

Strings of Hope Purpose & Need

The Purpose

- To take advantage of the location and mission of Hope Academy to provide economically disadvantaged kids access to an intensive Suzuki violin program.
- To provide these same students with the countless educational benefits that accompany musical instruction (e.g., there seems to be a strong correlation between music instruction and enhanced spacio-temporal ability, and both math and reading aptitude).¹
- To provide these same students with the countless character-shaping benefits that accompany mastering a musical instrument (attentiveness, confidence, obedience, and perseverance, to name a few).
- To encourage and empower inner city students, families, and neighborhoods by training up their children to excellence in the fine arts.
- To provide economically disadvantaged kids with skills to perform fine music with excellence, thus giving them access to areas of society that would otherwise be inaccessible.
- To enhance the educational program of Hope Academy by offering Strings of Hope as a supplement to their music program.

The Need

As is widely known, the educational achievement gap between black and white, rich and poor, is large and growing. Music instruction, if only for a small number of disadvantaged kids, has the potential to help bridge the gap.

Yet music instruction is often unaffordable for economically disadvantaged families, though not due to lack of interest. A poll of economically disadvantaged parents shows the grim reality. Out of random sample of ten parents with students at Hope Academy (with a total of 23 students, grades K-8), not a single student receives music instruction of any kind, saving the limited music classes offered at the school.² Each of the parents acknowledged that if lessons were free (or affordable) and available at school, they would be extremely interested.

¹ See, for example, Frances H. Rauscher, "Can Musical Instruction Affect Children's Cognitive Development?" ERIC/EECE Archive. Accessed online June 27, 2007.
<http://ceep.crc.uiuc.edu/eecearchive/digests/2003/rauscher03.html>.

While Rauscher's gives no definitive answers, (s)he concludes that "the research suggests that music may act as a catalyst for cognitive abilities in other disciplines, and the relationship between music and spatial-temporal reasoning is particularly compelling."

² Informal survey conducted by Dan Olson between June 25, 2007 and June 28, 2007. Music offerings at Hope Academy for the 2006-2007 school year included just two 45-minute periods each week of general music education.

While these ten families may not benefit from Strings of Hope, future Hope Academy families will be playing a different tune.