

To whom it may concern.

As an instrumental music teacher for over 15 years I can honestly say that giving the opportunity to children and young adults to study a musical instrument is very important for their development. As a community in Australia we are generally over saturated with sport and underrepresented with art and culture.

When I recruit students at the beginning of the year I ask them who listens to music, every hand in the class goes up. When I ask them who plays or has played a musical instrument, very few hands go up. Generally children from Asian backgrounds will raise their hands as their parents recognize the value of learning a musical instrument.

There are numerous studies that show that learning a musical instrument has many benefits including improved learning outcomes in other subjects due to the brain being stimulated while the student is engaged in playing music. A student must be reading, interpreting, breathing appropriately, and correctly fingering all at the same time. This should not be taken for granted, beginner students are initially quite surprised at how hard this actually is. In a world of fast technology students are becoming softer and not wanting to do things that take too long and are too hard. I actually think it is harder to teach a student a musical instrument these days as opposed to 15 years ago as they have been pre conditioned to a computer doing the thinking for them. For that reason I think it is very important that some real challenges are still in a child's school life.

Many of the students that I have taught have ended up being high achievers, school captains, in the debating team, school musicals and it is not because they were smarter than anyone else to start with, music made them smarter. Playing music has improved their discipline, their confidence, their social skills, their work ethic, their self-esteem, their understanding of a team and how it doesn't work unless everyone works together. I believe that much of the graffiti and vandalism we see today is because young people are bored; they have low self-esteem and don't have enough worthwhile things to do. They have Facebook where they peer

endlessly into a screen and waste time looking at what other people are doing and clicking on the “like” icon.

I have worked at high and low socio economic schools that struggle with children to even turn up and do some homework. For them to actually master something, especially if they are no good at sport is a huge deal for them. And for their parents to see them playing in a school ensemble on stage and to stand there soaking up the applause, it is a real high. It is possibly the only opportunity in their life that they might have that experience. That is a huge confidence builder to students that allows them to realize that they can actually be good at something and that they don't have to go and prowl the streets looking for trouble when they could be involved in something really worthwhile that also has many social outlets.

Instrumental music also is one of the only subjects that can give a student one on one ratio with the teacher, I teach between one and five students in a class and apart from being their teacher, I am also their friend and someone that they can talk to if they need to about the pressures of life that they are facing. If instrumental music is dropped from school, you will still have kids wanting to play guitar and drums as they see this on TV all the time. Brass, woodwind and strings however will become almost history as they need to be promoted in school for kids to know about them. The long term implication of this is that schools will find it harder to put on shows, musicals, and open days with bands playing. Melbourne may one day have international artists having to bring over their own bands as we have no one able to play these instruments to a high standard anymore and we will all just have to watch sport. Great, a land of sport loving bogans who can't concentrate on anything too hard for more than five minutes.

In my spare time, I restore old cars and motorbikes. I have nearly finished my latest creation and it has taken me nearly five years. I have the patience and the long term view as I can see the end result and know how worthwhile it will be. I learned about long term goal setting by learning to play a musical instrument. It took years and slowly I got a little bit better every day. Another example of how

music has helped form my character, this of course gives me confidence when I can look back at the mountain I have climbed. Music encourages people to be participants, not onlookers.

Education starts at school, be it history, literature, geography or music. Why would you deprive a child and a society the opportunity to be enriched by culture?

Thank you

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