

To the Education and Training Committee, Parliament of Victoria,
in response to
the Inquiry Into the Extent, Benefits and Potential of Music Education in Victorian Schools.

I am 17 years old and a recent graduate from Blackburn High School. I would like to share with you the extent to which being a part of the school's renowned music program has impacted on my life.

I would firstly like to begin by sharing that I am currently going on to pursue my music education at tertiary level, as a result of the excellent preparation provided by my school. However, the opportunity of learning music in a school of such reputation has significantly affected my life in many other ways. It affects students on a profound level, and ultimately allows them to develop into well-rounded people, adequately preparing them for the life they have yet to live.

I began learning piano at the age of six, and when I commenced my journey at high school I chose to undertake a further two instruments. This immediately introduced me to the school's ensemble program, which was the true beginning of my education at school; an eye-opening experience. I was rehearsing with other students once or twice a week, collectively working as one towards a common goal: the production of a piece of music, something that could only be described as a truly remarkable experience. This teamwork led to me learning an unspoken language: I was listening intently to other people's voices and interacting with them through a world so unique that others, who were not part of this experience, would not be able to understand. This connectedness continued and grew throughout my years of playing in the school's various bands, and, within a few years, I had observed other noticeable changes in my development as an adolescent.

Through the ever-increasing engagement in musical performance and creation over the course of my secondary years, I perceived many positive changes directly impacting on my schooling life: natural stress-relief, deeper meditation, increased memory function, faster reflexes, and higher aptitude for spontaneity/improvisation, resulting in a more relaxed approach towards everyday life. Apart from the obvious increase in my academic results across all subjects, my overall attitude towards life in general had changed. I was calmer as a person, more secure within myself, and had an appetite for learning that I had not previously been aware of. However, I am not denying the fact that it was often incredibly difficult for me to maintain an interest in something that often made me frustrated and took so much patience. Eventually, I pushed through and overcame these hurdles in the realisation that the end rewards far outweighed my struggles. This in turn had a domino-effect, and I was then motivated to strive for excellence in all aspects of my life. I felt as though I could take on the world. Hence, this distinct form of creative expression not only helped to make my entire schooling experience much more inviting, but it encouraged the development of my whole brain.

I have been fortunate enough to be involved in a music program in which staff and students alike exude a common passion and love for an art form that, in its solo or collaborative creation, could so definitively change one's perception of life overall. Such an environment is rare among the majority of schools, and results in a consistently high calibre of musical output, from solo/group

VCE students to each of the 20 different ensembles offered. The school promotes the individual's positive self-esteem and the key discovery of a significant, equal voice. Students are driven and inspired by listening intently to one another and having their own solo work discussed by others, as this makes them feel as though their ideas and interests are valued by their peers. This attitude is particularly evident in each of the three VCE music subjects offered, as students are striving for their best standard of performance at the culmination of their years at secondary school. Overall, the pursuit of music education in such an encouraging atmosphere is an unparalleled and highly gratifying experience that allows students to flourish as mature and strong-willed adolescents, ready for the real world that is awaiting them.

Thanks to the dedication and guidance of my professional music teachers and like-minded students, I am empowered to go out into the world and begin my life as an adult, doing my very best to share my love of music with the rest of the world through performance and, eventually, as an educator myself. This is because I wish to keep music education in schools alive, and I believe that the amazing music education I was so fortunate to have received should be upheld. Specialist music programs such as those at Blackburn High School should be supported and allowed to keep thriving.



Selene Messinis



Dated: 11th February, 2013