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THE YOUNG MUSICIAN'S TEXTBOOK

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# Bringing MUSIC Back to School

A bicoastal nonprofit group is leading the charge for music education in two of America's biggest cities. **BY STEVE HOLLEY**

**W**hile the benefits of music as a component of a well-rounded education have long been recognized, a lack of a music education culture persists in far too many communities across the United States. Despite the resounding evidence available to administrators and policy-makers alike, music is often one of the first subjects to be cut due to budget constraints or low test scores. But some organizations are doing their best to turn this situation around, and one of the most successful is Education Through Music (ETM), a nonprofit based in New York City.

Since its founding in 1991, ETM has endeavored to foster a culture of music as a core subject in the inner-city schools of New York and Los Angeles. Based on research that indicates cuts in arts funding disproportionately affect students in low-income neighborhoods, ETM has focused its efforts on those areas. More than 44,000 children in 87 schools have been served by ETM to date. Of those children, 90% qualify for free or reduced lunch; 92% are students of color; 20% have special needs; and 14% are English language learners.

The schools that ETM partners with have little or

no access to music education. In consideration of this unfortunate fact, the organization employs a unique model that relies on collaboration between the schools, their students, and the students' parents. The main method at work here is to use music education as a means of supporting learning in other core subjects—including math, science, and language arts—and improving student outcomes. Music thus becomes a catalyst to increase academic achievement, motivation for school, self-confidence, and skills that can help students thrive in the future.

After identifying a potential partner school, ETM begins all of its partnerships by initiating a conversation with the principal. According to Tim Lemberger, the organization's director of marketing and communications, "We have a non-negotiable that when we launch ETM at a school, every child needs to be served, including those students with special needs. However, the school is our partner; we work with the principal to ensure the program is implemented so that it works with the school's mission."

ETM works to ensure sustainability and long-term success for music programs in its partner schools by configuring and supplying new music classrooms; offering a sequential curriculum that meets state and



COURTESY OF EDUCATION THROUGH MUSIC

Education Through Music partner school students get ready to perform at the 2012 ETM Festival in the Bronx. Below: ETM partner school students at work and play.



national standards; developing band and orchestra ensembles; and evaluating programs regularly. It also assists in the recruitment of high-quality, certified music educators. And once those educators have been recruited, ETM lends them continuing support, with services that include:

- Tuition reimbursement for graduate school for all teachers
- Year-round professional development
- Matching every music teacher

with a mentor/coach

- A centrally located resource lab stocked with a wide array of music education books, learning materials, lesson plans, keyboard, computers, etc.
- Assistance with equipping new music classrooms and acquiring materials and supplies
- Helping with New York teachers' transition onto the NYC Dept. of Education payroll and providing support in the first years with music teacher salaries

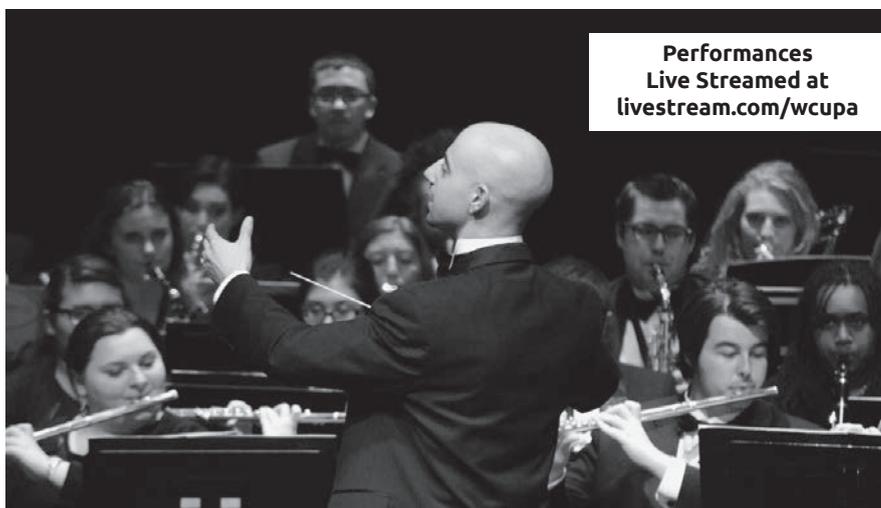
"The implementation of our program has strengthened over the years," Lemberger says. "ETM has increased professional development for teachers, improved the curriculum, and refined our overall model."

Despite the support offered, challenges remain. One of the greatest is finding quality teachers. Another is a lack of familiarity with the power of music among principals and administration, which can limit their desire to increase music education opportunities. "If principals haven't had music education in their lives, they may not see its value," Lemberger points out. "Principals may want to allocate additional dollars for math and reading to support higher scores, instead of launching a music program."

"One of the ways we've grown is by word of mouth," he continues. "We find our school principals learn about the program, then they implement it and experience success in their school, and then they tell other principals about it. Success comes in many forms, including increased attendance, motivation for school, academic achievement, and parent involvement."

Of the many great teachers who received their start at ETM, one in particular, Melissa Salguero, of P.S. 48 Joseph R. Drake in the Bronx, is now receiving national attention. Her determination to improve the lives of her students through music recently garnered Salguero a spot as one of 25 semifinalists for the 2018 GRAMMY Music Educator award—her second time as a semifinalist. When she was placed at P.S. 48 at 2010, the music program had been dormant for almost 50 years. Since then, not only has it thrived, but Salguero has raised over \$150,000 for the students through multiple awards and grants. "Education Through Music has been one of the biggest supporters throughout my teaching career," she says. "From their mentor program to their professional development training, ETM has had a profound impact on me as an educator."

One of the advantages of being located in the musical meccas of New York City and Los Angeles is that students have the chance to interact with, and be mentored by, some of the best artists in the world. Some notables who've taken part in the program include GRAMMY-winning violinist and



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**"Our mission has remained consistent over the years: that every child deserves quality music education."**

ETM board member Joshua Bell and four-time GRAMMY-winning country music superstar Keith Urban. ETM has also been featured on the *Today* show and *The Ellen DeGeneres Show* and highlighted in *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *Vogue*, among others.

This increased visibility helps the organization to accomplish the bold task of providing music education for all through a collaborative fundraising effort between the ETM staff, its board of directors, and supporting organizations including the CMA Foundation, Steinway and Sons, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

As for what the future holds, ETM



ETM partner school choir students sing for an audience.

Executive Director Katherine Damkohler says, "Our ultimate goal is to put ourselves out of business. We want to create sustainable music education programs that are valued by the school communities that they serve. While that may not happen in the next five years, we definitely want to increase our reach and the number of children that we serve. Our mission has remained consistent over the years: that every child

deserves quality music education."

To learn more about this outstanding nonprofit, or to apply to be a teacher or partner school, visit [ETMonline.org](http://ETMonline.org) or send an email to [info@etmonline.org](mailto:info@etmonline.org).



**Steve Holley** is the director of the Commercial Music Program at the Kent Denver School in Englewood, Colo.



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