



Making Minds *Sing*



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From the Chairman of the Board

The Conservatory Lab Charter School (CLCS) has become a successful, inner city, public, elementary school where the infrastructure and culture enhances and supports the mission of the school. As in any successful start-up, we continue to grow and evolve.

This coming September the school moves to a more permanent home in Brighton. We will be moving to a former parochial school, with big airy classrooms, access to an auditorium, a park nearby and lots of parking. Finding and securing 'permanent' space has been a priority for the Board since the beginning. Consequently, this move is a major achievement for the CLCS, and it has already drawn us further together as a community of parents, teachers, staff, and Board.

This last year we continued to work on articulating a common and clear vision for the CLCS; one that would guide and inspire us all. Working with Community Consulting Teams, we began an exercise in strategic planning that sought to lay out a common vision, including long-range goals and objectives. Their work culminated in an all day retreat, at the beginning of April, which was attended by thirty members of the CLCS community including faculty, staff, parents, Board members and a volunteer. The retreat reaffirmed the mission of the CLCS and articulated a shared vision. Together we are committed to building a school, which will ensure any child's academic, creative and emotional success through a curriculum with music at its core. The vision that we embrace uses the Learning Through Music model being developed at this laboratory school to engage any child anywhere and thus to become a strong, replicable educational model, opening up new avenues for change and improvement in public education.

The retreat also helped set our priorities for the next year. First was the need for a permanent home. That has been met. Additional goals include supporting our teachers and the ongoing development of the LTM curriculum in more explicit ways; reaching clarity around the relationship between the New England Conservatory of Music, its Research Center for Learning through Music and the CLCS; and moving forward on our commitment to replication. Underlying all of this is the need to raise the funds necessary to meet our mission and realize the vision of replication.

As Chairman of the Board of Trustees, I look at the strength and commitment of the Board, teachers, administrators, and parents, and I know that all of these things will happen. As I look both backward at what has been accomplished over the past three years as well as to the challenges of the future, I know that this school has built a strong team. The CLCS is blessed with good people and compelling work, and has many generous supporters.

Thank you all.

Katharine M. Pell

Chairman, Board of Trustees

July 7, 2002

Executive Summary

The Conservatory Lab Charter School (CLCS) is a public school in the inner city of Boston serving, in 2001/02, 100 children in grades K-4. Full enrollment will be reached in 2002/03 with 120 students in grades K-5. The school was founded in 1998 on the premise that music can provide a universal language of learning for all children and seeks to test the conclusions of a growing body of research which suggests that achievement in reading, math, and social studies is enhanced by the study of music. Students are selected in a random, open lottery without the expectation for either academic or musical ability. Currently, there are about 300 children on our waiting lists.

Since music is fundamentally interdisciplinary, the educational approach at the CLCS encourages learning across the curriculum that fuses academic subjects and social/emotional development with musical studies. Children explore math, science, social studies, and language arts *through* musical projects. Teachers implement projects using those concepts that are shared between music and academic subjects to reinforce learning and to build Learning Through Music lessons that explore and experiment with the many ways music stimulates and increases learning. Processes intrinsic to learning music – listening, questioning, creating, performing and reflecting – are used to enhance intellectual curiosity and the love of learning.

Mission Statement

The CLCS will engage all children by using the Learning Through Music curriculum model to ensure every child's academic, artistic, creative, and social/emotional success, as validated by qualitative and quantitative measures.

Learning Through Music

The CLCS is committed to building a strong, public elementary school to serve children from the City of Boston. The curriculum model at the CLCS has evolved by organizing developmentally appropriate learning activities from at least two recognized approaches to each subject area, and integrating these activities with music into lesson plans and interdisciplinary projects within each trimester of the school year. Curriculum planning is also closely aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks

Planning and implementation makes conscious use of fundamental concepts shared among disciplines to strengthen learning across the curriculum. For example, math and music are enhanced through the study of fundamental concepts (numbers, proportion, patterns), strategies (counting, sorting), and representations (graphs, number series, tallies) shared between these two subject areas. Similarly, activities based on fundamental concepts (compositional structure, character, dialogue) and processes (improvisation, interpretation, listening, reading) shared between language and music reinforces both areas of study. Teachers write lesson plans that explicitly name those concepts being explored and reinforced for students.

The CLCS also fosters and values five complementary and fundamental processes that motivate children to learn in any subject area. More than learning strategies, these processes represent what CLCS teachers try to foster in their students: the ability to *listen* and make distinctions, to *question* and formulate and investigate significant questions, to *create*, or invent, multiple solutions to problems, to *perform* and interpret information accurately and fairly, and to *reflect*, personalizing learning by making academic work relevant to one's life and community.

The ethos of the school that follows from these core values is one of respect for each other, respect for the multiple abilities of children from administrators and teachers, and a highly supportive environment where encouragement is offered for maximum learning and achievement. Teachers and students are both expected to be learners, and teachers are committed to continuing their own professional development as they encourage children to become life-long learners.

The CLCS believes that a comprehensive, authentic music program has a powerful impact on social/emotional development. Since every child is required to participate in group violin classes, semi-private lessons, and to practice at home, children learn self-discipline and the meaning of being part of a group. The simple act of taking a bow together after a performance is a strong lesson in support of building a sense of community.

Assessment and Accountability

Internal Assessments

The school has developed three forms of internal assessment tools: (1) Essential Skills Tests, (2) the evaluations of Student Exemplary Work Portfolios, and (3) Teacher Portfolios.

The Essential Skills Tests for language and math are based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. The Essential Skills Test in music is based on Conservatory standards for musical literacy (reading, performing, listening, and reflective thinking about music). Overall, the Essential Skills tests are administered as pre-post assessments of the CLCS curriculum. Students are required to pass these tests as a minimum standard for advancing to the next grade level. The results of the tests form the basis for progress reports given to families.

Assessment of a broader aspect of the curriculum is achieved through the evaluation of Student Exemplary Work Portfolios. The portfolios, containing exemplars of student work, are used to assess evidence of *engagement* in the learning process, *improvement* in skills and content knowledge, and *achievement* of high standards of academic performance by the teacher and during conferences. Portfolio assessment is particularly useful for tracking the progress of students who are under performing in standardized tests, recognizing the individual strengths and weaknesses of students in terms of their actual work rather than test taking skills, and documenting the impact of our unique approach to curriculum -Learning Through Music..

Teachers also create a portfolio each year that includes examples and reflections on their work in the classroom and professional development throughout the year. These portfolios are used for teacher evaluation and school accountability purposes as well as for conveying the mission and practices of the school to parents, new teachers, and outside observers.

External Assessment & Accountability

Two forms of external assessment are used: the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment Tests (MCAS) and the Stanford Tests of Academic Achievement. A primary accountability objective is to prevent at-risk children from failing, especially in the early development of literacy skills. The CLCS had no third grade students fail the third grade MCAS reading test. In comparison, Boston Public Schools and the state reveal substantial percentages of failing readers.

MCAS 3rd Grade Reading Scores

School	Average Raw Score	# of students tested	Advanced	Proficient	Needs Improvement	Failing
CLCS	29	18	NA	50%	50%	0%
Boston Public Schools	24	5,253	NA	30%	50%	20%
StateAverage	30	75,803	NA	62%	31%	7%

Results from the last three years of Stanford 9 Tests of Reading and Math¹ show that the Conservatory Lab Charter School is making significant progress in academic achievement while providing high standards of musical education at a public elementary school.

As indicated in the tables below, improvement in academic performance in Stanford 9 test scores has become clear during our third year of operation.² In the spring of 2001, for example, only the children in first grade (who had attended the CLCS exclusively for two years) scored above average³ both in reading and math using national norms established by the Stanford Tests as a benchmark. In the spring of 2002, grade level data shows that, on average, the mean percentile score for all students in grades K-3 demonstrate levels of academic performance consistently at or above the national average in reading and math. While the mean percentile score per grade level suggests that academic achievement has been relatively stable over time, the rate of improvement in all grade levels from the first year to the third year has been the most encouraging indication of the school's progress, especially in mathematics.

Stanford 9 Total Reading Scores

	Spring 2000	Spring 2001	Spring 2002	Avg. End of Year (Spring) Test Score per grade level	Pet change Initial to Spring. 02
Grade K	56	48	61	55	+5
Grade 1	51	69	66	62	+11
Grade 2	49	54	64	57	+15
Grade 3		55	67	61	+12
Grade 4			45	45	—

Stanford 9 Total Math Scores

	Spring 2000	Spring 2001	Spring 2002	Avg. End of Year (Spring) Test Score per grade level	Pet change Initial to Spring. 02
Grade K	55	49	56	53	+1
Grade 1	40	64	73	59	+33
Grade 2	39	47	64	50	+25
Grade 3		41	59	50	+18
Grade 4			47	47	—

The cohort data suggest that all students are performing, on the average, at or above grade level in reading. Only those students who have not been with the school exclu-

sively (the current fourth grade) are under performing in math. However, the rate of improvement from the initial year to our third year is uniformly positive for all student cohort groups.

Stanford 9 Total Reading Scores: Cohort Performance Data

	Spring 2000	Spring 2001	Spring 2002	Avg. End of Year (Spring) Test Score per grade level	Pet change Initial to Spring. 02
Grade K 2000	56	69	64	63	+8
Grade 1 2000	51	54	67	57	+16
Grade 2 2000	49	55	45	50	-4
Grade K 2001		48	66	57	+18
Grade K 2002			61	61	—

Stanford 9 Total Math Scores: Cohort Performance Data

	Spring 2000	Spring 2001	Spring 2002	Avg. End of Year (Spring) Test Score per grade level	Pet change Initial to Spring. 02
Grade K 2000	55	64	64	61	+9
Grade 1 2000	40	47	59	49	+19
Grade 2 2000	39	41	47	42	+8
Grade K 2001		49	73	61	+24
Grade K 2002			56	56	—

Another indication of meeting the goal of supporting at risk students, regardless of academic performance test score averages of the whole school, is the increasingly low incidence of failing students on the Stanford Test. The following tables compare percentages of students at or above grade level based on the Stanford 9 Test between the springs of 2001 and 2002.

Grade & percent at or above grade level	2001 Total Reading	2002 Total Reading	2001 Total Math	2002 Total Math
Grade K	60%	94% (+34%)	70%	95% (+25%)
Grade 1	84%	95% (+11%)	89%	95% (+6%)
Grade 2	62%	100% (+38%)	62%	90% (+28%)
Grade 3	95%	85% (-10%)	63%	90% (+27%)
Grade 4	-	84%	-	79%

¹The CLCS employs a non-standard un-timed process for administering the Stanford 9 Tests that allows for students to finish a particular section of the Stanford test if time has run out. Typically, only a small minority of students exercises this option. This testing procedure provides optimal conditions for determining what children know by eliminating false negatives and false positives in the data. Since there are no published norms for untimed tests, Stanford has advised us to report the results of our particular procedure as a benchmark for academic progress in our school in relationship to the nationally-normed sample while noting that some students end up taking the test in a non-standard manner.

²We at the CLCS have chosen to report only Spring Stanford 9 test results because the End of Year tests are a better measure of the effect of the full academic year's achievement. Criterion referenced pre-post testing is used at the beginning and middle of the academic year to alert the school community to students who need tutoring in language, math, and/or music. Portfolio assessments are used to show progress of students who do not test at grade level on the Stanford 9 tests.

³ The CLCS uses a statistic based on the averages of all individual percentile scores and throughout this paper will be referred to as the mean percentile score when referring to the whole school average in any category of the Stanford test.

Summary: Accountability Objectives & Curriculum

Stanford 9 test data as of June 2002 shows:

- that students, overall, are performing at or above expected percentile levels in reading at all grade levels (ranging from 84% to 100%)
- that students, overall, are performing at or above expected percentile levels in math at all grade levels (ranging from 79% to 95%)
- that data from individual student scores is consistent among classrooms and is not skewed by a few high performing students.
- that students are performing at or above expected percentile levels in math and reading at all grade levels except grade four.

Further analysis of the data suggests that the fourth grade will focus more on math procedures in the coming year.

- Results from the first and third grade, indicate that students are, on average, performing one full grade level higher than the national sample norm.
- As was the case during the first two years, at least 90% of students in all grade levels achieved overall Essential Skills Test ratings necessary for promotion to the next grade level in the third year.
- Baselines and pre/post improvement indices for science, history, music, visual arts and violin are still being developed.
- Baselines and pre/post improvement indices for interdisciplinary learning (the Learning Through Music program) are being developed and will be piloted in the fourth year.
- Baselines and pre/post improvement indices for social/emotional development have been created and can now be used as a further index of achievement in relation to the academic testing.

Standardized, normed measures of musical skill development will be implemented in the fourth year.

Research Goals

Unique to this laboratory school is the pattern of improvement. That is, as test scores have improved, additional statistical analyses suggest that the positive association between learning music and academic achievement has strengthened as well. These factors combine to suggest that, over time, the interaction between music and the academic subjects provides a more integrated way of learning that increases overall academic and musical performance. The addition of the Metropolitan Opera Guild's "Creating Opera Program" through the New England Conservatory partnership, for example, has demonstrated how music-based interdisciplinary learning promotes the integration of academic concepts and social roles with high performance standards in music.

Although test scores are high and musical development of all children remains an essential aim of the school, challenges remain. At this point, 10% of students still are performing below grade level, even in our highest performing classes. Thus the focus in the coming year will be to set up and implement a special tutoring program for "literacy challenged" students who most need to benefit from the effects of Learning Through Music. In addition, the CLCS portfolio assessment program will be implemented fully, a program that will look more closely at the assessment of individual student work and indications of progress with literacy that will help provide new strategies and resources for bringing all students up to grade level.

The research plan for this laboratory school for Learning Through Music is the result of the close partnership between the New England Conservatory and the Conservatory Lab Charter School. The CLCS charter, curriculum frameworks, overall assessment practices, and accountability plan has been designed to produce a fully accountable and replicable Learning Through Music program at the CLCS. As the CLCS approaches the school renewal process in the next two years, the research agenda stemming from the unique mission of the school has been defined as proceeding in four steps:

Step One: Provide evidence that the CLCS has established a *replicable* Learning Through Music (LTM) program.

Step Two: Provide documentation of the *process* and *resources provided* that led to the establishment of the LTM Program development at the CLCS.

Step 3: Provide evidence of the impact of the LTM Program on student achievement

Step Four: Provide evidence that the CLCS Learning Through Music program has been disseminated to other school communities.

Partnerships

The Conservatory Lab Charter School has an ongoing partnership with the New England Conservatory of Music (NEC) and its Research Center for Learning Through Music. The Research Center has provided a critical link for the CLCS to interact with other schools who are also working on further integration of music and has provided the means for performance opportunities with other schools and with students at NEC. The Metropolitan Opera Guild's "Creating Opera in Schools" program also came to the CLCS through the Research Center. The CLCS also participates in the Project for School Innovation, which disseminates best practices to other charter schools and the Boston Public Schools.

Staff & Students

Staff

Teaching staff: 17 FTE

Experience: combined total of 71 years; 10 Bachelor's degree; 9 Master's degree

Student/teacher ratio: 5.8/1

Turnover: 6 full or part-time at the end of the year; 3 to become lead teachers; 3 for personal and family reasons

Student Information

100 students – grades Kindergarten through 5
48 (45%) African American, 37 (33%) Caucasian, 19 (19%) Hispanic,
2 (3%) Asian American, 1 (1%) Native American
53 (50%) Female, 54 (50%) Male
48% qualify for federal free and reduced lunch programs

Special Education: 14 (13%) of total; 12 (11%) 502.2; 2 (2%) 502.4

Limited English Proficiency: 0

Linguistic Minorities: 18 (17%)

Promotion Policy

Students are promoted as they meet two of the three standards:

Essential Skills Test scores of 3.0 out of 5.0 or higher in all subjects and social/emotional development;

Completion of sufficient work, demonstrated in student portfolios, to show minimum CLCS standards in all subjects and social/emotional development;

Evidence of minimum level performance on all administered standardized tests.

Suspensions/Expulsions

In-school/9; out-of-school/9; no expulsions

Applications and Lottery

135 applications: 87/Kindergarten; 14/First Grade; 18/Second Grade; 9/Third Grade; 4/Fourth Grade; 4/Fifth Grade

Ratio of applications to openings: 5/1

Student turnover: 8; 3 moved; 2 changed schools; 2 unknown

Wait List Demographics

Grade	K	1	2	3	4	5
Allston	0	2	2	2	0	0
Boston	6	4	14	4	0	0
Brighton	1	1	7	0	0	0
Charlestown	0	1	1	0	0	0
Dorchester	18	30	25	20	2	3
East Boston	1	1	1	0	0	0
Hyde Park	4	4	5	2	0	1
Jamaica Plain	7	6	5	0	0	1
Mattapan	4	1	5	5	0	2
Roslindale	3	2	4	1	0	1
Roxbury	3	6	7	3	0	1
South Boston	12	8	10	6	0	1
West Roxbury	0	1	0	0	0	0
Total	59	67	86	43	2	10
<i>Out of Boston</i>						
Arlington	1					
Chestnut Hill	1			1		
North Quincy			1			
Quincy			1			
Revere			1			
Total	2	0	3	1	0	0

Finance

Balance Sheet

Assets

Cash	237,674
Grants and other receivables	2,747
Prepaid expenses	1,484
Fixed assets	155,693
Total	\$397,598

Liabilities

Accounts payable	8,612
Accrued expenses	1,314
Accrued payroll	57,769
Payroll taxes accrued and withheld	5,282
Total	72,977

Fund Equity

Fund balances:	
Undesignated	168,928
Investment in general fixed assets	155,693
Total	324,621

Total liabilities and fund equity **\$397,598**

Statement of Revenue and Expenditures

	FY02 Actual	FY03 Budget
<i>Revenue</i>		
Per pupil income	\$ 948,909	\$1,116,720
Federal/State meal reimbursement	38,622	34,485
Federal grants	57,332	74,034
State grants	23,120	24,684
Fundraising	402,319	450,000
Parent reimbursements (meals, etc)	8,466	6,989
Total	\$ 1,478,768	\$1,706,912
<i>Expenditures</i>		
Instructional staff	624,056	772,942
Administrative staff 3	08,540	395,625
Payroll taxes	40,988	51,933
Benefits	67,959	86,317
Non-salary compensation	52,660	24,083
Subtotal	\$1,094,203	\$1,330,900
Rent/mortgage/utilities	149,000	178,800
Maintenance	34,740	44,430
Insurance	2,205	2,719
Subtotal	\$ 185,945	\$ 225,949
Classroom materials/supplies	16,641	27,000
Classroom technology/activities	16,716	13,095
Music/art equipment & supplies	14,676	19,269
Subtotal	\$ 48,033	\$ 59,364
Business services	8,819	8,000
Marketing	7,907	10,000
Staff recruiting	2,050	5,150
Office supplies/technology	25,590	28,967
Program and staff development	11,509	15,135
Food service	53,798	54,432
Subtotal	\$ 109,673	\$ 121,684
Total	\$1,437,854	\$1,737,897

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