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**FIORIELLO H. LAGUARDIA HIGH SCHOOL OF MUSIC AND
ART AND PERFORMING ARTS: A HISTORY**

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ABSTRACT

The Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music and Art and Performing Arts in New York City was formed through a merger of two existing arts high schools in 1961--the High School of Music and Art and School of Performing Arts. Although the High School of Music and Art's history has been well documented, no studies have documented the histories of the School of Performing Arts and the Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music and Art and Performing Arts. Therefore, this concise history of the development of the Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music and Art and Performing Arts in New York City fills a gap in current historical literature.

Research questions focused on (1) the founding of the two independent performing arts high schools and their amalgamation into the Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music and Art and Performing Arts; (2) key personnel and their role in facilitating the merger; (3) the shaping forces of the philosophies/missions/visions of the two independent high schools on the Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music and Art and the Performing Arts; (4) how the music curriculum of the High School of Music and Art and School of Performing Arts helped shape the music curriculum of the Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music and Art and Performing Arts, and (5) students' musical activities throughout the school's history.

Research methodologies included consulting primary and secondary sources and interviewing former and current administrators, students, alumni, friends, and other key personnel from each of the three schools.

This study has several implications for the music education field. Alumni and LaGuardia Arts HS students were grateful for an opportunity to attend a school dedicated to the arts, in particular--music. The students interviewed claimed that the schools saved their high school careers because they were allowed to express their creativity. These students' stories suggest that educators, policy and political leaders who determine educational policies should consider music education as essential to any school curriculum.

Philosophy and mission statements are at the core of successful schools. When the HSMA and SPA were merged for convenience sake, core values were jeopardized even nullified--as was the case with the SPA. Their histories highlight the importance of a unified mission among administrators, policy makers, and faculty. In addition, music programs would benefit greatly from principals and/or other personnel within the schools' administrative department who possess an understanding of the arts, but also value the arts education. Without value and understanding of music and the arts, there is potential for poor leadership in delivering high quality arts programs for students.

From the schools' rich independent beginnings to their turbulent transitional years, where the amalgamation and relocation took nearly a quarter century to complete, the school remains a model for subsequent specialized arts high schools in the nation.