas such as appropriate teacher contact time, standards, curricula, music teacher credentialing and more. This important document can guide long-range planning and strategic initiatives at the local and district level. Find the *Opportunity to Learn: Standards for Music Instruction, Grades preK-12* on the index at www.menc.org.

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