

Philosophy of Music Education
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Rev. March 2009

Music has been present in some shape or form for all of known history. It functions as a representation of culture. Music can have a purpose, such as the music written for processions, marches, or military functions. Music, as well, can serve as public entertainment, as well as private entertainment. Music can come from a variety of cultures, be played on a variety of instruments, and sang in a variety of languages using many different styles. Because music is so important, it is extremely important that students receive a quality music education that they find useful and enriching.

Music advocates are quick to point out extra-musical benefits of a musical education. These benefits may be true, but music is more than just an enhancement to a child's education. As established through Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, musical intelligence is part of a child ¹, and nurturing this unique intelligence should be a priority of any educational program, whether or not that musical development has extra benefits outside the classroom.

Because music is a unique intelligence, all students should receive an enriching musical education. According to Zoltan Kodaly, everyone capable of communicating linguistically is capable of communicating musically ². Because of music's enriching quality, everyone can benefit from a musical education, and it is a right that no student should be denied.

All students deserve, and should receive, music education. IDEA, in its current revision, has been crafted to provide access to free and appropriate public education to all students, but especially to those with special needs. The music classroom, in general, is often the “least restrictive environment” available for most students, and for that reason, students with special needs can excel in a music classroom.

In many metro areas, the community and student body is comprised of individuals from a variety of

racial, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds. Because of this, previous methods of instruction, that use school as a means of cultural assimilation and acquisition are not adequate for modern students. Instead, instruction must be carried out that respectfully and authentically represents cultures inside and outside the classroom. Within a classroom, any instructor must also take great care to show understanding, interest, and respect for cultures other than one's own. Whenever possible, an effective teacher uses primary sources, or “culture bearers” to ensure that students receive an authentic portrayal of culture and society through the music that represents that culture.

Because students have differing learning styles, there are many different educational approaches with the potential of benefiting students. However, to best foster musical development for children, ideal music education borrows from many different methodologies to meet different children's needs by utilizing the best aspects of teaching approaches. Teaching methods such as Kodaly, Suzuki, and Orff-Schulwerk have many strengths and applications for young children and young adults. As outlined through the Kodaly method, children should be taught using authentic, high-quality music of their own culture from a young age ¹. The Suzuki method, which borrows and shares some aspects of the Kodaly method, stresses constant encouragement and parental involvement ³. By focusing on the strengths of several educational methods, a teacher can borrow from several established traditions to give their students the best possible musical education.

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1. Grice, June “Kodaly Applications in the American Music Classroom” Spotlight on General Music. MENC, Rowman and Littlefield. 2007
 2. Gardner, Howard. Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences. Basic Books, 1993.
 3. “Suzuki Twinkler”. Suzuki Association of the Americas. Created August 2008, accessed March 2008. <<http://suzukiassociation.org/parents/twinkler/>>.