

Philosophy of Music Education
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Music in many ways is a universal language, a means of communicating ones thoughts and ideas across many cultures. It is creative expression and has the ability to take you to another world, learn about a different culture or a different time in history. Music has the power to produce emotion and is therapeutic for many.

Entertainment is required for humans. In fact, a culture without entertainment is nonexistent, and in order to keep societies functioning entertainment must be present. The easiest way to entertain people is through things that are unique such as the arts. Music is the most viable form of entertainment because it enlightens us about cultural values and is a form of storytelling. It educates us about the world, passes on information, and even guides people to self-identity, whether they realize it or not. Even in a modern society, popular music of today continues to teach these values.

Music is all around us. There has not been a time in history where civilizations have existed without music. It is present at every celebration and time of mourning. It accompanies us as we dance the night away and comforts us in times of sorrow. Whether we want to admit it or not, it seems to be true that music is the very fabric of our society.

Seeing how music is of high value to us, it should be obvious why the subject should be taught in schools, but there are always those who are determined to prove that music is simply for fun and not a proper means of educating.

Music should be taught in schools for a number of reasons. Often times in music class the students will feel a sense of belonging. Learning music builds confidence and allows for a healthy form of expression. I would ask parents who question the value of music education if they preferred their child to be expressing him or herself through music, or getting into trouble on the streets.

Studies show that children who study music tend to achieve better test scores and have an all around better academic performance. Learning music also adds to the success of gaining other life skills such as responsibility, coordination, discipline, and working with others. Learning about music history allows students to tap into other cultures and times of the past.

Knowing these values, we are brought to the question – what types of music should be taught in schools? It is my belief that music from various time periods with varying styles should be taught at all levels. Choosing types of music that keep the students interested should be mixed with classical composers such as Mozart, Beethoven, and Bach. Teaching many styles of music will allow for students to keep an open mind and develop an understanding for the various cultures and music literature of the pieces they are studying.

In elementary school, children should be exposed to pieces with simple rhythms and concepts. At the secondary school level splitting the subject into choral and instrumental while still allowing children to participate in one or the other, or even both is suggested. At this level, the teacher may wish to expose new types of instruments to the students, new concepts should be introduced and various styles of music should be increased.

At all levels, the instructor should keep in mind that pieces they choose for the students to play should be challenging yet fun and interesting.

So who should learn music in schools? My answer is everyone. I believe that it is vital for everyone to be exposed to music, especially in their younger years. Kindergarteners can easily learn solfege syllables by using hand symbols. They can also play games with music involving stomping of the feet to keep rhythm. In middle school and high school, entering competitions should be encouraged to keep students motivated to learn. Even adults who are new to the subject can learn music and still receive the same benefits as any other music student.

The teacher is by far the most important role in the learning and spreading of music. To me, one who pursues a career, especially a career as special as music education, should act as though they are pursuing their dreams. Music educators should be knowledgeable of their field, have patience, and the ability to explain a concept in many ways. Most importantly, the teacher should be passionate about his or her profession and pass that passion onto the students. If a teacher is not passionate about what they do, it is likely that they will not be taken seriously as an educator and will undoubtedly lose the respect of many students.

Music teachers should be knowledgeable and have an appreciation for the many types of music that they plan to share with students. They should have a strong background in important subjects such as music theory and literature. The teacher should have good listening skills and should always try to inspire each and every student to do what they love to do.

To conclude, it is obvious that music has been, and always will be an important part of our lives. So why question whether it is of value to us, or whether or not we need it in our schools? It will always be there, so we may as well take advantage of its numerous benefits.