

# The Sound of Silence

The Unprecedented Decline of  
Music Education in  
California Public Schools:  
A Statistical Review

September 2004

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The information and data used in the preparation of this report is from the California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS) made available by the California Department of Education Demographics Unit and obtained through Dataquest (<http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest>).

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Excerpts from this report may be used freely with acknowledgement. Suggested reference: Music for All Foundation, 2004, *The Sound of Silence – The Unprecedented Decline of Music Education in California Public Schools*. Organizations may provide direct links to the full report at: <http://music-for-all.org/sos.html>

## INTRODUCTION

The Music for All Foundation has embarked on a multi-year effort to find quantifiable data regarding access and participation in music and arts education programs in public schools and communities across the United States. This effort has been a difficult task since, among the fifty states and their reporting local educational agencies, there is a lack of an agreed upon definition for calculating and reporting student enrollment in arts education coursework. Surprisingly, most states do not measure or report student enrollment in arts education coursework at one or more grade levels. As a result, when the arts education community is confronted with the question “How many programs have been added or eliminated?” we rarely had reliable data to provide the answer.

Prior to the development of computer technology for storing and retrieving school site information, obtaining reliable data regarding the state of music and arts education was limited. Even now, many local school systems do not measure or report student participation for all music or arts discipline courses. In many larger school districts, it is difficult to determine basic information regarding student enrollment in arts education courses, offerings on a school-to-school basis, or any comparable data.

Because of the overall lack of reliable data, the Board of Trustees of the Music for All Foundation is initiating a state by state review and analysis of course enrollment figures and statistical data to clarify and help shape our understanding of the nature of instruction offered and the level of student participation in public school music and arts education programs. In doing so, a more complete picture for percentage of students enrolled in music and arts programs and the number of qualified teachers can be identified with some degree of consistency. This is an effort to identify access and equity of music and arts programs for all students.

*The Sound Of Silence: The Unprecedented Decline Of Music Education In California Public Schools* is the first in a series of reports being developed by Music for All Foundation. This report elicits several important questions. We did not attempt to answer them here though we do try to illuminate some potential explanations. While we would have preferred to delve into the questions this report generates, the significance of the disturbing statistical trends contained within this document makes it imperative we inform the broader community as quickly as possible. By releasing this stark news now, we firmly believe there is time to stop this decline, reverse this trend, and prevent the permanent loss of music education programs in California’s public schools. It is through the active process of exploring the questions raised here that solutions will come to light and proactive steps may be taken to address these findings.

It is our hope that this report will also serve as a catalyst for other states to begin to gather and measure data regarding music and arts education programs, student participation, and qualified teachers so we may have a true sense of the status and level of, and access our children actually have to, music and arts education in our public schools nationwide.



Robert B. Morrison  
Chairman and C.E.O.  
Music for All Foundation

# **THE SOUND OF SILENCE**

## **THE UNPRECEDENTED DECLINE OF MUSIC EDUCATION IN CALIFORNIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The information and data used in the preparation of this report is from the California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS) made available by the California Department of Education Demographics Unit. For the purposes of this report, we are examining student participation (actual student enrollment figures), percentage of student involvement (which provides us with the “market share” for a subject area as a percentage of the overall student population), as well as the actual number of teachers. We are examining a five-year period from the 1999-2000 academic school year through the 2003-2004 academic school year. By this approach we are able to determine, using the actual California Department of Education CBEDS data, increases or decreases in student participation, overall student “share”, and increases or decreases in the teaching population in a subject area.

The results are stunning: Student participation in music courses, the overall percentage of students involved in music courses, and the number of teachers teaching music courses in California have declined dramatically over the past 5 years. The decline has been so significant that music education has suffered the greatest losses in percentage enrollment, actual student enrollment, and teachers than any other academic subject. These losses are clearly disproportionate to those in any other academic subject.

### **KEY FINDINGS**

The data<sup>1</sup> in this report show that during the five-year period covering the 1999/2000 academic school year through the 2003/2004 academic school year that:

During the period when the total California public school student population increased by 5.8%, the percentage of all California public school students involved in music education courses declined by 50%. This decline is the largest of any academic subject area.

Actual student participation in music declined by 46.5% representing a loss 512,366 students. This decline is the largest of any academic subject area by a factor of four. (Physical Education is second with a decline of 125,000 students representing a drop of 5.2% of the total PE enrollment)

The number of music teachers declined by 26.7%. This represents an actual loss of 1,053 teachers.

Participation in General Music courses (those courses designed to bring basic music knowledge and skills to young students) declined by 85.8% with the loss of 264,821 students. This represents over half of the total decline of participation in all Music

Courses. This is followed by declines in Other Music Courses (- 48.5%, -103,783 students), Chorus (36.1%, -57,905 students), Band (-20.5%, -44,509 students), and Instrumental Lessons (-41.4%, -39,792 students).

When student participation declines are compared to other academic subjects, Music tops the list. The decline in music participation (-46.5%, -512,388 students) leads all other areas including Physical Education (-5.24%, -125,156), Health (-12%, -31,660), Humanities (-37.5%, -25,622), Safety (-9.13%, -6,983), and Computer Education (-0.7%, -1,866). Art, Drama, Dance, Foreign Languages, Social Sciences, Science, Math and English all posted gains during the period.

## POTENTIAL CAUSES

While additional research needs to be conducted to determine the actual causes, interviews conducted with educators and policy makers generated two recurring themes:

1: The implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act, in particular the act's emphasis on testing the limited areas of reading, math, and (soon) science, has led to the decline in music programs. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) as implemented has indeed been widely blamed for lessening of support for a variety of valuable school programs. Disturbed by this, U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige has recently been moved to exhort school superintendents that "NCLB included the arts as a core academic subject because of their importance to a child's education".<sup>ii</sup> Based on the fact that the Secretary himself has observed problems with state and local implementation of the act, it is plausible to trace part of the erosion in California's school music programs to the process of implementation. The entire observed effect, however, cannot be traced to the NCLB. First, the idea of systematic student assessment did not arrive in California with the 2001 passage NCLB, but was implemented as a result of the California Public Schools Accountability Act of 1999 (based on an "Academic Performance Index," and not specifically centered on status targets in a few subjects). Second, one would expect the effect of NCLB-mandated testing on the breadth of offerings in a school system to apply equally to all subjects not among the few chosen for testing. This is clearly not the case, as the data show that music programs have been limited in a manner vastly disproportionate to other curricula. At a minimum, therefore, other forces must be at work.

2. The well-documented budget crisis in California has led to the decline in music programs. The allocation of resources is certainly the central issue here, and "resources" in the context of education always includes the element of money (the other critical resource being time). Following logic similar to that applied to the effect of the No Child Left Behind Act, however, it is difficult to attribute the entire observed effect to budgetary woes. Nevertheless, it can be argued that many music programs in the state, most notably at the elementary level, were never reinstated to the vigor they enjoyed prior to the passage of Proposition 13 in 1979.

The situation has been compounded by the elimination of the position of Fine Arts Coordinator in many school districts which means there is no one to keep music “on the table” when budget constraints are discussed at the administrative/district level. Again, simple monetary shortfalls alone cannot account for the disproportionate effect on music programs.

These possible explanations are just that: possibilities. More work must be done to identify with more certainty the causes that underlie these declines. It is this need for additional exploration and examination of this issue that has led us to our first recommendation.

## **RECOMENDATIONS**

**Recommendation I** – We urge the Governor, State Board of Education, Department of Education and/or the State Legislature to empanel a special taskforce to explore in detail the cause of this rapid decline of music education participation and present recommendations to reverse this trend for action by the state.

**Recommendation II** - We urge school districts to use resources available from the Federal Government to support the restoration of music programs. Specifically, monies in Title I, part A can be used by local education agencies to improve the educational achievement of disadvantaged students through the arts; Title II Teacher Quality Enhancement Grants can address the professional development needs of teachers of the arts, and various funds under Title V are available for music education programs. (For detailed advice on this area, please see "No Subject Left Behind: A Guide to Arts Education - Opportunities in the 2001 NCLB Act at [www.aep-arts.org/Funding.html](http://www.aep-arts.org/Funding.html).)

**Recommendation III** - We urge School Boards and Superintendents across the state to follow the guidance provided by Secretary of Education Rod Paige in his July 2004 letter to support music and arts instruction as part of the core curriculum of every child. Based on the contents of this letter, the No Child Left Behind Act should no longer be used as an excuse to reduce or eliminate instruction time in music and the arts in California Public Schools.

**Recommendation IV** - We urge local citizens to let their voices be heard. Local school boards must provide accurate student participation data for music and arts courses for both individual schools and school districts to the public each year. Individuals may access the current reported data for each school and school district from the California Department of Education. The website address is: <http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>. Local citizens may access tools and information to support local advocacy efforts at <http://amc-music.org>.

**Recommendation V** – Learn from successful models. CMEA: The California Association for Music Education and the California Alliance for Arts Education have examples of schools and school districts that have robust music and arts education programs. These schools provide real world examples of how music education contributes to the overall success of these schools and the children in these communities. In addition, school districts should use the *California Framework for Visual and Performing Arts* to develop the appropriate, standards based, course work for students in music and the arts.

The trends identified in this data indicate that if steps are not taken immediately to reverse declining enrollment, music education courses in California's Public Schools will virtually disappear within a decade.

**I. STUDENT ENROLLMENT AND ARTS EDUCATION**

To fully comprehend the implications of the findings of this report, it is necessary to explore the issue of music and arts education as it relates to the overall student enrollment figures. Doing so establishes the aggregate size of the “pie” or market to compare and contrast the music course data on file for any particular year.

**Total California Public School Enrollment (K-12)**

During the period examined for this report, beginning with 1999-2000 and concluding with the 2003-2004 school year, the total student enrollment in California public schools increased by 5.83%.

<i>Total California Public School Enrollment</i>			
<i>1999-2000</i>	<i>2003-2004</i>	<i>Change</i>	<i>% Change</i>
5,951,612	6,298,413	+346,801	5.83%

**Total California Public School Arts Education Enrollment**

California Education Code<sup>iii</sup> defines arts education as part of the state’s legislated Course of Study for elementary and secondary students to include instruction in the subjects of dance, music, theatre, and visual arts, aimed at the development of aesthetic appreciation and the skills of creative expression. Student Enrollment in arts education courses declined by 24.4% between the 1999-2000 and 2003-2004 school years. This represents an astounding loss of 461,806 students.

<i>Total California Public School Arts Education Enrollment</i>			
<i>1999-2000</i>	<i>2003-2004</i>	<i>Change</i>	<i>% Change</i>
1,892,579	1,430,773	<b>-461,806</b>	<b>-24.40%</b>

**Arts Enrollment as a Percentage of Total Student Enrollment**

Arts Education participation as a percentage of the total student enrollment “pie” (what we will refer to as market share) has declined over the period covered from 31.8% to 22.72%. This represents a 28.57% decline in the overall share of students in public school arts education classes.

<i>Arts Enrollment as a Percentage of Total Student Enrollment</i>			
<i>% 1999-2000</i>	<i>% 2003-2004</i>	<i>Change</i>	<i>% Change</i>
31.80%	22.72%	<b>-9.08%</b>	<b>-28.57%</b>

When these numbers are examined at face value, there is most definitely a cause for concern. What is driving this decline and what does it mean? One obvious conclusion would declare that arts education in California, as a whole, is in a steep decline. As you will see in a moment, this is not the case.



## II. BREAKDOWN OF ARTS EDUCATION BY DISCIPLINE

To better understand the nuance this decline, we must breakdown the greater category of “arts education” into its individual component disciplines. Through this more detailed examination of the data available from the California Department of Education, a clearer picture begins to appear about what is driving these figures.

### California Arts Discipline Course Enrollment Statistic

When we examine each arts education discipline individually, the true story begins to emerge. Enrollment in Music Education courses declined by 46.52% from 1999-2000 to 2003-2004. This represents a decline of over one-half million students or, more precisely, 512,388 students were no longer studying music in California’s public school system. Since the entire Arts Education student enrollment has declined by 461,806 students, the stark reality vividly shows Music Education assuming the responsibility for the entire decline... and then some. In fact, course enrollment figures for Dance, Drama/Theatre, and Visual Arts increased during the period. Visual Arts enrollment increased by 1.44%, Drama/Theatre enrollment increased by 8.62%, and Dance enrollment increased by 52.89%.

<b>California Arts Discipline Course Enrollment Statistics</b>				
<i>Arts Discipline</i>	<i>1999-2000</i>	<i>2003-2004</i>	<i>Change</i>	<i>% Change</i>
Music	1,101,503	589,115	<b>-512,388</b>	<b>-46.52%</b>
Visual Arts	597,757	606,375	8,618	1.44%
Theatre	136,163	147,897	11,734	8.62%
Dance	57,156	87,386	30,230	52.89%
<b>Total Arts Student Enrollment</b>	<b>1,892,579</b>	<b>1,430,773</b>	<b>-461,806</b>	<b>-24.40%</b>

Yet, this reveals only one more part of the story. If, as we have seen, the overall student population increased by 5.83%, the next question is “What happened to the overall share of the total student enrollment “pie” in each arts discipline?”

### Percentage “SHARE” of Total Student Population by Arts Education Discipline

Enrollment in Music Education courses as a share of the overall student population dropped nearly 50% (49.46%), from 18.51% of all students in the 1999/2000 school year, to 9.35% in 2003-2004. This plummet in Music Education enrollment represents the lowest percentage share of the total student enrollment in the history of California public education based on available data. While the Visual Arts student share of total student enrollment declined by 4.15%, Drama/Theatre increased by 2.63% and Dance enrollment increased by 44.52%.

<b>How the Arts Disciplines Split the Total Student Enrollment Pie</b>				
<i>Discipline</i>	<i>Percentage of All Students Enrolled</i>			
	1999-2000	2003-2004	Change	% Change
Music	18.51%	9.35%	<b>-9.15%</b>	<b>-49.46%</b>
Visual Arts	10.04%	9.63%	-0.42%	-4.15%
Theatre	2.29%	2.35%	0.06%	2.63%
Dance	0.96%	1.39%	0.43%	44.52%
<b>Total % Arts Enrollment</b>	<b>31.80%</b>	<b>22.72%</b>	<b>-9.08%</b>	<b>-28.57%</b>

### Full Time Equivalent Arts Teachers

The decline or increase in students in a discipline would suggest a decline or increase in teachers in each arts discipline. This hypothesis holds true when the number of arts educators in each discipline during the period is examined.

While the total number of arts educators declined by 8.54%, or 757.87 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) teachers, the numbers within each discipline paint a more accurate picture. True to the student data figures, the number of music educators has declined by 26.67% representing a loss of 1053.48 FTE teachers. Drama/Theatre showed a 3.99% gain, Visual Arts showed a 4.3% gain, and Dance showed a 30.92% gain

<b>Full Time Equivalent Arts Teachers</b>				
<i>Arts Discipline</i>	1999-2000	2003-2004	Change	% Change
Music	3,949.76	2,896.28	<b>-1,053.48</b>	<b>-26.67%</b>
Visual Arts	3,690.29	3,848.92	158.63	4.30%
Theatre	903.98	940.02	36.04	3.99%
Dance	326.50	427.44	100.94	30.92%
<b>Total Arts Teachers</b>	<b>8,870.53</b>	<b>8,112.66</b>	<b>-757.87</b>	<b>-8.54%</b>

### III. COMPARING MUSIC EDUCATION DATA WITH ALL REPORTED COURSES

The key question this data raises and the real meaning behind it is this: Have music education programs been reduced disproportionately to the other measured academic areas? The thinking behind this question is the underlying perception that all academic programs in California's public schools have declined somewhat over the years. The assumption then becomes that music education has been reduced in proportion to other academic subjects. This is not the case.

When examining all of the reported subject areas of the database and using the same methodology and period of analysis it becomes clear that not only has music been disproportionately affected by program reductions, **MUSIC EDUCATION HAS SUFFERED TO A GREATER DEGREE IN BOTH PERCENTAGE REDUCTIONS, ACTUAL STUDENT REDUCTIONS, AND TEACHER REDUCTIONS THAN ANY OTHER SUBJECT AREA.**

#### **Student Enrollment in All Subject Areas** (Ascending order based on percentage change)

Music Education showed the greatest percentage decline in student enrollment when compared to all other curricular subject areas as shown in the following chart.

<b>Student Enrollment in All Subject Areas</b>				
<i>Subject Area</i>	<i>Enrollment</i>		<i>Change</i>	<i>% Change</i>
	<i>1999-2000</i>	<i>2003-2004</i>		
Music	1,101,503	589,115	<b>-512,388</b>	<b>-46.52%</b>
Humanities	68,320	42,698	-25,622	-37.50%
Health	263,772	232,112	-31,660	-12.00%
Safety	76,446	69,463	-6,983	-9.13%
Physical Education	2,386,385	2,261,229	-125,156	-5.24%
Computer Education	265,528	263,662	-1,866	-0.70%
Art	597,757	606,375	8,618	1.44%
Foreign Language	763,286	817,942	54,656	7.16%
Drama/Theatre	136,163	147,897	11,734	8.62%
Social Sciences	2,231,256	2,460,217	228,961	10.26%
Science	2,045,411	2,285,547	240,136	11.74%
English	3,062,629	3,465,724	403,095	13.16%
Math	2,289,011	2,668,093	379,082	16.56%
Dance	57,156	87,386	30,230	52.89%
Total Student Pop.	5,951,612	6,298,769	347,157	5.83%

**Student Enrollment for All Curricular Subject Areas**  
(Ascending order based on actual student change)

Music Education showed the greatest decline in actual student enrollment of all the academic subject areas.

<b>Student Enrollment for All Curricular Subject Areas</b>				
<i>Subject Area</i>	<i>Enrollment</i>		<i>Change</i>	<i>% Change</i>
	<i>2000</i>	<i>2004</i>		
Music	1,101,503	589,115	<b>-512,388</b>	<b>-46.52%</b>
Phys Ed	2,386,385	2,261,229	-125,156	-5.24%
Health	263,772	232,112	-31,660	-12.00%
Humanities	68,320	42,698	-25,622	-37.50%
Safety	76,446	69,463	-6,983	-9.13%
Computer Education	265,528	263,662	-1,866	-0.70%
Art	597,757	606,375	8,618	1.44%
Drama	136,163	147,897	11,734	8.62%
Dance	57,156	87,386	30,230	52.89%
Foreign Language	763,286	817,942	54,656	7.16%
Social Sciences	2,231,256	2,460,217	228,961	10.26%
Science	2,045,411	2,285,547	240,136	11.74%
Math	2,289,011	2,668,093	379,082	16.56%
English	3,062,629	3,465,724	403,095	13.16%
Total	5,951,612	6,298,769	347,157	5.83%

**Subject Area Enrollments as a Percentage of Total Student Enrollment**  
(Ascending order based on percentage decrease over period)

Music Education showed the greatest percentage decline in total student “share” (as a factor of total student population divided by music education population) of all the academic subject areas.

<b>Subject Area Enrollments as a Percentage of Total Student Enrollment Between 1999-2000 and 2003-2004</b>				
<i>Subject Area</i>	<i>% Total Enrollment</i>		<i>Actual Change</i>	<i>% Change</i>
	<i>1999-2000</i>	<i>2003-2004</i>		
Music	18.51%	9.35%	<b>-9.15%</b>	<b>-49.46%</b>
Humanities	1.15%	0.68%	-0.47%	-40.95%
Health	4.43%	3.69%	-0.75%	-16.85%

Safety	1.28%	1.10%	-0.18%	-14.14%
Physical Education	40.10%	35.90%	-4.20%	-10.47%
Computer Education	4.46%	4.19%	-0.28%	-6.18%
Art	10.04%	9.63%	-0.42%	-4.15%
Foreign Lang	12.82%	12.99%	0.16%	1.25%
Drama	2.29%	2.35%	0.06%	2.63%
Social Science	37.49%	39.06%	1.57%	4.18%
Science	34.37%	36.29%	1.92%	5.58%
English	51.46%	55.02%	3.56%	6.92%
Math	38.46%	42.36%	3.90%	10.14%
Dance	0.96%	1.39%	0.43%	44.46%

**Change in FTE Teachers by Subject Area**  
(Based on reduction in actual number of teachers)

Music Education showed the greatest decline in the total number of teachers of all the academic subject areas.

<b>Change in FTE Teachers by Subject Area Between 1999-2000 and 2003-2004</b>				
<i>Subject Area</i>	<i>FTE Teachers</i>			
	<i>1999-2000</i>	<i>2003-2004</i>	<i>Change</i>	<i>% Change</i>
Music	3,949.76	2,896.12	<b>-1,054</b>	<b>-26.68%</b>
Health	1,645.70	1,466.81	-179	-10.87%
Phys Ed	10,272.81	10,095.07	-178	-1.73%
Humanities	485.53	324.38	-161	<b>-33.19%</b>
Safety	602.54	570.36	-32	-5.34%
Drama	903.98	940.02	36	3.99%
Dance	326.5	427.44	101	30.92%
Computer Education	1,672.40	1,778.41	106	6.34%
Art	3,690.29	3,848.92	159	4.30%
Foreign Language	4,994.24	5,309.07	315	6.30%
Social Sciences	14,593.79	15,722.47	1,129	7.73%
Science	13,000.71	14,444.07	1,443	11.10%
English	23,674.37	25,928.25	2,254	9.52%
Math	15,760.74	18,293.41	2,533	16.07%

As the data is presented here, we can readily see how music education in California Public Schools has been disproportionately affected by program reductions over the past five years. We know that declines in overall share of students, actual student participation, and teachers have occurred to the greatest degree in music education when compared to all other measured academic subjects. The question now becomes, within music, where is the decline coming from?

#### IV. ENROLLMENT CHANGES WITHIN MUSIC COURSES

To answer this question we examined the data available from the California Department of Education regarding the actual music course offerings. It is when we do a comparative evaluation of the actual music course offerings that the courses receiving the greatest decline in enrollment emerge.

We have often heard during the course of our research that school music programs lend themselves to budget cuts based on an assumption that these courses tend to be more expensive than the other “core” academic courses. If this conjecture is valid, then we would expect to find a majority of the program reductions occurring in the most expensive music courses offered in public schools, which are instrumental music classes such as band, orchestra, as well as large and small instrumental ensemble groups. Our research suggests that actually the opposite has occurred. The California Department of Education data shows the music course with the greatest overall reduction in student enrollment is the one catchall course for music in California listed as Classroom/general/exploratory music, which is predominately an elementary music course.

#### Change in Music Course Enrollments Between 1999-2000 and 2003-2004

<b>Change in Music Course Enrollments Between 1999-2000 and 2003-2004</b>				
<i>(Ranked based on largest decline in student participation)</i>				
<b>Course Name*</b>	<i>Enrollment</i>			
	<i>99-00</i>	<i>03-04</i>	<i>Change</i>	<i>% Change</i>
Classroom/general/exploratory music	308,410	43,589	(264,821)	-85.87%
Other music course	214,061	110,278	(103,783)	-48.48%
Chorus/choir	160,246	102,341	(57,905)	-36.14%
Band	216,619	172,110	(44,509)	-20.55%
Instrumental music lessons	96,027	56,235	(39,792)	-41.44%
Orchestra	40,091	36,762	(3,329)	-8.30%
Voice class	2,656	438	(2,218)	-83.51%
Composition/songwriting	4,714	2,731	(1,983)	-42.07%
Music theory	2,763	2,278	(485)	-17.55%
Vocal jazz/jazz choir	3,462	2,995	(467)	-13.49%
Electronic music	959	775	(184)	-19.19%
Musical theater	2,315	2,251	(64)	-2.76%
Recorder ensemble	2,989	2,953	(36)	-1.20%
Computers in music	295	482	187	63.39%
Swing/show choir	4,255	4,469	214	5.03%
Jazz band	12,137	12,649	512	4.22%

Chamber/madrigal/vocal ensemble	9,096	10,459	1,363	14.98%
Stage band	4,819	6,249	1,430	29.67%
Music appreciation/history/literature	15,589	19,071	3,482	22.34%
Total	1,101,503	589,115	(512,388)	-46.52%

As shown in the chart above, the decline in General Music participation accounts for 51.68% of the total reduction in student enrollment in music education. In fact, student participation in General Music declined 85.87% in the period covered. Adding insult to injury, this represents a staggering drop of 264,821 students moving what was once the top music course (as measured by enrollment) to a distant fourth place. This is followed by declines in Other Music Courses\* (-48.48%), Chorus/Choir (-36.14%), Band (-20.55%) and Instrumental Music Lessons (-41.44%). Reductions in these five areas represent 99.69% of the total decline in music education.

The erosion to general music participation is cause for considerable concern. General music courses, on average, are no more expensive to provide to children than any other area of study. Therefore, there must be something more that is driving this decline. This is a key question emerging from this analysis, which must have further examination.

\* Music Course Codes and Definitions are located in the appendix of this report.

## V. DISCUSSION

The statistical trends revealed in this report show trends that are certainly disturbing to all those concerned with the education of our children. It is clear that music education – particularly offerings in General Music – have suffered significant erosion over the past five years. Unfortunately, the data do not reveal the reasons for this erosion. Several possible explanations could be advanced, but only a few are plausible:

- Explanation 1: Public support for music education has eroded, and the erosion in services to schoolchildren simply mirrors this trend. This explanation can be rather easily dismissed. Data gathered by the Gallup organization<sup>iv</sup> reveal that Americans widely accept the idea that music is an essential part of a child’s education, and that acceptance has been growing over the past several years. Specifically, in the 2003 poll, 95 percent of Americans surveyed said that they feel music is part of a well-rounded education (up from 90 percent in 1997), 93 percent feel schools should offer musical instruction as part of the regular curriculum (up from 88 percent), and 78 percent (up from 70 percent) feel states should mandate music education for all students. In a California Public Opinion Survey released in 2001 by the California Arts Council, 89 percent of Californians believe the arts help children develop creative skills. Creativity is one of the most sought after skills businesses are looking for in employees. In addition, 74 percent of Californians believe the arts improve the quality of children’s overall education.<sup>v</sup>

When interpreting these surveys, one must wonder what percentage of respondents represent low-income, low-performing school districts versus more affluent, high-performing school districts. A widely held premise among music educators reveals that when parents in a particular district demand music instruction for their children or when music instruction is an expected curricular offering, music programs flourish. This is a common occurrence in affluent, high-performing districts. In fact, parents in these same districts often substantially subsidize music (and other arts) instruction by establishing arts foundations. One must therefore wonder what support exists in low-income, low-performing schools where parents don’t speak English and often feel disenfranchised from the educational process.

- Explanation 2: The implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act, in particular the act’s emphasis on testing the limited areas of reading, math, and (soon) science, has led to the decline in music programs. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) as implemented has indeed been widely blamed for lessening of support for a variety of valuable school programs.<sup>vi</sup> Disturbed by this, U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige has recently been moved to exhort school superintendents that “NCLB included the arts as a core academic subject because of their importance to a child’s education”. Based on the fact that the Secretary himself has observed problems with state and local implementation of the act, it is plausible to trace part of the erosion in California’s school music programs to the process of implementation. The entire observed effect, however, cannot be traced to the NCLB. First, the idea of systematic student assessment did not arrive in California with the 2001 passage NCLB, but was implemented as a result of the California Public Schools Accountability Act of 1999 (based on an “Academic Performance Index,” and not specifically centered on status targets in a few subjects). Second, one would expect the effect of NCLB-mandated testing on



the breadth of offerings in a school system to apply equally to all subjects not among the few chosen for testing. This is clearly not the case, as the data show that music programs have been limited in a manner vastly disproportionate to other curricula. At a minimum, therefore, other forces must be at work.

Many low-income, low-performing elementary schools have curtailed or eliminated general music, and in some cases, instrumental music, because of the demand placed on teachers and administrators by the state of California to improve Academic Performance Index (API) scores. Additionally, elementary schools throughout the state have implemented “literacy blocks” which provide two or more mandatory hours of specialized instruction in reading and/or math during which no other activities (i.e. music instruction) may take place. The fact that many California school districts defer decisions regarding the offering of music instruction (and the other arts) at the elementary level to individual elementary school site-based management councils who may or may not include music instruction in their curriculum, as observed by many educators, exacerbates the problem.

- Explanation 3: The well-documented budget crisis in California has led to the decline in music programs. The allocation of resources is certainly the central issue here, and “resources” in the context of education always includes the element of money (the other critical resource being time). Following logic similar to that applied to the effect of the No Child Left Behind Act, however, it is difficult to attribute the entire observed effect to budgetary woes. Nevertheless, it can be argued that many music programs in the state, most notably at the elementary level, were never reinstated to the vigor they enjoyed prior to the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978. The situation has been compounded by the elimination of the position of Fine Arts Coordinator in many school districts which means there is no one to keep music “on the table” when budget constraints are discussed at the administrative/district level. Again, simple monetary shortfalls alone cannot account for the disproportionate effect on music programs.

- Explanation 4: Some statistical anomaly or fault in the gathering of data has led to the observed effect, while the reality is more benign. While some portion of the observed effect might possibly be tied to errors in reporting, it is difficult to imagine that a decline of this magnitude, as gathered by the State of California itself, on a population so large (over one million music students in 99-00), could be dismissed as an artifact of the reporting system. And the question of statistical anomaly does not really arise, as the data are drawn from reports for the entire system rather than from a sample that is presumed to be statistically valid.

The most probable explanation is, like most things in public education, a relatively complex blend of effects. This probable explanation takes in the second and third explanations above (those to do with the implementation of testing requirements and with budget shortfalls), combined with political expediency:

In reaction to interpretations of testing mandates in a narrow range of subjects, combined with budget shortfalls, certain music curricula have been adversely

impacted because they represented single, relatively significant, politically expedient targets for cuts.

This explanation seems to provide a plausible explanation for the fact that General Music programs have been at the core of program reductions. General Music programs have historically been a significant (though not enormous) presence in California schools, so cutting them could be seen as a way to free up resources of time and money in schools. And those programs, while providing significant avenues for developing the knowledge and skills that the public seemingly wants from music curricula, are less visible than music ensemble programs (band, orchestra, and chorus), and are therefore more easily cut with political impunity.

The problem is, of course, that these cuts to these programs hurt students. General Music classes are those that provide the benefits of music education to students who are not involved, either because they are too young or for other reasons, in school ensemble programs. They typically provide these benefits in ways that clearly reach children both with the inherent value of music and with educational experiences that reinforce other curricula.

These possible explanations are just that: possibilities. More work must be done to identify with more certainty the causes that underlie these declines. It is this need for additional exploration and examination of this issue that has led us to our first recommendation on the following page.

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation I** – We urge the Governor, State Board of Education, Department of Education and/or the State Legislature to empanel a special taskforce to explore in detail the cause of this rapid decline of music education participation and present recommendations to reverse this trend for action by the state.

**Recommendation II** - We urge school districts to use resources available from the Federal Government to support the restoration of music programs. Specifically, monies in Title I, part A, can be used by local education agencies to improve the educational achievement of disadvantaged students through the arts, Title II Teacher Quality Enhancement Grants can address the professional development needs of teachers of the arts, and various funds under Title V are available for music education programs. (For detailed advice on this area, please see "No Subject Left Behind: A Guide to Arts Education Opportunities in the 2001 NCLB Act" at [www.aep-arts.org/Funding.html](http://www.aep-arts.org/Funding.html).)

**Recommendation III** - We urge School Boards and Superintendents across the state to follow the guidance provided by Secretary of Education Rod Paige in his July 2004 letter to support music and arts instruction as part of the core curriculum of every child. Based on the contents of this letter, the No Child Left Behind Act should no longer be used as an excuse to reduce or eliminate instruction time in music and the arts in California Public Schools.

**Recommendation IV** - We urge local citizens to let their voices be heard. Local school boards must provide accurate student participation data for music and arts courses for both individual schools and school districts to the public each year. Individuals may access the current reported data for each school and school district from the California Department of Education. The website address is: <http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>. Local citizens may access tools and information to support local advocacy efforts at <http://amc-music.org>.

**Recommendation V** – Learn from successful models. CMEA: The California Association for Music Education and the California Alliance for Arts Education have examples of schools and school districts that have robust music and arts education programs. These schools provide real world examples of how music education contributes to the overall success of these schools and the children in these communities. In addition, school districts should use the *California Framework for Visual and Performing Arts* to develop the appropriate, standards based, course work for students in music and the arts.

**Accountability** – The Music for All Foundation will be working with California based organizations that share our concerns about these findings to provide a follow-up report on the progress being made in regard to these recommendations. This report will be released to the public in March of 2005 as part of the national celebration of Music and Arts Education in Our Schools Month.

## **IN CONCLUSION**

The trends identified in this data indicate that if steps are not taken immediately to reverse declining enrollment, music education courses in California's Public Schools will virtually disappear within a decade.

It is our strong belief that this is not the desired goal of the citizens of California. Nor do we believe that this is a preordained outcome. Therefore, we strongly urge the citizens and policymakers to take concrete steps, many outlined in this report, to ensure the children of California are not denied the many valuable benefits an education that includes music provides.

Finally, we urge legislators, boards of education, and others interested in the education of our children nationwide to learn from the experience of California and work proactively to maintain and improve music education programs in every state. While each state and local education agency serves a unique population, is funded by a unique formula or system, and faces unique systems for ensuring student achievement, no state can afford to let the benefits of music and arts education slip away from their children.

We are in an exciting (and somewhat frightening) era that combines educational experimentation with educational accountability. In this era, creative curricula are now being combined with and supported by creative funding strategies, and the worthy goal of leaving no child behind is receiving the attention of the best thinkers in our nation. In grappling with those issues, it is the responsibility of every education decision-maker to ensure that we keep in place the fiscal and educational structures that give all students, regardless of their economic, demographic, ethnic or geographic background, access to a full, balanced, education with high standards for every subject including music.

## VII. Appendix – Music Course Definitions

**Course Codes and Definitions – Music:** The definitions below reflect current instructional practices and national and state curriculum guidelines for reporting on the California Basic Educational Data System.

**2300 Band** - This program is a performing ensemble in which students learn proper individual and ensemble instrumental techniques; the elements of music; and band music of different styles, cultures, and periods. It may or may not include marching experiences.

**2301 Jazz Band** - This advanced performing ensemble concentrates on jazz music. Student soloists (instrumental and vocal) are expected to improvise, demonstrating an understanding of the harmonic structure of the music that is played. Members may also write for the group. This course may include a jazz string group as well as more traditional jazz wind and percussion groups.

**2302 Stage Band** - This instructional program is a performing ensemble in which students continue to learn proper instrumental techniques. The focus is on different styles of popular, commercial music and/or jazz music, improvisation, and harmony.

**2303 Orchestra** - This instructional program is a performing ensemble in which students learn proper individual and ensemble instrumental techniques; the elements of music; and orchestra music of different styles, cultures, and periods.

**2305 Chorus/Choir** - This instructional program is a performing ensemble in which students learn proper individual and ensemble vocal techniques; the elements of music; and choral music of different styles, cultures, and periods.

**2306 Vocal Jazz/Jazz Choir** - This instructional program is an advanced vocal group, generally accompanied by a small instrumental ensemble, that performs jazz. Student soloists (vocal and instrumental) are expected to improvise, demonstrating an understanding of the harmonic structure of the music performed.

**2307 Music Appreciation/History/Literature** - This class emphasizes listening activities related to the structure or design of the music from perceptual, creative, historical, and critical viewpoints using a variety of musical forms and styles.

**2308 Music Theory** - This class concentrates on the theoretical aspects of music, such as symbols, intervals, scale and chord structure, duration, meter, pitch, harmony, etc. Classes such as "Harmony, Theory, and Styles" belong in this category and not in Music History if the largest proportion of study is theoretical rather than historical.

**2309 Composition/Songwriting** - This class is for students who wish to express themselves through creation of music. It may or may not have a prerequisite of music theory and/or ability to play a melodic instrument; it may use either non-conventional or conventional notation; it may include harmonization in addition to melody writing; it may use computers for creating music.

**2310 Instrumental Music Lessons** (Brass, Guitar, Keyboard, Percussion, Recorders, Strings, Woodwinds) - This class provides individual or class instruction in which students learn to play specified instruments and identify their unique contributions to various types of ensembles. They also study the elements of music and learn to read music.

**2311 Recorder Ensemble** - This ensemble is a performing group that includes recorders and a limited number of percussion instruments. Music ranges from medieval through contemporary selections. Singing and other selected instruments may be part of the ensemble as dictated by the music literature.

**2313 Swing/Show Choir** - This selected vocal ensemble performs popular or jazz music. Often the students dance as well as sing and may emphasize visual additions such as costuming.

**2314 Chamber/Madrigal/Vocal Ensemble** - This small, advanced vocal ensemble builds upon performance capability by extending opportunities for the talented singer. A chamber ensemble may confine itself to special literature (such as madrigals) or may perform music with a wide range of styles, periods, and/or cultures. Chamber ensembles are especially designed to encourage independent musicianship.

**2315 Classroom/General/Exploratory Music** - This class is designed to develop the student's ability to make discriminating judgments regarding music through a variety of musical activities. The class considers the elements of music as found in many different styles, cultures, and periods of music. Secondary classes in this category have many titles such as: "Mime and Music," "Today's Music," "Music of Yesterday and Today," "Music Survey," "World of Music," etc. Elementary classes are usually known only as "Music."

**2316 Voice Class** - This class is one in which students learn to use their voices appropriately by singing various types of literature especially chosen for the unique characteristics of their voices (such as range, timbre, tessitura). They also study the elements of music and learn to read music.

**2320 Electronic Music** - This class is devoted to music either composed or realized through electronic media. Students learn to use the equipment through performance of music from other sources and explore personal means of self-expression through the electronic media.

**2321 Computers in Music** - This class is for students who wish to learn computer applications related to music such as creative work, ear training, music writing and printing, and performance of contemporary compositions. The course may include principles of computer technology and the study of the appropriate physics of sound.

**2322 Musical Theater** - This class is one in which students learn vocal music techniques, principles of musical drama, and acting techniques. They learn skills through performing examples of musical theater, including, but not confined to, Broadway shows.

**2360 International Baccalaureate – Music** - Offered at two levels, Music is designed to promote a greater awareness and understanding of the power and variety of musical experiences for those who have a general interest in music and for those who intend to continue their formal study of music. Candidates are exposed to a broad spectrum of music, ranging from classical and modern Western traditions to that of other regions and cultures. At both levels, the creative and practical aspects of music are evenly balanced with the theoretical or academic. All students study basic music theory, undertake general and detailed studies of Western music from different time periods and of world music from each continent, and participate in the creation of music through compositions or performance. Candidates are not expected to play more than one instrument but may choose more than one (including the voice) if they wish.

**2370 Advanced Placement - Music Theory** - This course is designed to be the equivalent of a first-year music theory college course. The course develops students' understanding of musical structure and compositional procedures. Usually intended for students possessing performance-level skills, this course extends and builds on the students' knowledge of intervals, scales, chords, metric/rhythmic patterns, and their interaction in composition. Musical notation, analysis, composition, and aural skills are important components of the course.

**2398 Other Music Course** - This designation is for any music course not identified in the series of courses outlined on the CBEDS assignment code list.

## VIII. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Music for All Foundation would like to thank the following individuals and organizations to whom we are deeply indebted for the tremendous assistance and support they have each provided in the research, analysis, reviewing, editing and completion of this report.

Rob Klevan, Mary Schliff, Sam Gronseth, George DeGraffenreid, John Larrieu, and Deborah Mitchell – CMEA: The California Association for Music Education; Laurie Schell – California Alliance for Arts Education; Michael Blakeslee – MENC, The National Association for Music Education; John D’Addario, Jr. and Laura Johnson – American Music Conference; Daryl Freidman, and Lizzy Moore – The Recording Academy; Nancy Carr and Don Doyle, California Department of Education; Robin Lemoine, California Department of Education – Demographics Unit; Randy Cohen – Americans for the Arts; Peter Giles, Jodi Burack, Jim Doughty, Ann-Marie Nieves – Giles Communications.

A special thank you to the Music for All Foundation Board of Advisors and Board of Trustees for their ongoing support of our work including: Richard Bell – Young Audiences; Joe Lamond – NAMM, International Music Products Association; Robert Lynch – Americans for the Arts; Dr. John Mahlmann – MENC, The National Association for Music Education; Robert B. Morrison – Music for All Foundation; Dr. Frances Rauscher – University of Wisconsin at Osh Kosh; Sandra Rees – Countrywide Financial; and Karen Sherry – ASCAP Foundation.

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<sup>i</sup> The information and data used in the preparation of this report, unless otherwise noted, is from the California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS) made available by the California Department of Education Demographics Unit and obtained through Dataquest (<http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest>).

<sup>ii</sup> Excerpt from the July 2004 letter from U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige to the 16,000 public school superintendents in the United States.

<sup>iii</sup> Education Code Number 51210 (Amended by Chapter 530, 1995)

Course of Study: Grades 1 to 6

(e) Visual and performing arts, including instruction in the subjects of dance, music, theatre, and visual arts, aimed at the development of aesthetic appreciation and the skills of creative expression.

Education Code Number 51220 (Amended by Chapter 530, 1995)

Areas of Study: Grades 7 to 12

(g) Visual and performing arts, including dance, music, theater, and visual arts, with emphasis upon development of aesthetic appreciation and the skills of creative expression.

<sup>iv</sup> *American Attitudes Toward Music* 2003 conducted by the Gallup Organization commissioned by NAMM, International Music Products Association

<sup>v</sup> *Public Opinion Survey 2001* – California Arts Council

<sup>vi</sup> See *Academic Atrophy: The Condition of the Liberal Arts in America's Public School* – Council for Basic Education 2004

**About the Music for All Foundation**

The Music For All Foundation is a national non-profit organization committed to expanding the role of music and arts in education, to heightening the public's appreciation of the value of music and arts education, and to creating a positive environment for arts through social change. For more information, including up-to-date news about the state of music education in America, visit [music-for-all.org](http://music-for-all.org).