

**Matt Farmer***Chicago lawyer and musician*

GET UPDATES FROM MATT FARMER



263

## Darwin's Musical Evolution

Posted: 09/20/2013 1:35 pm



Follow > [Rahm Emanuel](#), [Chicago Impact](#), [éducation](#), [Chicago Public Schools](#), [Chicago Teachers Union](#), [Diane Ravitch](#), [Music Education](#), [vh1](#), [Chicago News](#)

Like 181 people like this. Be the first of your friends.

32

13

0

0

0



GET CHICAGO NEWSLETTERS:

**SUBSCRIBE**

Segovia said this about music and education:

I deeply believe fine arts training provides a critical platform to help us ensure our students are well-equipped to handle other educational disciplines. Music education, for example, helps to make kids better listeners. It also helps to change their behavior. Art is a synonym for love.

To be sure, these words of wisdom were spoken not by master guitarist Andrés Segovia, but by Mauricio Segovia, principal of Darwin Elementary School in Chicago's Logan Square neighborhood.

Darwin serves a population that is 94 percent low-income, 87 percent Hispanic and 9 percent African-American. Chicago Public Schools slashed Darwin's budget by \$638,000 for the 2013-14 school year.

For many years, Darwin had no music program. Despite the district's budget cuts and heavy focus on standardized test scores, Principal Segovia decided his kids needed music.

The quote at the top of this piece is what Segovia told me Thursday in the Darwin auditorium when I asked him why he brought music back to the school.

The man gets it.

I visited Darwin on September 19 to attend a morning assembly at which VH1 and Houlihan's Restaurants Inc., through VH1's Save the Music Foundation, donated \$30,000 worth of band instruments to the school's music program.

When Segovia decided to bring music back to Darwin, the first thing he did was hire Joe Panganiban, a young music teacher, better known to his students as Mr. P.

Panganiban knew he was walking into a cash-strapped school, so he did what a lot of CPS teachers do as a matter of course -- he started looking for money outside the district. Last year he secured a donation of ukuleles from an organization called [Little Kids Rock](#). He said the Darwin kids love to play their ukes and sing.

But Mr. P wanted more for his students.

And this year, with the VH1 grant, he landed an even bigger fish. The \$30,000 donation means he'll have enough trumpets, trombones, saxophones, clarinets, flutes and percussion to outfit a beginning band.

Panganiban may have hit the jackpot, but his winning ticket came only after applying for nearly 50 other grants.

And with Darwin's VH1 victory, other CPS applicants lost out.

Overall, the arts continue to take a beating within CPS.

The Chicago Teachers Union [summed it up](#) at the start of this school year.

The arts, despite a signature announcement by the district to expand their role in the school day, take a cut of 13% across CPS. Funding for music programs is slashed by 14%.

As a reminder, this is in a school district, where just last year, 40% of schools had neither full time art nor full time music teachers; 22% had no art teacher ; 39% had no music teacher; and only 27% of schools had both full time art and music teachers.

When Principal Segovia told me why he brought music back to Darwin, I thought immediately about a passage I'd just read in Diane Ravitch's new book, *Reign of Error*.

All are enriched and enhanced by the arts. The arts are essential for everyone. Life is enhanced by the arts. No student should be denied the opportunity to participate in the arts or to learn about the arts as practiced here and in other cultures. All students should have the chance to sing, dance, draw, and paint in school. They should have the resources for video production and for chorus, band, orchestra, and dramatics. The arts are a source of joy, a means of self-expression and group expression. To master a musical instrument or to participate in choral music requires self-discipline and practice; no one can do it for you. Every school should have the resources to enable students to express their individuality or to take pleasure in joyful communal activity.

Darwin School, for the moment, has some of those resources.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/matt-farmer/darwins-musical-evolution\\_b\\_3962725.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=chicago](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/matt-farmer/darwins-musical-evolution_b_3962725.html?utm_hp_ref=chicago)