

## Urban Orff Possibilities: What if . . . ?

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### I.

#### Orff's Unique Elements that Empower

What was your first experience with Orff?

I remember my earliest Orff experiences were playing with words and layering speech patterns to create a composition. It was planting seeds and watching them grow. It was about making choices for ears, eyes and body. It explored an idea kinesthetically, aurally, and visually, building deeper understanding through multiple modalities. It required me to think on my feet, and be responsible for my thoughts and work. It honored the ideas and imagination of individuals while building a community within the group. It was invention in real time, unfolding through process rather than performing through interpretation. It was all the artistic processes: creating, performing and responding interacting at once. It built my confidence by celebrating real successes, and allowing me to self assess and revise toward excellence.

I was empowered in a way that changed my life.

*Orff empowers me  
With imagination, and flexibility.  
Body, ears, eyes and words.  
My voice is heard.  
Process is at the core.  
And if you think about it, there is even more.*

There are multiple bodies of research that inform us about WHY Orff does what it does, and WHY it is important. Music and arts research, brain research, developmental theory, kinesthesiology, learning theory, literacy research, creativity and imagination theory, social/emotional and motivation research, social policy, business/futurists, and other fields are providing us with support for what we do.

(See the attached bibliography/webography)

One recent interesting perspective is provided by Daniel Pink, in [A Whole New Mind](#). During Americans for the Arts' 21<sup>st</sup> annual Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts and Public Policy, author Dan Pink made a persuasive case linking arts education to the kind of brain development needed to build creative and innovative thinking skills for 21<sup>st</sup>-century jobs.

His talk is at: [http://www.americansforthearts.org/information\\_services/video\\_audio/default.asp#pink](http://www.americansforthearts.org/information_services/video_audio/default.asp#pink)

### II.

#### Urban and Poor Children

In this country, educational policy has been created by middle and upper class individuals to teach middle and upper class children. There has been a long and enduring tradition of disenfranchisement of the poor, who are preponderantly people of color.

In Head Start, children entering at 3 years old are cognitively intact, but significantly developmentally and language delayed. Hart and Risley's research (<http://www.brookespublishing.com/store/books/hart-1979/> or [http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american\\_educator/spring2003/catastrophe.html](http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american_educator/spring2003/catastrophe.html) ) indicates that the average child living in poverty hears 30 million words less by age 3 than a child in a professional family – a nearly insurmountable difference. In addition, children in poverty are recipients of a preponderance of discouragements that erode their confidence and belief in their competence.

Cultural differences are rarely addressed in classrooms. Hispanic children are often well behaved and very quiet. African-American children are often extremely verbal, inclined to tell a whole story in order to give an answer. What do these behaviors suggest for classroom structure, management, and teaching strategies?

The current education policy, which sets finite benchmarks for each grade level, does not accommodate the pre-literacy needs of disadvantaged children and families. Cultural and individual learning differences are not taken into account in direct instructional strategies that have been labeled “research based” by the most stringent technical standards without consideration of those less easily tested but still tangible factors. The ideas that knowledge and learning can be measured through tests for which one can provide “right” answers denies the multi-dimensional reality of today's tasks, problems, and needs.

### III.

#### Matching Orff strategies and Child Development System Needs

Ed Zigler, Father of Head Start, identifies the four systems that support a child's development and school success. How many of these do we address/touch through the Orff process in all its potential manifestations?

- **The child's resources** – health, age appropriate skills, ability to care for self, emotional and behavioral regulation, appropriate interactions, secure attachments, ability to communicate, interest and engagement in world, motivation to learn, mastery of certain cognitive and academic skills, ability to adjust to the school environment.

*What if Orff-type activities were provided starting at birth to infants/toddlers and their family members, pre-school children and their providers and parents, and Kindergarten -4<sup>th</sup> grade students and their teachers with a goal of changing adult-child interactions and patterning the brain for learning how to learn?*

- ☞ Birth – 3 and 3-5 year old programs are Music Together classes each week.
- ☞ K-4<sup>th</sup> grade programs provide intensive, embedded professional development for a year, with a second year of support.
- ☞ The professional development introduces classroom management module followed by 20 strategies in sets of four: auditory, kinesthetic, visual and linguistic (or music, dance, visual art and drama).
- ☞ These strategies are quickly applied to deliver classroom content.

- **Family resources** such as such as parent child interactions, home support for learning, participation in school, parenting skills

*What if parents are supported to build positive parent/child dyadic interactions and parental trust in schools and teachers?*

- ☞ Parents are invited into the classroom as partners in their child's learning, sometimes learning along with their child.
- ☞ Parent nights are held to build parent skills and give them ways to positively interact with their child to support learning.
- ☞ Family workers are available to help be certain children are in school on time each day.
- ☞ A hospital family behavioral health program is available to work with children, families and classrooms/teachers at risk in a holistic mental-health way to prevent serious emotional and learning problems.

- **School resources** such as quality of school environment, classroom environment, school-level performance.

*What if school provided highly engaging, multi-modal, multi-sensory, hands-on, brains-on teaching and learning that pattern the brain for learning?*

- ☞ Teachers receive intensive, embedded professional development through which they learn and learn to apply arts-infused strategies that enhance classroom management, increase achievement, build social/emotional skills and confidence, and develop classroom community.
- ☞ Program development is based on research and best-practices from a range of fields and disciplines, with developmentally appropriate strategies that address the needs of the whole child.
- ☞ Students become partners in the professional development process while gaining multi-modal (arts) skills.
- ☞ Principals are engaged in supporting teachers and classrooms to develop differentiated learning classrooms.
- ☞ An enriched curriculum delivery system is introduced over the course of a year, providing a high ratio of time on task
- ☞ Formative and mastery assessments inform the process and allow for timely modifications.
- ☞ The Board of Education is a partner in this initiative.

- **Community resources** such as after school programs, local organizations that provide support, health and mental health organizations

*What if a partnership of local agencies and programs contributed to the initiative for leadership and program provisions?*

- ☞ The Board of Education is a partner in this initiative.
- ☞ Highly qualified, multi-faceted educational experts as teacher trainers.
- ☞ A wrap around program is developed with
  - Family workers from the anti-poverty agency
  - Extended day program from the city's after-school agency
  - Intensive family support from the hospital's behavior health services program
  - Partnership of other programs involved in the school
- ☞ An independent, objective evaluator provides formative and summative evaluation.
- ☞ Pro bono support from a high-profile business school community service organization to develop a roadmap and budget.

- ☞ Leadership of an anti-poverty agency with a very politically savvy executive director.

#### **IV. Partnership Possibilities**

In poverty situations, the profound and deleterious effects of growing up in poverty cannot be addressed in one way. While Head Start and other quality early childhood programs provide gains, those gains disappear by the first round of mastery tests in Grade 3 or 4.

Is it possible that a unified effort, with Orff process driving professional development for teachers and content for students, can mediate some of the effects of poverty and reduce the achievement gap?

When others see Orff classes, they recognize how we meet multiple needs. We don't even know how powerful our work is! Depending on the teacher's skills, Orff experiences can develop social/emotional skills and self esteem, higher order thinking skills, literacy skills (word, visual, aural, kinesthetic and media literacy), arts skills, kinesthetic/motor development, metaphorical thinking, numeracy and logic skills, artistic processes, imagination and creativity, perseverance and resilience, differentiated learning, patience, communication skills, interpersonal skills, classroom and school community, aesthetic discrimination, brain network development, critical thinking . . .

Just tune in to the professional literature and imagine the links, make the maps, articulate your intuitions. Now look at what you do and imagine how much more powerful it could be if it was connected to what others do.

Using Zigler's four major systems a multifaceted partnership in Bridgeport, CT went about creating a new approach, which is still being refined. This approach, Total Learning, has a very rigorous evaluation component to gather data and provide gold standard research findings. It's not easy! There are multiple levels of successes and challenges. Partnerships are crucial.

Choosing language that has been effective with funders, we equate arts-infused with "multi-modal, multi-sensory, hands-on, brains-on strategies that pattern the brain for learning." We might also say that we are using Orff-Schulwerk process and strategies to deliver the curriculum and teach children how to learn.

#### **V. A Challenge of Encouragement**

To find out more and keep track of our findings, go to [www.bridgeporttotallearninginitiative.org](http://www.bridgeporttotallearninginitiative.org) and/or [www.totallearninginstitute.org](http://www.totallearninginstitute.org).

Use this model as inspiration to help Orff be all it can be. Reach out to others to meet the real needs of children in poverty – They need better environments, instruction, family support and community underpinnings. Orff process and teachers can be the impetus and central hub of really different approaches that make a difference and can reduce the achievement gap.

# Bibliography/Webography

*Why is it that the books and print that drive policy decisions are often so devoid of information about the importance of the arts? What partnerships and alliances have we failed to make? What opportunities are lost as a result?*

*There are so many organizations, publications, texts, articles, websites, blogs – here is a small sampling.*

## **Organizations supporting the arts and arts education:**

Americans for the Arts: [www.americansforthearts.org](http://www.americansforthearts.org)

The Kennedy Center: <http://www.kennedy-center.org/education/home.html>

Center for Arts Education, NY: <http://www.cae-nyc.org/>

Perpich Center for Arts Education: <http://www.mcae.k12.mn.us/>

Research Studies in Orff-Schulwerk: [http://itc.uky.edu:16080/orff\\_research/](http://itc.uky.edu:16080/orff_research/)

AERA (American Educational Research Association) has several SIGs that address arts:

Arts and Inquiry in the Visual and Performing Arts in Education (SIG #53)

Arts and Learning (SIG #8)

Arts-Based Educational Research (SIG #9)

American Music Conference: [http://www.amc-music.com/research\\_briefs.htm](http://www.amc-music.com/research_briefs.htm)

arts education IDEAS: [www.aeideas.com](http://www.aeideas.com)

The Total Learning Institute: [www.totallearninginstitute.org](http://www.totallearninginstitute.org)

## **Organizations that Influence Policy:**

ASCD (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development)

<http://www.ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/index.jsp/> (search for “arts” “whole child” “best practices”)

Phi Delta Kappa <http://www.pdkintl.org/research/respubs.htm>

The Aspen Institute <http://www.aspeninstitute.org/>

RAND Corporation <http://www.rand.org/> (take your time – research, occasional papers, publications, articles, etc.)

U. S. Department of Education

<https://www.t2tweb.us/Workshops/Sessions.asp?Content=Arts> for Teacher to Teacher workshop sessions in the arts

Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills [www.21stcenturyskills.org](http://www.21stcenturyskills.org)

Edutopia, The George Lucas Foundation. <http://www.edutopia.org/>

KnowledgeWorks Foundation: <http://www.kwfdn.org/> (see Map of the Decade)

## **Articles:**

*Arts Education: Creating Student Success in School, Work and Life*

[http://www.keepartsinschools.org/Resources/Materials/Unified\\_Statement\\_110706.pdf](http://www.keepartsinschools.org/Resources/Materials/Unified_Statement_110706.pdf)

Organizations that focus on visiting artists rather than arts educators are the most active in developing or promoting research. MENC affects policy more by lobbying and partnering with other organizations than generating theory and research outright. AOSA has a research SIG.

## **Early Childhood**

Kirp, David L. The Sandbox Investment: The Preschool Movement and Kids-First Politics. Harvard University Press, 2007. ISBN-13: 978-0-674-12641-4.

Zigler, Edward et al. A Vision for Universal Preschool Education. Cambridge University Press, 2006.

### **Articles:**

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*Ready by 5 and Fine by 9: Connecticut's Early Childhood Investment Framework* [http://www.cga.ct.gov/COC/PDFs/earlychildhood/ready5\\_fine9.pdf](http://www.cga.ct.gov/COC/PDFs/earlychildhood/ready5_fine9.pdf)

The Economics of Early Childhood Policy: What the Dismal Science Has to Say About Investing in Children, RAND Corporation <http://search.rand.org/search?input-form=rand-simple&query=economics+of+early+childhood>

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Pink, Daniel. A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future. Riverhead Books, 2006. ISBN 1-57322-308-5.

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### **Articles:**

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**Articles:**

*Turning Around Chronically Low Performing Schools*, US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences

[http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/Turnaround\\_pg\\_04181.pdf](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/Turnaround_pg_04181.pdf)

*The Power of Music to Nourish Children in Stressful Times*, by Dee Joy Coulter, Ed.D.

[http://www.kindlingtouch.com/documents/powerofmusictonourishchildreninstressfultimes\\_001.pdf](http://www.kindlingtouch.com/documents/powerofmusictonourishchildreninstressfultimes_001.pdf)

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INTASC: Interstate New Teachers Assessment and Support Consortium. From the Council of Chief State Schools Officers (CCSSO)

[http://www.ccsso.org/Projects/interstate\\_new\\_teacher\\_assessment\\_and\\_support\\_consortium/](http://www.ccsso.org/Projects/interstate_new_teacher_assessment_and_support_consortium/)

CCSSO Arts:

[http://www.ccsso.org/Projects/interstate\\_new\\_teacher\\_assessment\\_and\\_support\\_consortium/projects/standards\\_development/791.cfm#arts](http://www.ccsso.org/Projects/interstate_new_teacher_assessment_and_support_consortium/projects/standards_development/791.cfm#arts)

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**Articles:**

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*Mind and Music in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, by Dee Joy Coulter, Ed.D. [http://www.kindlingtouch.com/documents/mindandmusicinthe21stcentury\\_000.pdf](http://www.kindlingtouch.com/documents/mindandmusicinthe21stcentury_000.pdf)

## **Sources of Funding**

Look to your local industries and organizations first. Getting one grant funded will lead to others. Starbucks, Target, local Education Foundation.

Look at RFPs outside of the arts that might fit.

NAMM Foundation <http://www.music-research.org/>

AOSA Research Grants <http://www.aosa.org/grants.html>