

**The Choral Program of the South Australian
Public Primary Schools“ Festival of Music:
A Study of its Effectiveness**

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of a state wide choral program for upper public primary school students that has been operating in South Australia for over a century. The program is jointly run by the South Australian Public (Primary) Schools Music Society, an independent, non-profit organisation dedicated to promoting music in the state's public primary schools, and the state's Education Department. While reviews of educational programs have most frequently been approached from the public service's standpoint, this study incorporates the perspectives of the program's other stakeholders. While some historical background of the program is included, the study concentrates on the program's effectiveness for the period 1995 to 2008.

The program's 'effectiveness' is considered for the way it functions as stakeholders intended – that is, as a program that serves an educational and, specifically, music education role. Other evaluation criteria critical to the program's operation, namely its management, staffing, funding, administration and curriculum are examined for their impact on the program's functions. Methods of inquiry into stakeholders' perceptions included questionnaires, formal and informal interviews, written records, multi-disciplinary published material and the author's participant observation during the period 1995 to 2009.

While most parents, principals and choir trainers recognised the music education component as a benefit, particularly when this was otherwise absent in their schools, of greatest import to their perceptions of the program's effectiveness were the life skills they perceived students gained. Consistently identified benefits included a growth in self-esteem, social skills and teamwork, enjoyment and deriving a sense of achievement. These benefits were observed to positively influence other areas of students' learning. Ancillary skills mentioned were the development of commitment, perseverance, self-discipline, co-operation and respect for others, focus, memory development and community service.

These observations reflected an extension of the meaning of education beyond the Education Department's employment-oriented skill confines to include an appreciation of education that involved students' social and personal development. This study affirms that the gamut of life skills observed in older children and adults in health or therapeutic contexts apply equally to younger children within an educational setting.

DECLARATION

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

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Abbreviations and Terms

AGM	Annual General Meeting.
AMEB	Australian Music Examination Board.
ANCA	Australian National Choral Association.
ASME	Australian Society for Music Education
CAP	Country Areas Program
DECS	Department of Education and Children's Services (name change from July 2002, occasioned by the change of state government to the Labour party); the department was previously known as DETE.
DETE	Department of Education, Training and Employment (as the department was known during the Liberal government pre July 2002).
Education Department	As capitalised, the term refers to the South Australian education department (either DETE or DECS).
FSS	(South Australian Primary Schools' Music) Festival Support Service
FTE	Full-time Equivalent (referring to full-time staff)
HPI	Hourly Paid Instructor
IMS	Instrumental Music Service, part of the Education Department
JSHAA	Junior School Heads Association of Australia
LOTE	Language Other Than English (specialist language teacher)
MCA	Music Council of Australia
NIT	Non-Instruction Time.
PAS	Publicly-Assessed Subject (less than half the marks are from a public examination; or assessment comes from other examiners apart from school-based teachers)
PD	Professional Development.
Pers. com.	Personal communication
PES	Publicly –examined subject (50% of marks are from public examination)

P21	Partnership 21 – introduced by the incoming CEO ex-Victoria in 1999, Geoff Spring, was a move to local governance in schools with strong financial incentives for schools to take it up.
Program, the	As capitalised, refers to the South Australian Public Primary Schools‘ choral program.
QR	Questionnaire Responses (Written responses by stakeholders to questionnaires)
R-7	Reception to year 7.
SA	South Australia
SSABSA	Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia.
SACE	South Australian Certificate of Education.
SACSA Framework	South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework
SAPPSMF	South Australian Public Primary Schools‘ Music Festival or as it is more officially know, South Australian Public (Primary) Schools‘ Festival of Music
SSO	Student Support Officer
The Memorandum	Memorandum of Understanding Between the South Australian Public (Primary) Schools Music Society and the Department of Education, Training and Employment for the Development, Implementation and Review of the South Australian Public (Primary) Festival of Music Program 1999-2001 (1998)
The Society	The South Australian Public (Primary) Schools Music Society
TRT	Temporary Relief Time

The Massed Choir at Festival Theatre



September 2008 – *The final morning rehearsal before the evening's concert performance with children seated on stage at Adelaide's Festival Theatre. The accompanying orchestra made up of public primary school students can be seen in the foreground.*



September 2008 – *Looking at the troupe from the choir risers onto Adelaide Festival Theatre's stage.*



September 2007 – *The troupe performing on Adelaide Festival Theatre's stage at the concert performance with the massed choir in the background. Students are shown in the performance uniform of a plain coloured T- shirt with black pants.*

Photographer: Kevin Williams, Administrator, South Australian Public (Primary) Schools Music Society.
With thanks to the Society for permission to use the photographs.