

Inquiry into the extent, benefits and potential of music education in Victorian Schools

Ballarat High School.

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The following is a brief based on the philosophy of music education by the Music Staff at Ballarat High School.

Enjoyment, enthusiasm and engagement are important words in regard to our approach to music education. The underlying philosophy is that music is a performing art, so what better way to engage kids in music than playing and enjoying it. We have a very strong instrumental programme catering for many different styles, instruments and ensembles. It is crucial that these ensembles perform. There is at least one performance of some type every week (normally many more). This drives the students to higher levels of playing and enjoyment. These “gigs” range from in-school performances to many community-based performances.

Classroom Music is where over 650 students participate in a very performance-based programme. The school has devised a unique way of teaching classroom music. The 26 student class forms a large band which comprises: singers, guitarists, bass players, keyboard players and drummers. No previous experience is assumed. It is an elective that draws on a large group of students. Many have little or no background in music, while others are quite experienced and talented on their instrument.

It is “student centred” learning, including a focus on trust and development. The music selected is arranged to meet the abilities of the students in the particular class and often re-arranged, or adapted for different classes. This approach is shared among all the Ballarat High’s music teachers, both classroom and instrumental. A large reason why it is successful is in the way all the music teachers work together as a team; not only supporting and encouraging the students, but also each other. Neither teachers nor students are ever frightened to get out of their comfort zone and try something different-always learning.

The responses to the following questions were answered by the Ballarat High School Music Department Team consisting of the Music staff, Senior Students and Principal.

POINT A. The benefits to students and the broader society of music education in schools.

Refer to Question 10

POINT B. The extent and quality of music education in Victorian schools.

Refer to Question 8

POINT C. The optimum funding and governance arrangements for music education in Victorian Schools.

Presently we have regional allocation (instrumental music) and school allocation (classroom and/or instrumental). Every school has different priorities and it is not an exact science how they deal with the music funds. It is left to the individual schools to use these funds and a more consistent approach needs to be taken.

Our programme is part-funded by the school and by the parents. Parents pay a music levy and hire fee for the instrumental programme. We also have a Music Support Group to fundraise and support events and finance larger purchases.

Presently we are happy with the current funding arrangements due to the support the leadership/finance team gives to the Performing Arts department. The concepts that are crucial for a successful programme are: team work, relevant PD, networking, collaboration and collegiality.

How do we effectively target this funding? We have started networking with other schools, at our own cost, and with a little help from the region. This has been hugely successful and is the most relevant PD that Performing Arts can do. This, however, is not sustainable and many schools could not participate due to the costs. Music needs funding to bring student musicians and teachers across regions, borders and cultural divides to work together towards a common goal of music education. Collaboration is a powerful tool that staff and students can share to aid and enhance the amazing things that music educators are doing.

1. What music education is offered at your school?

All Performing Art subjects (Music), consist of Ballarat High School students only. As do the Vet Music classes. The Vet classes are not part of the Ballarat Vet Cluster, however much collaboration and performing goes on between them.

Our week consists of 6 x 50 min period days

Classroom Music

Yr 7	Music	7 Classes	2 P / Per week	All Year
Yr 7	Band	3 Classes	2 P / Per Week	All Year
Yr 8	Music	6 Classes	3 P /Per week	Semester
Yr 8	Band	2 Classes	2 P/ Per week	All Year
Yr 9	Music (tech, perf)	4 Classes	4 P / Per week	Term
Yr 10	Music (perf & Gen)	2 Classes	5 P / Per week	Semester
Yr 11	VCE Music Perf	1 Class	5 P / Per week	Year (Units 1&2)
Yr 12	VCE Music Perf	1 Class	5 P / Per week	Year (Units 3&4)

Yr 9	Vet Cert II in Music	1 Class	5 P / Per week
Yr 10/11	Vet Cert III in Music	1 Class	5 P / Per week (1st year Units 1& 2)
Yr 11/12	Vet Cert III in Music	1 Class	5 P / Per week (2nd year Units 3& 4)
Yr 12	Vet Cert IV _(partial)	1 Class	3 P / Per week (instructed) P3 P (SDL)

Instrumental Music.

Currently, we have over 300 students in the instrument programme and tuition is available on the following instruments:

Voice	French horn
Oboe	Trumpet
Bassoon	Trombone
Flute / Piccolo	Euphonium
Clarinet / Bass Clarinet	Tuba
Alto Saxophone / Soprano Saxophone	Percussion / Drum Kit
Tenor Saxophone / Baritone Saxophone	

Ensembles

Yr 7 Band (3 Bands 26 each band) 2 x 50 min timetabled during the day

Yr 8 Band (2 bands 24 each band) 2 x 50 min timetabled during the day

Intermediate Concert Band (50 students)	1 x 60 min	3:30-4:30pm
Junior Stage Band (30students)	1 x 60 min	3:30-4:30 pm
Senior Concert Band (50 students)	1x 60 min	7:45 – 8:45am
BOB: senior stage Band (45 students)	1 x 60 min	3:30-4:30 pm
WhizBang Orkestra – Original Music	1 x 60 mins	4.30 – 5.30pm
Clarinettics (6)	1 x 35 mins	1:00 – 1:35pm
Snr Flute Ensemble (8 students)	1 x 30 mins	1:00 – 1:30pm
Saxtraxs (8 students)	1 x 35 Mins	1:00-1:35pm
Groove Based Singing Ensemble (55 students)	1 x 35 Mins	1:00 – 1:35

This does not include the many Student run rock bands that rehearse every lunchtime. (2 different rock bands each lunch- 2 different spaces)

2. Who teaches music at your school e.g., classroom teachers or a specialised music teacher?

This is one of the strongest points of the Performing Arts team at Ballarat High School. All the Performing Arts staff believes in a performance-based programme. They are actively involved in running performing ensembles and work towards the same goal. As mentioned, enjoyment, enthusiasm and engagement is crucial towards our approach as a whole. All Performing Arts staff help out at performances, even if it's not their ensemble involved. This does not matter if they are classroom teachers, Vet teachers or any of the instrumental teachers. All Classroom teachers take an ensemble after hours. All the Performance Arts teachers, both classroom and instrumental, are active musicians performing on a regular basis. This is excellent for students to see their teachers practicing and being passionate about their field of expertise.

Presently we have

Classroom Music / Vet Music - 4 Teachers (Part time / Full Time)

Instrumental Music - 8 Teachers working (Part time / Full time)

All classroom music teachers also teach instrumental music.

3. What Factors affect the quality of music education at your school?

Staff is a major factor affecting the quality of music education. We have 10 quality-trained, dynamic and committed staff devoted to the development of the students and the department. The diversity of the music staff is also a big factor. We are able to draw on the different strengths of the individual staff. The countless hours above and beyond all add to the quality of a successful programme. This also creates a friendly and happy atmosphere that the students continually comment upon when in the Performing Arts department/building. This is a super strength of our programme.

Another factor is being respected within the school and school community. Having the support not just from the Performing Arts team but the Leadership team and fellow colleagues is crucial. When discussing with students, they feel that more recognition needs to be given to Performing Arts.

Resources are another important aspect of the quality being delivered. Having up to date equipment, rooms, Audio/visual and the like is essential. Subjects such as Vet, which are industry based, need to have up to date equipment to aid students in what the real world is all about. The school owns all its gear and it is of excellent quality and sufficient quantity. We have a good budget that helps with the purchase and maintenance of equipment. We have sound support from the school to aid us in the area. The Parent Support group also aids in the financial assistance as well as helping out at performances and fundraising events.

4. What facilities and support is available for music education at your school?

Ballarat High School is well resourced. It has three performance areas including a Theatre, Band room and a room set up for Practical classes. There is a Classroom with an adjacent computer pod, consisting of 20 Desktop computers. The Electronic Musical equipment is of industry standard and all the Woodwind and Brass instruments are well maintained. There is a 5 year plan in place with the replacement of instruments to aid in the students having quality, well maintained instruments. All the equipment and resources is owned by the school. Collegiate support is huge at Ballarat High School. All staff helps out at each other's performances working as a cohesive team.

5. The current extent of professional Development opportunities for teachers related to music education.

This area is quite limited. The professional Development that is of most use is instrument specific. This is to keep up to date with the current trends related to the area of expertise. Much of the PD at Ballarat High School is done through collegiate support within the school and community. It is a collaboration of music teaches as such, rather than external PD.

A major issue is the cost involved to attend external PD. Not just the cost of the activity, but the cost of leaving replacement classes at school and to travel. Many PD activities are based in or around major cities, which is harder for those from smaller schools, or those in the country. Country schools/teachers are quite disadvantaged due to the number of PD activities occurring in larger cities. The Regional Instrumental co-ordinator organised PD that serviced the Country schools and brought them to a central location accessible to all in 2012. This was very well received.

6. Whether your school participates in any external music programs e.g., the song room or Musica Viva?

Yes. We readily do workshops with different schools not just in our area but within the state. This is so important to do and the students benefit greatly from them. Last year we worked with Musica Viva on a Video Conferencing project communicating with Musica Viva and three other schools. This was enjoyable to do.

Funding was an issue with Musica Viva as these external programs are expensive. We can only do them when we share costs with other schools or if the Regional instrumental Music Coordinator is able to take part and contribute some funds.

With Instrumental Music, we participate in the Melbourne School Bands Festival with performing ensembles. The Melbourne Youth Music Summer School, for individuals and the Australian Youth Band, for Individuals. Unfortunately, it is too expensive to participate with the Classroom Music side of things.

We tend to organise our own workshops with the Instrumental and Vet programme. This includes such events as guest artists, industry personnel to come along to classes or camps to work with the students.

7. Your view of the current funding arrangements for music education in Victorian Schools.

Our programme is part-funded by the school and by the parents. Parents pay a music levy and hire for the instrumental programme. We also have a Music Support Group to support events and finance for the larger purchases. Presently we are happy with the current funding arrangements due to the support the leadership/finance team give to the Performing Arts department. However, I know this is not the case in all schools. Every school has different priorities and it is not an exact science how individual schools deal with the music funds. Refer to Point C at the start of the paper.

8. The current extent and quality of music education in Victorian schools.

We are very fortunate to have a large successful Music programme at Ballarat High School. Fortunately, this programme is valued and supported by the school as a whole. This is not always the case. Music education in schools is widely varied from exceptional programs to virtually non-existent. There are lots of good things happening in music education in other schools, but often they are under-resourced or not given the same priorities that is at Ballarat High.

The quality also varies, not just from school to school, region to region but from country to city. It also varies on the teaching qualifications of the staff. As it is up to the school how to use Music education budget allocation, it is so different from school to school. It is also important to note that it is personality driven, if you have one or two staff that have not got the same expectations or passion then their program will have a different approach and quality will be different.

Team work within the music/Performing Arts department is paramount for it to be working at its best. This is, of course, very hard when in regional schools there might be only one teacher running the department. These teachers need to be supported. Funding levels are very ad hoc and variable. Parent contribution is huge and state schools offer a much valued and subsidised music education as best they can. This is crucial for it to be available to as many students as possible. As mentioned, some great things are happening in some schools, while others are struggling severely.

9. The current status of music education in Victorian schools.

Once again, the status here at Ballarat High school is very good. In other schools in our region it has been aided by the new Regional Instrumental Music coordinator. They have a much better knowledge of what is happening in many schools and can organise regional PD,

festivals and other activities to meet the needs of the school. They are able to create a link between schools which can only benefit the staff and students.

Instrumental music has seen a shift to more contemporary instruments such as guitar, vocals and drums. This has created a decrease in the number of students playing woodwind and brass. Once schools lose these instruments it is hard to build them back up again. We are fortunate that this has not been a problem at Ballarat High due to the support of the staff, parents and school.

10. Key benefits and issues surrounding music education in schools, including any identified gaps in existing educational opportunities

Once again, Enjoyment, Enthusiasm and Engagement are important benefits.

There are many great benefits of music education in school.

The appreciation of the Arts and lifelong learning are also paramount. When discussing with students there were a number of key issues that kept arising. One was meeting students with similar interests from all year levels. Playing music is one area where there can be a year 7 student being able to play next to a Year 12 student. The support that the students show across all year levels is fantastic. Developing new skills and learning from each other were other benefits. Students are able to work with others and watch and learn new skills all the time. Industry experience is also important. Students are playing, developing skills that they are immediately able to be used out in the community for performances.

The discipline aspect is also a benefit. When learning an instrument they need to be structured and able to time-manage. Students who are disengaged or have behaviour issues often find a niche in music. We have had a number of students who, if they did not have music at school, their education would have been more difficult for everyone involved. The links that it creates to the community is valuable indeed and enables the community to work with the school.

Connectedness with their peers, teachers, school and the wider community is a major benefit. It is an area that students of all year levels can come together with the same passion and enthusiasm and perform. The students feel they belong and develop excellent positive relationships with their teachers and fellow students. They have a sense of wellbeing, being able to express themselves creatively, mentally, physically and emotionally. Students gain confidence, not just in music but in other areas. Discipline of participating in music education can also work across other areas of the students' schooling. The concept of gaining new skills, and the varied ways of learning results in the learning process being tailored to the individual needs of the students.

Music education also provides the student with an avenue to pursue music as a career. Or, if not a career; a lifelong hobby where they can continue to enjoy their love of music. A career can be as formal or as informal as the student would like. Formal could be a university degree, playing in orchestras or as informally as performing in a rock band playing gigs on weekends. The education pathway that the school delivers needs to cater for all these avenues. It could be as a VCE solo/group performance or it could be Industry based Vet pathway. Having both these options caters for all the needs of the students. Music education has it all and is crucial to have on offer for all students. Whether it is creating new friendships, taking up travel opportunities for tours or just jamming with fellow friends, there can be no disadvantages of music education in any setting.

The gaps or issues that arise come from there not being sufficient time given for the administration of the music programs, especially in a larger school with a larger Performing Arts programme. The link between the primary school needs to be stronger. Have a pathway for the students to start developing the instrumental techniques earlier. The need for Special project funding for projects such as: regional concerts, smaller grants for instruments, guest artists and the like. This needs to be available to regional (country) schools as well as city schools. Being in the country is a huge gap. Many feel isolated and not supported from the larger areas. Often these schools only have one music teacher who is left to do it all on their own. There is also an inequality between schools of equipment, facilities and staffing.

11. Any Music Education programs you consider to be best practice.

Ballarat High School. With the large amount of performances, relationships between classroom and instrumental practice, varied ensemble programs, quality dedicated and varied staff. Ballarat High School demonstrates an excellent cohesive music education setting.