

14th February 2013

Introduction

Thank you for accepting this submission to the Inquiry into the Extent, Benefits and Potential of Music Education in Victorian Schools.

My name is Mark Hynes. I trained in Music, Media and Drama graduating in 1978 with Bachelor Of Education (Creative Arts) from Melbourne State College, now Melbourne University.

Throughout my tertiary years, and since, I have lived and worked in the north western suburbs of Melbourne. After graduating I worked as an Outreach Youth Worker with disengaged young people, often encouraging their involvement in the Arts as a point of contact and involvement. I did this for approximately four years. Since 1983 I have been teaching in secondary schools, the last twenty or so years teaching Media and Drama, and Music in particular.

Presently I am exclusively teaching Classroom Music to students in Years Seven to Nine at Hume Central Secondary College, where I am also the Instrumental Music Coordinator. I have held this position for almost approximately twenty years beginning at my previous school, Hillcrest S.C. which merged to form my present place of employment.

So overall, my personal history is an involvement with youth and schools set in a large public housing district with many low income families from a large range of cultural backgrounds. Many arrive here as migrants some as refugees. It is an area with a high representation of rental housing so a fair section of the population can be transient. Many families are aspirational but for some of our families there are very few choices or opportunities. It is no surprise then, that a large number of related social issues arise and all of this is reflected in the school communities within which I work.

Benefits

I am sure there are many other people well qualified to describe and endorse the ways in which music activates learning in the brain across all learning areas, but I will state how Music Education has had significance in my experience.

- Underachievers are able to participate in an area of learning that gives them success and satisfaction. Music can provide confidence.
- Music involves students across all skill levels.

- Music performances focus college identity and pride.
- Music is easily interwoven with other Performing Arts, and with the Visual Arts.
- Proper participation in Music can give a sense that it is something to strive to get better with, rather than just do. So therefore it can be fun and challenging.
- Music gets socially isolated students working with other students cooperatively.
- Music gives students who in class are attention seeking and disruptive, a constructive sense of working with others and seeing/hearing/feeling the benefits of that cohesion.
- Performance gives staff, and parents/carers, a chance to see their (disruptive/quiet/lazy) students in a new light.
- The teaching of Music reinforces and enhances other study areas.
- Students who are having difficulty engaging in school are often doing so through Music. Some students come to school to do Music.
- Music can spark students' curiosity to learn by opening up other areas of interest.
- Music provides an opportunity to share between cultures and use celebration through music.
- Some students have gone on to play in bands, some have done further tertiary Music study and I know of one ex-student who has gone on to teach Music.

Fortunately, living and working locally over many years has brought me the satisfaction of seeing many ex students who have been gracious enough to stop and tell me how memorable and important their classes have been for them.

Current Provision

- Presently at Hume Central Secondary College each student has the opportunity to study Classroom Music for one semester between the Years Seven to Nine. Students can go on to do a Unit of Music at Year 10 and Units One and Two at VCE.

- When the **primary students** arrive at Hume Central from the feeder schools, many have little, if any, music study, while some have Music in their curriculum for the last year or so. I find it interesting, but sad, to note the growing number of primary students who danced at their graduation concert rather than sing. Sing and dance ok, but no singing?
- All students have the **opportunity to participate** in the Instrumental program if there are sufficient places. As is the case in some instrument areas, their names may have to go on a waiting list. We are fortunate enough to offer Voice, Percussion, Bass and Electric Guitar, Keyboard and Woodwind across the three campuses. We encourage students of all abilities to participate while asking each student to strive for their best.
- Our **performance program** includes assemblies, festivals and community events, school productions, concerts and Information Evenings. There are also more informal and smaller performances that are held to give the less experienced students opportunities for some confidence building.
- It has been suggested by some that perhaps we have a **system of fee payment for lessons** and make instrument hire mandatory for students taking lessons, if they do not have the instrument already. This seems obvious to some as our Instrumental program and Classroom programs rely solely on the budgets supplied by the school.

Parents /carers are encouraged to purchase an instrument for their child and advice is often given by Instrumental staff in doing this. Students come into the music area outside of class times, to practice and rehearse with their friends and Music staff.

However students' parents/carers often do not have the resources to make paying for the lessons or instrument a priority. Especially so with larger families and increasing demands in other school related purchases such as lap top computers. The students may have trouble finding the spaces, or quiet in their homes and sadly sometimes not even find the encouragement to practice at home.

Of course performances and celebrations are wonderful for encouraging parents/carers to give that extra encouragement when they share the success enjoyed by their child, but sometimes it makes it all the more painful when they just unable to.

- **Organizations** such as The Songroom and The Smith Family have been encouragers in the past with individual students and for this I have been thankful as well as the students and their families.
- Musical education in schools as with **other services** like "theatre in

education” in schools are a wonderful way to introduce students to experiences they would not have encountered, and experiences they will not forget. These services are extremely important for whetting the appetite that will create tomorrow’s audiences for these various performing arts.

However, for similar reasons stated above, these incursions, even at \$7.50 per students can be out of the reach of many parents. Schools can try to have a subject levy to encourage participation but many of these levies remain unpaid in schools with low income families.

Added to this, is the complication that these touring companies require a minimum number of students, usually a hundred and fifty, in order to perform at the minimum price per student. Some schools find it hard to get the required number at a particular year level and so miss out.

The Victorian Arts Centre is to be applauded for it’s “First Call” program, where our students have been able to access school productions at the Victorian Arts Centre , with transport tickets and admission paid for, thanks to the generosity of the First Call Fund donors.

Future Provision.

- The provision of **qualified Instrumental staff** in schools provides many significant benefits to our students. Not only are they qualified in the teaching of their instruments, but they also are able to share real life experiences of “growing up” while learning an instrument and of later participating in the music industry. These people have been able to inspire students. The benefits of a well run Instrumental program, such as those mentioned above, are due to their hard work and dedication to their students.
- It is important for the Instrumental staff to be focused on encouraging **students to perform** because it is through performance that the benefits of participation occur for the students.
- It also important that Instrumental Music students receive **goal based reports** to acknowledge achievement, to put Instrumental Music on a par with the rest of the curriculum. It also provides direction for a course of study. The level and methods of assessment however, is an issue that should be dealt with at a school level.
- While I loathed doing the annual **Instrumental Music Survey**, which used to be distributed by the regional offices, I do think there needs to be some consideration to accountability for schools, Instrumental and Classroom staff, and administrators of such programs, when they are centrally funded. For quite a few years now there has been little communication or guidance in the operation of these programs. I am sure that in almost all cases schools have continued to make the most of the physical and human

resources they have, but there may need to be some rationalization of why some schools run the programs they do, and with the human resources they have. Again, I stress, when they are centrally funded.

I thought the last survey I received was a bit heavy handed in asking for every student to be in an ensemble and to have played publicly in the first term. For a beginning young student this is very unreasonable. Ensembles yes, performances yes, but a forced approach is not what is required.

-The nature of the job for an Instrumental staff member asks for a contribution of time outside school hours, just as it does for a classroom teacher of any subject for parent evenings etc. A **clarification of the roles and expectations** for Instrumental staff, especially centrally employed, would be helpful for all concerned. I do not think I have seen a job description for a centrally employed Instrumental Teacher.

Funding for a Music Program should consider

- maintenance and replacement of instruments and equipment
- a periodic injection of funds (2-3 years) “to move forward” in the offerings of the program eg. recording /touring/ jam hub technology/ a new direction of instruments, adding a brass section for example.
- an input of funds to initiate a hire/buy program for students who may wish to purchase an instrument, with the school being the broker. With funds gained, replacement equipment might be purchased.
- a boost to disadvantaged schools to subsidize “music in education” visits, remembering that this does not just support the school, but the art form itself in **generating new audiences**.

Perhaps more “relationships” or “partnerships” could be formed so repeated visits build up a sense of ownership and familiarity, similar to the Pizzicato Effect Program at the Meadows Primary School, but not necessarily to the same depth of involvement- great as it is!

The Classroom Program.

I was recently greatly encouraged by the Musical Futures project after attending a two-day workshop. This network of Music teachers, Classroom and Instrumental, bring forth a lot of ideas to give confidence to Music teachers and help nurture student engagement by actually making more music. Being in a newer school where learning areas are closer together,

the need for sound isolation becomes crucial. To be able to isolate the Music class from the other learning areas but at the same time isolate acoustically, groups from each other in the same class is important to this approach. New technologies are available to do this, Jam hubs and electronic drum kits, but to do this requires extra funding.

Perhaps one way of looking at providing these funding arrangements is to consider the sharing of material, and perhaps human resources between primary and secondary schools, especially when they are in close proximity to each other, but funded separately.

In closing.

I think there's still a few good years left in me yet. I'm still learning and, as I tell my students, more importantly, trying.

In the late 1970's, a few years before I started teaching at Broadmeadows Technical School in 1983, there was a Music teacher, Diana Martin. She had started a brass band that was the source of much pride for the school and the for the people of the large Housing Commission area, with all its associated issues back then, as it does now. I believe much of the resourcing for this band came from the Disadvantaged Schools Funding.

For a while there was also a Broadmeadows City Band, fed by the school band. Melbourne percussionist David Jones was part of this era. Many performances were held at the Broadmeadows Town Hall and large audiences attended.

The Town Hall still stands and is not used for much. We need places to perform in. Ms Martin left a long time ago to go to Strathmore S.C and Broadmeadows Tech eventually closed. The Broadmeadows City Band I haven't heard of for many years although David Jones is doing well.

Disadvantaged Schools Funding was another era. Broadmeadows is still here and the same needs are here for the school, the students and their families. Well run and resourced Music programs are essential to enhancing the learning of every student.

Thank you for your time and consideration

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<http://www.davidjonesdrums.com.au/>

<http://www.theage.com.au/national/melbourne-life/drummer-taps-into-rhythm-of-tranquillity-20110508-1ee6i.html>

Diana

Martin <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1300&dat=19820414&id=UQNVA AAAI BAI&sjid=X5QD AAAI BAI&pg=3765,5946916>