

12 February 2013

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The Chair: David Southwick MP

Education and Training Committee

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

Dear Sir

Thank you for the invitation to provide a submission to the Parliament of Victoria Inquiry into the extent, benefits and potential of music education in Victorian Schools.

I am responding as both a committed music teacher/consultant and a parent of two young children both attending Victorian primary schools.

Also, as a very involved member of the Kodaly Music Education Institute of Australia, Vic. committee, I would also like to draw your attention to the submission made by the National President of KMEIA, Tess Laird, on behalf of all members of KMEIA Australia wide and to commend the information contained within on behalf of all members of KMEIA Vic.

I am pleased that you are undertaking this inquiry and I look forward to hearing of your findings in this matter and I hope that this inquiry will help to provide the best music education possible for ALL school students in Victoria (and indeed around Australia).

Yours sincerely,

Deborah Smith

“I would teach the children music, physics and philosophy; but the most important is music, for in the patterns of music are the keys to all learning.” Plato

“Music education can help spark a child’s imagination or ignite a lifetime of passion. Music education should not be a privilege for a lucky few, it should be a part of every child’s world of possibility.” Hillary Rodham Clinton

Philosophy of a good quality music education:

- Music is essential to the curriculum.
- Music belongs to all.
- Teachers must be highly competent and well trained and most of all love music.
- Music learning should be active and fun.
- Music education should be based on singing (available to all).
- Music should be taught as a language.

True music literacy is the ability to see what you hear and hear what you see. (Solfege). Teach to use music as a language. In order to truly understand the elements of music one must be able to read and speak the language of music fluently.

- Only the best music should be used. (Not just classical but the best).
- The language of music should be taught developmentally, i.e. in small steps.
- Teach for success – all students can achieve!
- Good quality music education produces students to whom music is not a way of making a living but a way of life.

Evidence supporting music education in schools

Benefits to students and the broader society or music education in schools

General benefits to students as a result of music education

Benefits to student academic performance as a result of music education

There is an extensive amount of academic research that strongly suggest that good quality music education programs (those built around an aural, singing, developmental, sequential pedagogy) provide numerous benefits including academic, social and emotional.

Below I have summarised some of those benefits however, again I would draw your attention to the submission made by KMEIA referred to in my covering letter hear for references and specific details of many of these research projects.

I have included a few hyperlinks to various articles that also support this research.

Learning music in an aural/vocal pedagogy in sequential, developmental and continuous manner offers many benefits, some of which are summarised below.

- Improved maths and language performance
- Improved reasoning capacity and problem solving skills
- Improved concentration and memory
- Playing music increases memory
- Develops independent thinking, reasoning capacity and time management skills
- Improved spatial intelligence
- Improved fine motor skills
- Improved craftsmanship – the ability to practice until something is of a certain standard – a mistake is a mistake, either right or wrong
- Enhanced teamwork skills, group cooperation and social skills
- Enhanced emotional sensitivity
- Provides an ideal extension for students who are already successful in other areas
- Develops habits of practice, focus, discipline and performance which contribute to heightened internal motivation and a sense of achievement
- Teaches students to think creatively
- Allows for self-expression
- Teaches discipline, responsibility and leadership
- Teaches students to face fear and conquer anxiety
- Enriches students' lives
- Learning music helps under-performing students to improve
- Music students are less likely to be delinquent

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

<http://www.childrensmusicworkshop.com/advocacy/whyteachmusic.html>

<http://www.mca.org.au/advocacy/2012-papers/21386-article-on-music-education-in-schools-published-in-the-australian-on-october-17>

<http://www.schoolatoz.nsw.edu.au/homework-and-study/other-subjects-and-projects/the-arts/why-your-child-should-study-music>

<http://www.childrensmusicworkshop.com/advocacy/benefits.html>

<http://musiced.nafme.org/files/2012/06/WhyStudyMusic.pdf>

What factors affect the quality of music education in Victorian Schools

Taken from the Response by the Kodály Music Education Institute of Australia to the Draft Australian Curriculum: The Arts:

“Excellent **teacher-musicians** will make the difference to student outcomes and students have the right to excellence”.

The major factor behind a good quality music education is good quality music teachers. Music needs to be taught by teachers who are themselves able musicians, fluent in music literacy and able to inspire students to achieve their best.

Another very important factor is the frequency with which good quality music is taught. Once a week would be an absolute minimum. As any mathematics teacher will attest, skills based subjects need to be revisited frequently in order for students to achieve and progress – in a perfect world students would have music every day!

In addition to the above, having a supportive principal – in particular one who believes in the benefits of the program, and having supportive class teachers can have a huge impact on the success of a school music program.

Schools that have a good quality instrumental program will also function better as this ties in with, and supports a classroom music program and vica versa. However, many parents cannot afford the cost involved in such lesson and as a result children miss out on an opportunity to further enrich their musical lives.

Best Practice Music programs

St Aidan's – Brisbane

Scotch College Junior School, Hawthorn

Caulfield Grammar Junior School

Flemington Primary School

Blackburn High School

Firbank Grammar, Brighton

Melbourne Grammar, Grimwade House

St Michael's Grammar

Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School

Eltham East Primary School