

The Importance of Music Education in Victorian Schools

“Musical training is a more potent instrument than any other (for education) because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul, on which they mightily fasten, imparting grace and making the soul of him who is rightly educated graceful...” **Plato**

“Young people never lose their passion for music...they carry around libraries of music on their iPods, MP3s, iPhones, iPads and laptops... Harnessing their love of music through performance-based classes (is very important)” **Dino Azzollini** Lalor North Secondary College

Research throughout the past few decades time and time again suggests that music learning contributes positively to a students learning across the whole curriculum, and from there students are able to benefit in cognitive, social, academic and emotional ways. I have seen this throughout my many years of teaching music both in the classroom and instrumentally, where students have not only benefitted from learning music but have done well in other subjects too.

Neuroscientists have found that music learning activities create powerful connections across the brain and nervous system providing a basis that supports the development of other skills such as speech, language, memory and attention.

HOW AMAZING IS THAT?

AND WHY WOULD WE NOT FOSTER THAT THROUGH MUSIC IN EDUCATION?

Students at the schools I teach in greatly benefit from the DEET supplementary funding that makes their lessons much more affordable, plus the opportunity to hire an instrument rather than purchase one outright before they know if learning an instrument is their “thing” or not. Of course the school then needs the funds to buy these instruments, but another option can be for musical instrument hire companies that can offer good prices to students and their families in this area. Another benefit from DEET funding too was that learning a musical instrument became not only “elitist” for those who had money, but could be accessible for all students.

The difficulties instrumental students face at one of my schools in the Ferntree Gully area is the culture within the community or their family where orchestral, concert band or jazz style instruments are unfamiliar and the genre of music is not appreciated or explored because of that. The music co-ordinator has therefore elected to focus on building the performing of the more contemporary music styles in the classroom on instruments that they are familiar with so that they can learn to enjoy playing music and explore other instruments and styles later on. And, whilst doing this they are benefitting from the advantages that learning music as a language can give them access to.

From my perspective as an instrumental teacher I have found that quite often the discipline required to practice an instrument each day prepares a student for gaining good study habits, and the feeling of success when they repeatedly learn a passage of music until it sounds smooth and musical is a tangible guide for them that effort reaps rewards.

On occasion I have been privileged to have taught all the children of one family and at least one of them well into their secondary school years and the development of their abilities in many areas outside of music has always been exemplary. I put this down to several factors :

*the feeling of belonging that music students gain through sharing the learning of a musical instrument with their peers and family,

* the feeling of triumph they receive regularly when they play a piece well, under the mild pressure of playing to their teacher, or the heightened pressure of playing in front of a larger audience,

*students gain a greater understanding of the music they enjoy listening to and they feel a special connection to music, and realise the privilege of understanding that they have, but not only that they start to look for the same aspects in their other subjects.

Many of my students have discovered the Maths and Sciences, Languages and other areas too have seemingly revealed themselves to them as disciplines that they can explore and feel good about too. I myself discovered that I was more open to developing an accurate reproduction of an accent when studying Greek and French because my ear had been developed musically.

The benefits from ensemble rehearsals and performance teach students the importance of team work, but not only that but they feel part of something, somewhere they belong where **THEY ARE IMPORTANT!**

“Music performance also teaches young people to conquer fear and to take risks...anxiety over performing (is) perfectly normal and something that would help (children) overcome the challenge of being in front of a crowd in later life. Dealing with it early and often makes it less of a problem later. Risk-taking is essential if a child is to fully develop his or her potential. Performing allows children to increase their self- esteem and self-belief in a supportive and caring environment.” **Kia Leong**

I firmly believe that music performance gives students something that they can own, that they can share with friends, family and strangers and that provides them with an identity. Graffiti is a display of a socially unacceptable form of an individual’s identity, but music is cohesive it can include all members of society and recognises the part a musician plays in its performance.

In concluding I would like to point out that music has always been and should continue to be an invaluable part of every school’s curriculum because it opens the hearts of performers and listeners alike, it brings students, families, teachers, and the community together and allows the youth of today to become the fruitful members of our society in the future.

MUSIC EDUCATION IS GREAT.

IT IS BENEFICIAL.

IT IS EXCITING.

IT IS REWARDING.

IT IS NECESSARY TO BECOMING A HUMAN BEING.

Thank you for taking the time to read my submission,

Yours faithfully,

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