

Philosophy of Music Education
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It is a difficult thing to sit down and plot out the advantages of music. One must understand that music must be experienced to be truly appreciated. Once you have been made subject to the power of music, you can never question its importance. Music is not extracurricular, nor is it expendable. Music must never be deemed as less important than any other subject area. Growing up in a musical culture is beneficial and essential to the general happiness and well being of everyone.

Music is a form of Intelligence

I firmly believe that possessing musical abilities is a high form of intelligence. It takes a great amount of logic, reasoning, and coordination to perform, as well as intuitiveness and concentration to objectively listen to and appreciate. As with any form of intelligence, the concepts of music require much study for understanding. It takes dedication and self-discipline to become good at your craft, but also required is a firm knowledge-based background.

It is pertinent that all individuals are introduced to the spectrum of musical ideas at an early age. Much like spoken language, music is much more easily understood if children are subjected to it from the time they are born. Producing musical sounds comes as a second nature to children, and by starting young, children are much less afraid of performance. At this stage, they are not yet overly self-conscious, and are often quite eager to entertain. While it is essential to introduce students to music at a young age, it is also very important that the worth of an

education in music is stressed throughout the student's entire academic career. Far too often, students who were initially enthusiastic about music become disheartened by outside influences. As students progress toward high school, music often gets left at the wayside. It is now considered an extracurricular activity, and only gets in the way of "real" study. This mentality has got to change.

Music has a profound impact on people's lives. By learning and performing music, students can gain the confidence that they cannot receive from other conventional classes. A clear display of self-confidence is crucial in every aspect of a person's life. Even if a person chooses a career completely unrelated to music, the presence of the confidence he or she gained through musical performance would still be noticed.

The Value of Music

Having a good background in music has also proven to improve students' comprehension in other areas. It improves spatial-reasoning, therefore enabling better math and problem-solving skills. It has also been proven that students involved in music programs generally score higher on standardized tests. The gaining of confidence and reasoning skills is definitely a great benefit to these students, but pales in comparison to the benefits of music for its own sake.

Music is a wonderful outlet for emotional expression, and can relieve stress and lighten spirits. Music allows for even the shyest person to open up and feel unafraid amongst numerous on-lookers. It can unite a room full of people, and can make each individual feel as important as the next. In an ensemble setting, every member is important to the success of the group.

Music can be felt, enjoyed, and understood by everyone, and should therefore be experienced and created by everyone who wishes to do so. I believe that all people can be musical, and should never be told otherwise.

Some people seem to be born with a natural talent for music, but that certainly does not mean that musical skill cannot be taught to everyone. Of course there are going to be different levels of skill amongst students, and it is very important that music educators work to bring each student up to their highest personal potential. Every student should be able to accomplish a level of skill they can be proud of. Likewise, musical talent can always be improved upon. Even the most famous of child prodigies have undergone extensive study to improve that which they already excelled in. The process of musical study never ends, and provides a lifetime of challenging and rewarding experiences.

Assessment in Music

In this government of checks and balances and equality for all, assessment in education is a natural step in the democratic process. As the focus is turning more and more to education in this country, it is becoming increasingly apparent that assessment in our schools is very important.

Through assessment, teachers can gain a better understanding of what individual students are capable of. Without regular assessment, struggling students may be overlooked, and individual accomplishments may go unrecognized. With growing class sizes in our public schools, assessment allows teachers to make connections to individual students. With consistent, progressive assessment, teachers can track the development of their students to create a record of achievement in different areas.

The most important thing that assessment does is encourage teachers to be reflective professionals. By keeping a tangible record of the success of our students, we are also keeping a record of our success as teachers. This information can be helpful by providing a basis for evaluating one's lesson plans and teaching techniques.

Music and Inclusion

When working with students with disabilities, it is important to praise their efforts, inspire them to enjoy learning, and encourage them to view their disabilities as a reason to work harder- not an excuse for poor effort. Students with disabilities must be constantly pushed and encouraged in order for real learning to take place. These students absolutely need extra supports to achieve the national standards of achievement for their grade level. With proper guidance, these students will not only show improved academic achievement, but they will also gain confidence in a classroom with their non-disabled peers.

The key to working with individuals with disabilities is to discover the unique challenges and talents of each individual, and carefully plan lessons that minimize difficulties and emphasize success. Once we understand the problem, we can begin to find new techniques to address and ultimately diminish obstacles.

The music classroom can provide a very safe, enriching learning opportunity for students with disabilities. Classroom music encourages teamwork, friendship, and creativity. Thoughtful planning and adapted instruments make it possible for students with disabilities to make meaningful contributions to the class, without feeling singled-out or excluded. With thoughtful adaptations, students with disabilities can be as creative and expressive as their non-disabled peers.

A World of Music

The primary goals of music educators are to get students involved, excited, and educated about music. Western Classical music is a fantastic source for quality musical examples that can be a true asset to any school music program. However, a school music program that focuses *only* on the Western musical experience is an incomplete program. Our students must be exposed to many different kinds of music in order to gain a real understanding of and appreciation for music. The music of cultures across the globe are valid, valuable, and certainly worthy of study and performance by our American students.

The thoughtful inclusion of multicultural music can be a valuable asset to a school music program and to the community as a whole. When we recognize and appreciate the music of people from different backgrounds, we are telling the community that these cultures are valuable and worthy of our attention.

Coda

So many people live their lives, never realizing their true talent and love for music. Of course, it is hard to realize something such as this, when the idea has never been introduced to you. This sets the task of the music educator: to seek out and inspire as many people as possible, so that no one will live their life unfulfilled.