

From:



Please find my submission attached.

Warm regards,

Evonne

RE: An Inquiry into the Extent, Benefits and Potential of Music Education in Victorian Schools

I am a music educator and Instrumental Music Department Coordinator teaching music in government high schools, Upwey High School and Dandenong High School. Both schools have a vibrant and growing Instrumental Music Department. I am passionate about what I do and highly value the teaching of music in schools and am pleased to have the opportunity to make this submission. I have drawn inspiration from research and based this submission on my own experiences and observations.

I am fortunate that I am able to witness daily the positive effects that music has on the lives of students. I am able to see the appreciation from parents for their child's musical education. I am able to see what an asset a music program is to a school and I am able to see the benefit a music program has in outreaching to the wider school community.

Research into the benefits of Musical Education:

From researching material to support my statement on the benefits of musical education there is a wealth of research and supporting documents.

Below is a list of the benefits of music from the "Music. Play for life" Music education advocacy Kit.

1. Everyone has musical ability
2. Playing music increases memory and reasoning capacity, time management skills and eloquence
3. Playing music improves concentration, memory and self expression
4. Playing music improves the ability to think
5. Music training improves verbal memory
6. Learning music helps under-performing students to improve
7. Music students are less likely to be delinquent¹

Below is a list of benefits of music from "more music toolkit"

- Improved reasoning capacity and problem solving skills
- Improve math and language performance
- Better memory
- Greater social and team skills
- Music provides a unique means of communication and expression through sound.
- Music provides a context for the understanding and transmission of beliefs and values.
- Music has its own body of knowledge and skills.

¹ http://www.musicplayforlife.org/pdf/mpfl_lobby_kit.pdf2011.pdf

- Music functions as a means of entertaining, celebrating, relaxing and expressing.
- Music brings joy and satisfaction, fosters creative expression, challenges thinking and stimulates imagination.
- Music learning contributes to intellectual and cognitive growth through the development of skills, techniques and processes.
- Music learning contributes to social and personal growth.
- Music engages all aspects of a person: cognitive, emotional, sensory, physical and spiritual.
- Music is an abstract, creative medium which allows for unique individual expression.
- Music is valuable in its own right - however, it also has other qualities that bring additional benefits to students.
- Learning music can help students improve in other academic and social areas of their lives.²

I have drawn from these lists as well as many other points and articles to help me articulate the extent, benefit and potential of musical education in the schools where I teach.

Organisation and Time Management

Taking on the responsibility of learning an instrument improves student's diligence and organisation. They have a responsibility to look after their instruments, practice regularly at home and come prepared to lessons. Having this routine set up through instrumental music lessons is excellent preparation for effective study patterns.

Concentration and Focus

Ensemble rehearsals in my music program are run early in the morning before school. Music activates the brain and exercises the brain ready for learning. Students are sometimes tired when they arrive to before school rehearsals but by the end of the rehearsal they are awake, stimulated and ready for the day ahead. I have a VCE student in 2012 who told me that she always practices her clarinet before exams as she said it calms her, helps her concentrate and enables her to focus. The controlled breathing required to play an instrument combined with concentration focus and calms students.

Self Confidence and Sense of Achievement

The sense of achievement that students gain from progressing on their instruments, learning and mastering new skills and then taking these skills and performing either solo or part of an ensemble is immense. Music performance

² <http://www.moremusic toolkit.org.au/images/stories/documents/mpfl-lobby-kit-2011.pdf>

increases confidence over several areas such as a high self esteem, satisfaction of what they have achieved and excitement about their potential. I have seen this increased confidence grow in my students and their excitement from performing in concerts, competitions and exams inspires them to believe that they can continue to achieve in music and other subject areas.

VCE Music and Leadership Positions

Instrumental music programs are crucial in supporting classroom VCE music students and prepare students to successfully complete VCE music. Completion of VCE music subjects offers student the option to further their musical education through tertiary study. Many of my instrumental music students have been school captains or taken on leadership positions such as house captains or student representative council members. Learning a musical instrument equips students with the skills they need in leadership position such as confidence, organisation, time management, the ability to address large audiences, the ability to communicate well and work with others, presentation and posture.

Social and Team Skills

Being part of a musical ensemble is being part of a team where all members are working constructively and creatively in order to achieve a common goal. Ensembles are comprised of students from varying year levels which give students the opportunity to reach a new group of friends from different year levels that all share a passion for music. Being in an ensemble gives students a sense of community and unity and can help students find a social group in school where they belong. Everybody in an ensemble must learn to work collaboratively and effectively in order to achieve their goals and every ensemble member is important and has a part to play. All of my students learning musical instruments are members of at least one ensemble.

“Although I have only been a part of the band since the start of this year, everyone quickly accepted me into the group. The best thing about our band is the sense of community that we all get from participating, and it’s a wonderful sensation to be a part of a group of enthusiastic students, who are so passionate about what we do, especially during the quarter-to-eight starts on a Thursday morning. It is a great honour to be included in Upwey’s music program, and I know I will miss every little bit of it next year, from the family-like banter to the nerve wrecking performances.”

- Alesha yr 12

Benefits the Wider Community:

My involvement in the music department has created strong links from the school to the community. 2013 marks the 11th consecutive year that Upwey High School has supported Legacy in the Dandenong Ranges and played an integral role of

providing music for the annual ANZAC day ceremony. We have recently received a shield from Bob Lancaster on behalf of legacy in acknowledgement and appreciation of the Upwey High Schools Concert Band's involvement over the last decade. I have had the privilege of taking ensembles to perform for the Dandenong Rangers New Australian Citizenship Ceremony in 2012 and many other community ceremonies such as the opening of the Sherbrook community centre and local primary school fetes. Emerald Secondary College hosted a community cabinet meeting in 2010 where the music department was involved and the choir sung our national anthem. The music department plays an important role in schools by providing the entertainment at many school events and always feature at assemblies, presentation nights, award ceremonies and other school events. Instrumental music involves the local community into our school community and connects students in the instrumental program with community events and organisations.

"The citizenship ceremony was great indeed. About two weeks before we performed we were told that we were performing at the local citizenship ceremony. I was very excited, as this was my first performance. When we got there we had a look at where we were playing and it was quite a big place! We performed two pieces, Waltzing Matilda and the National Anthem of Australia. After we had played (including me on keyboard percussion) all of us went into the hall for some snacks. All in all I think that it was a great experience and another great reason why I am in Upwey High School's concert band."

-Shay yr 7

Enjoyment and Self-expression - Learning music is enjoyable and a lifelong journey

Playing music is a creative experience and a wonderful outlet for self-expression. It is an enjoyable experience for both performer and listener and an experience unlike any other. Music is a wonderful thing to analyse and interpret and its depth encourages curiosity and exploration for the listener and performer.

My fondest memories from school are of the time I spent with my music teachers learning to play my instruments, the time I spent with other students rehearsing in ensembles and the excitement of performing and achieving my musical goals and those set for me by my teachers. My musical education in High School has been the strongest educational influence on my life. I completed my associate of music diploma when I was in year twelve and this led me to tertiary study of music and into musical education with a Bachelor of Music from the University of Melbourne and a Graduate Diploma of education from Monash. In my current position of running an exciting and vibrant high school music program I am able to share my passion of music with my students and community. The ability to play a musical instrument and express yourself through music is a gift for life.

"It's great to have the opportunity to learn your own musical instrument

and being able to enjoy playing music for the rest of your life.”

-Nadia yr 9

I believe that learning a musical instrument must be made to be an accessible and affordable option for all students. For many of my students learning a musical instrument would not be an option for them if not for instrumental music programs offered in Dandenong and Upwey High Schools.

I feel very fortunate for the extent that I am involved in musical education and the amount of students involved in learning musical instruments in my school programs. With so many students engaged by music and all the benefits of musical education with the right support there is a huge potential to equip students with the skills and benefits they gain from learning a musical instrument. I have prepared and implemented strategic planning with a clear vision to ensure the growth and direction of the music program continues to improve. The potential is exciting!

References:

<http://www.limelightmagazine.com.au/Article/329408,every-child-needs-music-richard-gill-still-arguing-50-years-on.aspx>

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DFE-00086>

http://www.musicplayforlife.org/pdf/mpfl_lobby_kit.pdf <http://www.moremusictoolkit.org.au/images/stories/documents/mpfl-lobby-kit-2011.pdf>