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New Haven public schools are more likely to ring with the sound of music after members of the Class of 1957 provided funding to augment music education in the city. The Class of '57 Music Education Project provides funding for graduate students in the School of Music to offer music instruction in the public schools. The project also gives money to provide professional development for city music teachers and brings schoolchildren to Sprague Hall for performances throughout the year.

Regina Warner, music supervisor for the New Haven Public School District, said test scores show that the program helps local students perform better in school. "It has been magnificent," she said. "Music and the arts can drive student achievement. The children and the parents are so proud of the program." Warner also said she hopes the program will grow so that it can reach more students. "They will eventually spread this program to different schools," she said. "Now we have the interns - the grad students - in various schools."

Test scores released in August by the State Department of Education show that New Haven students consistently perform below state averages. Members of the Board of Aldermen have said the low test scores reflect problems endemic to urban public education systems, which often suffer from lack of funding and therefore must limit extracurricular programs like art and music.

Ramona Gatison, the principal of Lincoln-Bassett School in the Dixwell neighborhood, said that while the aim of the program is not to turn children into concert musicians, they gain skills and an appreciation for music that may last a lifetime. The program ensures that children get some form of musical education at a young age, School of Music Dean Robert Blocker said in an e-mail, which he believes is a right for every child.

Thomas Schreiner, a music teacher at Lincoln-Bassett School, said the program helps students gain discipline that improves their academic studies. "Music and math are the same thing," Schreiner said. "You are constantly reading here - the rhythms and notes. It is quite an academic thing. It makes them think."

The program is also beneficial for the Yale interns who teach music at the schools, project coordinator Denise Meyer said. "Interns in general report how rewarding and enlightening their experiences are," she said in an e-mail. "They are keenly aware of the difficulties faced by music teachers and yet are rewarded with making a difference, truly relating and sharing their passions with the younger generation." Meyer said the teaching experience is also useful in preparing music students for their careers. The program allows children to learn to play the keyboard, the recorder, string instruments and band instruments.