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**MEMPHIS MUSIC INITIATIVE INVESTS IN YOUTH THROUGH MUSIC,
CELEBRATES LAUNCH WITH EVENT NOVEMBER 5**

(MEMPHIS, TN) – There’s a new song being composed in classrooms across Memphis. Its melody has been softly stirring throughout the past year, and next week it builds to a crescendo as the Memphis Music Initiative marks its official launch with the introduction of its website and digital properties at MemphisMusicInitiative.org.

The Memphis Music Initiative was started in 2014 with funding from a private Memphis foundation. The initiative was inspired by earlier work from various youth and music organizations throughout the city to use community engagement to develop arts-focused activities that build on existing resources and assets to drive youth and community outcomes. The initiative's strategic priorities and approach were defined through a five-month strategic development process which engaged low-income and communities of color throughout Memphis and local and national youth development and arts leaders to identify the assets, process, and activities important to carrying out this work successfully. The five-year, \$20 million strategy is expected to run through 2020.

The initiative was designed to focus on three critical areas of work: in-school (sustain existing in-school music education and expand instruction through partnerships with local musicians); extended learning (expand high-quality out-of-school time programs to reach more youth and remove barriers to youth engagement and participation); and innovation spaces (develop places to spur innovation where youth can hear, learn and play music).

The introduction of the website and other digital properties represents the formal launch of Memphis Music Initiative, but hardly the beginning of its work and impact – teaching fellows were first placed in classrooms to pilot the program in January of 2015 and some initial grants were made to a shortlist of youth development and music engagement focused Memphis organizations this summer and earlier this fall.

“The success of this work rests in our ability to foster community buy-in and ownership and we’re excited to have spent the last 10 months piloting our work and offering some initial grants and activities to the communities and community organizations that will own its impact,” says Darren Isom, Memphis Music Initiative Executive Director. “Our formal launch serves as an opportunity for us to share this initiative with a broader set of stakeholders and to allow those who’ve already been a part of this important work to connect with their fellow change makers.”

That opportunity will come next week, as MMI hosts a launch event Thursday, November 5 from 6 to 8 p.m. at Tower Room, 5100 Poplar Ave., Ste. 3300. The evening will allow the MMI team to tell the story of work that's been happening throughout the past year in Memphis schools, and share the myriad ways the Initiative will support youth development through music engagement in the future.

"We believe very strongly in the power of music to connect, to inspire, and to transform our youth and communities," Isom says. "Our hope is that with the proper set of supports and investments, Memphis' musical culture, its most unique and powerful asset, can be used to positively develop its next generation of leaders. And we are excited to work with others throughout Memphis who are committed to using creative youth development to strengthen our youth and communities and make a better Memphis."

Learn more at MemphisMusicInitiative.org.

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