

Gwinnett Daily Post

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[County's top teacher stresses importance of arts in education](#)

01/24/2007

By Heather Darenberg

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DULUTH — It's not every day business executives and community leaders are serenaded and asked to play games that teach rhythm and composition.

Those who attended the Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce's Education Action Group on Tuesday experienced just that, as Gwinnett County Teacher of the Year Tiffany English talked about the importance of music and the arts in education.

English, a music teacher at Sugar Hill Elementary School, told the group music class teaches students to be responsible, have self-discipline and have pride in a job well done — all qualities the business community would want in employees.

"Children learn to interact socially and to problem solve through their method of work, which is play," English said. "I teach exploration and discovery all day long every day. ... Music is the vehicle that I use to teach."

Music class can also help students make connections between their classes, English said. She said she creates lessons to introduce or reinforce the concepts students learn in language arts, math, social studies and science.

English said one of her students once told her she showed him how to make his brain work. That child's statement is one reason why music and the arts are considered core classes, she said.

"In the business world and community, we want people who can think," English said. "Educators don't produce a product that has a financial return. There's no profit margin for us ... (but student success) reaps rewards for the community and society." Gwinnett County Public Schools supports its music and arts classes, but community support could further enrich these classes, English said.

People can help classes by donating musical equipment to new schools that don't have any instruments, English said. They can also help by replacing instruments at older schools that don't have the money to purchase replacements.

Support doesn't have to cost anything, either. English said the community can support the students by attending concerts and giving the children an audience.

Jayne Olderman, a songwriter who attended the Education Action Group meeting, said she also believes music and the arts can help students succeed in school.

Olderman is working with Tiffany Milagro, a young musician who will be visiting middle schools to talk about how vision, integrity and passion can help people achieve their dreams. Milagro, who lives in Braselton, will begin the tour in Gwinnett County schools, Olderman said.