

Thomas N. Gellert – The School Music News Editor



Who reads anymore?

Editor's note: I have a favor to ask: if by chance you read the editorial that follows, please take a minute to shoot an e-mail to me at schoolmusicnews@nyssma.org and in the subject area of the email simply type: "YES" Thanks!

"A person who won't read has no advantage over one who can't read."

- Maya Angelou

When I started as NYSSMA® editor in 1994, we were just beginning to explore the Internet and the World Wide Web. E-mail was available in the early '90s but very limited, and the online experience was only accessible then through painfully slow dial-up modems transmitting signals over phone lines.

Those of us who call ourselves Baby Boomers grew up with television. The generations after us grew up with computers, and here we are today in a world that demands instant information. So, who has the time to sit and read any more?

Back in the 1990s MENC (prior to changing its name to NAfME) rolled out a national project entitled, "Get America Singing ... Again!" The purpose of this movement was to encourage more Americans to sing. It was an inspired idea and started an all-out attempt led by music educators to reaffirm the value of singing in school and at home, even for those who called themselves non-singers.

Later, the "Get America Singing ... Again!" initiative helped to spawn discussions and the design of national and individual state Learning Standards for the Arts, especially in reintroducing songs that every person should know.

To this day, the value of teaching and learning to sing is an extremely valuable tool on many levels for children and adults. It is also very important from a cultural and historical perspective that we all sing and pass that joy on to others.

Is reading dead?

While we're at it, let's take this in another direction by simply asking: Do folks still read (and I'm not talking about music but rather, words)? We should all be concerned on multiple levels.

For the past 31 years I have been privileged to promote the public face of our association through the publishing of the NYSSMA® *School Music NEWS*. As I reflect on my NYSSMA® editorship I am keenly aware of the role that our association journal has played and continues to play in serving the NYSSMA® membership from collegiate members to active professional educators to those of my colleagues (like me) who are now retired.

The magazine you hold in your hands (or, if reading the abbreviated magazine

24/7 is now just a swipe or click away on our phones. They don't call them "smart" phones for nothing!

Yes, the never-ending advance in technology is wonderful but it has also created a certain degree of impatience and a diminishing ability to read for content as folks seek short spurts of information. The result is a world driven by instant information gathering and gratification. Attention spans are shorter than ever. The enjoyment of settling in with a good book or just reading a long newspaper story has been replaced by quick sound bites.

The joys of reading

In an attempt to explain to someone who prefers not to read, here are just a small number of reasons why reading is valuable for each of us:

- We actually can learn something new we didn't already know.
- We can learn new words and their meaning.
- Reading helps us to communicate better through the written word.
- We can make better sense of what is going on around us.
- We boost our essential thinking and reasoning skills.
- We can often de-stress and even sometimes, "recharge our batteries!"

Shinichi Suzuki, the great Japanese music educator, teacher and philosopher, understood that learning to read music should parallel the learning to read one's native language. If we take this a step further, we can easily conclude that all reading (language, music, etc.) becomes the means for gaining deeper learning and understanding. Isn't that ultimately what we want for ourselves and our students?

Keep reading and please don't forget to send me an e-mail after you've read this editorial, thanks! ||

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online) is the only extensive record we have of our association's history. Years from now when NYSSMA® members of the future want to know about NYSSMA's past they will be able to refer to the history of our association through the written word.

The NYSSMA® archives at the Eastman School of Music's Sibley Library include an extensive collection of NYSSMA® history as chronicled through our publications and important historical documents. Most of these items are one-of-a-kind and are not something readily found online or in digital format for quick access.

What we know today about consumption of the written word is that advances in technology have changed the way we consume information. Our collective search for having access to just about anything