

Piano Lessons Plus

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Dear Committee Members,

I am a teacher of many years experience in both classroom and music, at all levels.

I now teach piano privately.

Parliamentary Review of Music Education Feb 15th 2013

Evidence supporting music education in schools

Terms of Reference 1

1. Benefits to society and to individual students wanting to pursue music as a career.

There will no doubt be many submissions reporting the plethora of benefits of music education. This will apply to both the economic benefits to society and individuals.

I am choosing to mainly refer to a phenomenon in Venezuela which proves without a shadow of a doubt the benefits to society and individuals. The flow on to society in economic terms is self evident.

Economist and musician [José Antonio Abreu](#) founded the project, El Sistema in 1975 under the name Social Action for Music. Abreu's vision is summarized in the quote below.

"Music has to be recognized as an agent of social development, in the highest sense because it transmits the highest values - solidarity, harmony, mutual compassion. And it has the ability to unite an entire community and to express sublime feelings"

"Essentially this is a social system that fights poverty," Abreu explained. "A child's physical poverty is overcome by the spiritual richness that music provides."

Abreu's program targeted impoverished, crime and drug abuse areas. The Venezuelan Government funds the project and is aiming to have it running in all schools by 1915. To date, hundreds of thousands of children have not only learned to play instruments but have acquired the skills to develop the self esteem enabling them to live fulfilling and productive lives. Many have broken away from the cycle of poverty and crime and some have become professional musicians of a very high standing.

The program has inspired other countries to follow suit. Below are just a few examples.

United Kingdom

In Harmony

On 22 November 2007, [Julian Lloyd Webber](#) noted the following in regard to the UK government's announcement of an infusion of £332 million dedicated to music education:

We also have an impoverished South American nation to thank. Last August, in the midst of school holidays, when an uncomfortable number of British children seemed even more disaffected than usual, the Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra arrived from Venezuela to deliver performances at the [Edinburgh Festival](#) and the [London Proms](#) that were, quite simply, miraculous"

USA

Harmony Program, New York City

Conservatory Lab Charter School, Boston, Massachusetts

Portugal

Orquestra Geração (Generation Orchestra)

References

There are a huge number of references available indicating the benefits of music education, however I will concentrate on only a few related to El Sistema

http://www.ted.com/talks/jose_abreu_on_kids_transformed_by_music.html

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=43tqQhOTCgQ>

<http://atlantamusicproject.org/about-amp/el-sistema/el-sistema-venezuela/>

http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-18560_162-4009335.html

Terms of Reference 2

2. General benefits to students as a result of music education.

There is evidence to suggest that music is the only discipline that uses the whole brain, both left and right sides.

All human beings have some degree of musical capability in the same way that they have some degree of mathematical, linguistic, emotional and social capability. If we do not teach ALL our children music, then we are not teaching the whole person. (Howard Gardner, 1983).

The **theory of multiple intelligences** was proposed by Howard Gardner in his 1983 book *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* as a model of intelligence that differentiates intelligence into specific (primarily sensory) "modalities", rather than seeing it as dominated by a single general ability.

The research over and over again indicates clearly, that music education benefits students in many ways.

It promotes literacy, numeracy, creativity, imaginative responses, problem solving, co-operation, listening, perseverance and concentration.

It is through emotional engagement that humans learn best and the arts, especially music, can do this better than other subjects.

Music requires the development of many skills simultaneously.

Singing as well as instrumental learning is vital to help connect to other people and develop a sense of well being.

Music can extend communication in the community between different age groups or socio-economic groups. This helps in a 'hands on' manner, to make students more socially aware and enables them to contribute in a unique way to enhance the life of others. Examples would be performances in Aged Care Facilities or Kindergartens.

References

Nadine Gaab, Harvard School of Medicine

<http://thesciencenetwork.org/programs/newark-workshop-on-music-brain-and-education/influences-of-musical-training-on-language-processing-and-executive-functioning-in-typical-and-atypical-developing-children>

[Even A Few Years Of Music Training Benefits The Brain | Science Sushi, Scientific American Blog Netw](http://blogs.scientificamerican.com/2013/05/29/even-a-few-years-of-music-training-benefits-the-brain/) blogs.scientificamerican.com

Terms of Reference 3

3. Benefit to student academic performance as a result of music education.

(a)“We know that music brings joy and solace, and makes us feel happy,” “But research has also discovered music plays a powerful role in the cognitive development of children. Music inspires creativity, imagination and self-expression. It also builds self-esteem and is good for memory skills.” Don Spencer The Song Room
“Much research supports both Spencer and Plato. A **Stanford University study** found that musical training improves the way the brain processes the spoken word. It showed that musical experience can help the brain improve its ability to distinguish between rapidly changing sounds, a key skill in understanding and using language. Research from Canada found that children aged four to six years old who had music lessons had better memories, as well as higher literacy and maths levels. Another study, from the US, showed that children aged five to seven years who had been lagging behind in their school performance caught up with their peers in reading, and were ahead of them in maths, after just seven months of music lessons.”

(b)[Deere, Kelli Beth](#) Source- ProQuest LLC, Ed.D. Dissertation, Union University

This study overall revealed that there was a correlation between music education and reading and math TCAP scores.

(c)By [Helen Neville, Ph.D.](#)

“The vast majority of these studies have assessed cognitive functions in trained musicians compared to people with no musical training. Several studies have reported that musicians have higher scores than non-musicians on tests of verbal, visual-spatial, and “numeracy” skills (those measuring competence in math skills needed for everyday living and for understanding graphs and charts); and that musicians scored higher on IQ tests compared to non-musicians. (These studies are summarized in Schellenberg 2006 and Norton et al. 2005.)”

(d)Source: *The College Board, Profile of College- Bound Seniors National Report for 2001.*

SAT scores of students who took part in music instruction surpassed students with no music training. Data collected from students taking the SAT, indicated that students taking music and arts averaged scores that were higher than non music students by 60 points on the verbal section and 43 points on the math section.

(e) **Music Training Changes Brain Networks**

from **Brain in the News**. By [Ben Mauk](#)

May 11, 2009

Ongoing study, led by [Ellen Winner](#), professor of psychology at Boston College,

“Music training in childhood improves related cognitive function, according to research that for the first time demonstrates brain plasticity as a result of music instruction.”

There is no shortage of research to indicate the high correlation of proper music education and cognitive/academic performance. Far too many to list here....

Music needs to be considered as worthwhile in its own right, however.

Current Provision of Music Education in Victoria

Terms of Reference 4

4. Music Education provided through specific funding for music.

Currently, MOST government primary schools offer no real music education by **highly trained teachers**. There are token Year 7 and 8 programs in many schools which is pedagogically highly dubious, in that, beginning at age 12 – 13 makes little sense. The culture and confidence that music brings is handled at the worst possible stage for many students. The peer group pressure increases and wanting to fit in is of prime importance. I have experienced very limited success with programs such as that as have other teachers.

Why start at Year 7 and 8? We begin most other subjects immediately – in pre-school, science for instance. Music must be treated the same, from the start.

There are some (mostly select) schools that have instrumental programs at secondary level, providing tuition to Year 12.

The figure for **solid music programs** in Primary schools is that only **about 23 %** of Victorian children have access to this. This is a totally unacceptable situation. All children have the right to real music education. Most schools do not plan for an appropriate music facility with the required equipment due to **perceived** lack of funds.

There is a need for improved music teacher training at primary level. Only **trained music teachers** should be permitted to teach music in primary school.

Ideally, there needs to be vocal, classroom and instrumental tuition provided. Most Primary schools have no programs other than external “Music schools” which is a **fee for service**, generally outside of school hours.

These schools vary immensely in the quality of teaching. Often, untrained young people are employed at low wages. I have several private students

who had a very bad start with their so called ‘Music Education’.
Principals are often not well versed with music and make inappropriate decisions regarding this issue and the staffing of classroom music. They may also be severely restrained by ‘budget’ demands and the DEECD formulas.

There are, however, some private music schools that provide sound tuition. Why parents are expected to pay for this remains an enigma.

Secondary Schools fare a little better in that there is often a music program in the classroom in Year 7 and 8. Some schools run successful programs. If students are lucky, they may in some cases, continue to Year 12.

Resources would be better spent to begin in the primary years and then **continue** into secondary.

Instrumental staff are employed by DEECD and travel to several schools to provide free tuition. **By no means are all secondary schools supplied.** A few ‘specialist schools’ have large music departments and many students go on to perform and teach.

The Regional Instrumental Program organizes instrumental teachers. Some are also employed by the school or paid directly by parents.

Terms of Reference 5

5. Music Education, provided through non-specific funding, for example, general student resource funding.

I have taught in many schools of all social levels both as a music specialist and classroom teacher in other subjects. In one capacity or another I have taught all levels, pre-school to Year 12.

I have rarely seen any funding of significance provided to support music education other than minimal provision of funding to carry out a concert for instance.

There may, of course be schools where this has occurred.

The question to be asked, is why should music specifically, be expected to raise funds at all? The Arts, including music, need to be on equal footing with for example, humanities or sport.

Terms of Reference 6

6. Music Education, provided through parent contribution.

Where there is interest in music education, parents do raise funds from time to time to provide music equipment for instance.

In the majority of schools, instrumental tuition incurs a fee that parents are required to pay. Tuition itself is often free, but schools must purchase instruments themselves and these are hired out to students, generally at very reasonable rates. The amount varies from school to school.

Parents may also be asked to fund Music Camps and pay an entry fee to concerts to help with the costs.

Some schools may have parents to contribute beyond fund raising - an area which could be explored further. For example, parents who have musical skills that can enhance the program.

Terms of Reference 7

7. The extent and quality of music education in Victorian Schools.

This has largely been covered in point 4. I will re-iterate that the quality of music education varies enormously. Putting on a mime show, (often considered the 'music education') is not what children need to the exclusion of a sound singing and instrumental program at all levels in primary schools and available for more intensive training in the upper levels in secondary schools.

Music has been included in the "Creative Arts" package and lumped together with other arts subjects. All creative arts have their own specific needs, for example, pottery and drama can hardly be compared to music in covering "The Arts".

Frequently schools require a "Performing Arts Teacher", a role which attempts to lump music in with other subjects areas such as drama and dance. This is a diluted approach to teaching music that compromises quality learning outcomes.

Principals should not be in the position of having to choose between pottery, drama or music or even LOTE nor constrained by inadequate budget provision.

This is very much the case currently in most schools and creates a culture of anything mildly related to music will do. Singing the latest pop song (badly), is not music education.

An example of a government school in Melbourne that does have a quality music program is Altona P- 9 College. The school has an enrolment of about 180 students. A group of highly dedicated staff lobbied for an on going music program at all levels. As part of new buildings, erected four years ago, a music/drama facility was constructed to accommodate the program and although scaled down from its initial conception, provides an adequate venue for a comprehensive program.

This includes provision for timetabled choir, which is attended by approximately a third of the primary school. All students from Prep to Year 8 receive a one hour session of music each week. In Year 9 music is an elective subject. The school employs one music teacher who is tertiary trained in both music and music education. The program is extensive and aims to develop music literacy, musicianship, creativity, and performance skills through a range of mediums including singing, group instrumental work and music technology. However the provision of adequate resources and equipment along with sufficient cash flow to maintain the program remains a concern due to DEECD budget allocation.

This example is not the norm unfortunately.

Future Optimum Provision of Music Education in Victorian Schools

Terms of Reference 8

8. Optimum Governance and Oversight Arrangements

Considering the global projects now in force, the committee needs to look widely at recommendations tabled in other countries such as the Henley Report in the UK. The Federal Education Department should work together with States to develop a national plan.

Provision needs to be made for trained music specialists to design a pedagogically sound classroom program that engages students from pre – school throughout Primary schools.

Provision also needs to be carried on in **all** secondary schools. The argument I have heard some administrators come up with of “Students don’t want to do it” betrays an ignorance of the background these students have experienced. We don’t say that about sport or SOSE.

Students don’t know what they are missing out on if they haven’t experienced **quality exposure**.

Music should be a stand alone subject and not muddled up with vastly different arts subjects.

Principals should not be in a position to decide whether or not a student is exposed to a particular arts subject. Each needs to stand on its own merits.

Terms of Reference 9

9. Optimum Use of Targeted Funding

“Professor Richard Teese from the University of Melbourne recently wrote a report for state and territory governments on the current school funding model and who it advantages and disadvantages.”

<http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2012/s3571971.htm>

It is clear from the El Sistema example that a wise investment in music education can help address the inequality present in the current education levels.

The Gonski report also recommends significant increased funding to government schools. The evidence of the benefits of music should indicate that a large proportion needs be allocated to provide access to music programs. Students do not need more technology- they have plenty already- as it cannot engage them in the same way that music and the arts can.

More funding needs to be targeted for **quality** training of teachers and building adequate facilities to carry out music programs in all schools.

Instrumental programs need to be offered to all students for at least a year. How this is to be implemented, for example whole classroom or small groups is a matter of debate. There may well be a mix depending on the situation in a given school.

Australia spends less on education than most developed countries. This needs to change quickly. Australian Governments spend vast amounts of tax dollars to support private enterprise, so finding the money for education need not be an issue.

Terms of Reference 10

10. Optimum balance of central mandates and supports.

Schools, professionals and other music organizations should work together to develop optimum use of resources.

This is a complex issue and needs to be developed. Victoria could well learn from existing programs and recommendations such as the Henley Report UK.

I would envision an overseeing body within DEECD with regional areas supervising and supporting programs, effectiveness etc

Terms of Reference 11

11. Optimum balance of music specific funding, non-music specific funding and parent contribution.

Classroom programs should be entirely funded by tax dollars. Highly qualified music specialists should be hired like any other subject. Generalist classroom teachers are ill equipped to carry out quality music education on the whole.

Singing specialists **may** need to be hired separately.

Government should also provide instrumental teachers for a wide range of instrumental tuition for at least a year.

The purchasing of instruments could be co-ordinated by DEECD (bulk buy) and save schools considerable costs.

The cost of music education is a great deal more than other subjects but the return on investment can save society billions as we have seen from the example of El Sistema.

Parents could contribute some money towards instrumental tuition.

Details would have to be developed as there will be significant differences between socio-economic groups.

The funding issue will need to be studied using models from successful projects in other countries and adapted to Victoria's needs accordingly.