

**INQUIRY INTO THE EXTENT, BENEFITS AND
POTENTIAL OF MUSIC EDUCATION IN
VICTORIAN SCHOOLS**

Submission by:

BRAYBROOK COLLEGE

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Principle's Overview

Braybrook College is a school in Melbourne's west, which prides itself on offering an environment in which diversity is celebrated and where students feel confident and happy. Our teachers are dedicated to challenging students whilst keeping a close eye on their well-being and academic progress. Our programs are designed to ensure that we optimise the opportunities for **all** students to attain entry to varied and appropriate post compulsory pathways. Our community is classified as Low SES with high levels of disadvantage. A significant majority of our students come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds requiring high levels of support in the areas of English literacy and numeracy. A number of our students have had little or interrupted schooling, some have experienced trauma and many live in single parent homes.

To address the high level of need a Literacy Support program (4 x 48 mins sessions, per week) was introduced in 2010, for all students in Years 7 & 8. Despite this very real imperative, we realise the importance of a broad educational experience and have worked to avoid narrowing the curriculum ensuring the inclusion of vital life opportunities such as learning to play musical instruments and learning to appreciate the cultural significance music plays in our lives. As such, each student in the junior school (years 7 and 8 totaling 430 students) studies Music for two sessions (2x48mins) each week. In addition, students opt to join the Instrumental Music Program, to access small group, additional tuition to enable them to formally join the various bands that we have at the college – ranging from Concert to Rock bands. These programs would not be able to be maintained without the current level of support received through the SRP and provided under the regional Instrumental Music Program.

The parents of students specifically in the Instrumental Music program are asked to pay \$30 per annum for the hire of an Instrument and in some cases parents are not able to find this extra amount for their child. The school will not exclude a student from a program such as this for financial reasons. Further, our parents are rarely able to afford the cost of private music tuition so it becomes even more of a priority for the school to bridge this gap and to minimise the impact of poverty. I'm sure that I do not need to argue a case for the benefits of music education to this audience – they are well known to members of the education community and are supported by much research throughout the world. What I do need to argue is that without support, and in my view an expanded level of support, many students will be denied what should be seen as a fundamental and crucial educational right.

The value of music education is clear to members of our community. At the last School Music Concert, our school gymnasium was full and the program showcased choral groups, percussion performances, strings, concert bands, rock bands and the crowning glory, the Year 12 Band. This year, these students have been selected to perform at the VCE Top Class event held at the Melbourne Recital Centre. This is the second time in eight years that a VCE group from our school has been selected for this prestigious event. This is extraordinary itself given the disadvantage our students face and the standard expected.

As principal I am proud to highlight individual successes but the chance for the every student to experience and benefit from music making is really what it is all about.

In this school, music education plays another, arguably more important, role. It brings people together. It engages students of all abilities and of all backgrounds, whether it be African, Vietnamese, Indian, Burmese, the Pacific Islander, Iranian or 'Australian'. It is significant in that it builds links between our school and these communities. Music brings understanding and respect.

I urge you to understand and to support the crucial role of Music in all schools.

Gerry Moloney
Principle
Braybrook College

OUR MUSIC PROGRAM

Braybrook College is school in the western suburbs of Melbourne with approximately one thousand students. We have a very successful year seven to twelve music program that has continued to grow due to the support provided our SRP and the regional instrumental funding. In the past twelve months our students have performed for the Prime Minister, Minister for Education, Governor of Victoria and our year twelve students are about to present two pieces at the VCE Season of Excellence concert at the Melbourne Recital Centre on the 24th February. This is the second time in eight years that our students have been selected for this prestigious event.

Our program provides a best practice model that integrates classroom and instrumental music teaching into a well-rounded music program that ensures equity of opportunity and produces above average results. The program provides a co-ordinated classroom and instrumental approach. Around 50% of the classroom music time is practical music making, either developing skills on various instruments or playing in ensembles. This reflects the nature of this subject at VCE level.

Junior School

All students in year 7 and 8 take part in a practical classroom music curriculum of 2 x 48mins per week. For the majority of students this is their first formal music tuition of any kind and it provides fundamental cognitive, social and emotional benefits to all students.

Middle School

In the middle school, Classroom Music is a four period elective that runs at both year 9 and year 10. Students receive 4 x 48mins per week as well as a timetabled instrumental lesson each week on their chosen instrument. There is no charge for these instrumental lessons.

VCE (Year 11 &12)

We have a large number of students who undertake VCE Music Performance. As with all VCE subjects students receive 5 x 48mins per week. They also receive a timetabled instrumental music lesson each week. As tuition on an instrumental is integral to any music performance subject, all students who are enrolled in a music subject from year 9 to year 12 receive instrumental lessons without any charge to the parents. This ensures that the students doing music at our school are those most interested and enthusiastic rather than just those who can pay.

You have no doubt, heard from other submissions of the decreasing number of schools (particularly government schools) offering music education whilst other struggle to get 6 or 7 students in a combined class of year 11 and 12. At Braybrook College we have consistently offered VCE Music Performance since it was developed more than 20 years ago and over the last 6 or so years, we have consistently had 19 – 23 students undertaking year 11 Music Performance (units 1 and 2) and 11-17 students undertaking year 12 Music Performance (units 3 and 4).

Co-ordination

The Music Faculty Co-ordinator receives 4 periods of time allowance and is currently a Leading Teacher Position within the school. Other performing arts subjects such as Drama are also part of the curriculum however Music is a distinct curriculum area with it's own Faculty Head, time allowance, budget and building.

All staff, including instrumental music staff, are highly qualified and experienced in this subject area and are encouraged to undertake professional development. There is funding and time release available when necessary and time release is given for those staff who are VCE Music Assessors.

FUNDING

Our Music Program is funded through our SRP and as well as receiving specific funding for instrumental music staff via the region.

This funding must be used for instrumental music tuition and cannot be redirected to another area. This allows for small group tuition without putting pressure on other school programs. It also enables instrumental staff to develop ongoing relationships with students and other staff.

Braybrook College Music Program is a flagship program for this college. Co-curriculum is a charter priority at Braybrook College. Our music program is both curricular and co-curricular and is regarded as an essential part of the school curriculum. It is one of the main programs that attracts students to Braybrook College.

Due to the low socio economic status of the school population there is a general inability of students to access private music lessons or purchase instruments. Therefore the music program is allocated a substantial amount of "equity funding" every year, by the school as a matter of policy. This funding is on top of the faculty budget allocation that all curriculum areas receive

We fund the music program significantly from within our SRP and invest in resources and capital. This support includes a \$300,000 building upgrade of the Music Centre which was completed 4 years ago and the purchase of a new Yamaha Upright Piano last year. (purchased with 14,000 grant from School Council)

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FACILITIES

Music Centre

One self-contained building separate from other school buildings, includes the following spaces/facilities:

- 1 x large Performance Area (including stage and mounted projector and speakers) – used by classes, rock bands & both the junior & senior concert bands
- 1 x Keyboard Lab with 26 keyboards.
- 1 x "normal" classroom with upright acoustic piano, stereo hi-fi system, a TV/DVD player that can be integrated into the room's hi-fi system, & 6 computer stations
- 2 x Inst Music Teaching Rooms – with filing cabinet, and each with a teacher's desk
- 1 x Music Staffroom for Classroom & Instrumental Music Teachers
- Music Storage Spaces

The school owns various musical instruments, PA system, sound-desks, etc.

CONCLUSION

I would like to stress the importance of specialist music funding and its significant role in helping to address educational disadvantage. As a relevant final point I would like to highlight the fact that of the group of 7 students from our school performing at the 'VCE Season of Excellence' on February 23rd, there are none that own their own instruments. They will be using equipment provided by our school.

Pepe Gillies
Music and Instrumental Music Co-ordinator
Braybrook College