

Spencer Jones Philosophy Statement

Music is all around us. Every where we turn there is music in some way, shape, or form. Music is a basic part of life. There has been music since the beginning of man. So why shouldn't it be part of our education? But before I explain why music should be in our education I will explain what music is. To me, music is sound put together in an organized manner, if it is not put together it is noise. This can be rock music to African drumming to Gregorian Chant. All of it is music in some way, shape or form. There are more questions that just why should music be in our education. As in who should teach and learn music in schools? What music should be taught in schools? How can we asses music properly.

The first question, *Why should music be in our education* can be answered in many ways. I believe that music, as stated above, is a basic part of life. It has been around for many years. In the times of the ancient Greeks, they taught music in their educational system. They were able to see the many beneficial aspects of music education in life. Although times have changed a great deal from the times of the Greeks, the need for music education has not. Music serves many purposes, including: a way to be creative, a way to express your feelings, a pastime, and many more. By learning about music in our educational system we are allowing our students to become one of the most well rounded individuals they can be with many ways of expressing themselves and dealing with other issues.

What music should be taught in schools? is the next question I would like to answer. There are many forms of music. All of them are very beneficial. Music should not only be fun for the students, but also challenging enough so that they can feel they have improved their technique and have mastered any particular aspect of music. This is very important for the students because they might have encountered something in the music that was new to them and challenged them. By practicing the challenging part they will learn it and be able to overcome it and continually improve on that tough section. Then they would be able to play it better the next time that it appears. The new and challenging thing could be time signature, key, rhythm, or anything of this nature. Choir music has even more benefits. The students will learn how to sing in a foreign language and how to pronounce the words clearly and effectively. This gives the students a broader knowledge of countries outside of the United States. Music teachers need to include music from many different cultures to help their students know about other cultures and musical traditions those cultures may have. This can be done in many ways; one way is to just read about it and perhaps do an activity in class. But there is yet a better way to make this music known and active in our students' lives. Teachers can do this by having a person from the community come in and talk to the students about the culture and teach them a piece from that culture. Or perhaps the class could go out into the neighborhood and students could attend a gathering of musicians who play music from different cultures and students could have the opportunity to participate. A follow-up to such involvement in the community could be to have the students return to school and share what they have learned about cultural music. To answer the question I believe that every

type of music should be taught in our schools because all of it can be used as a teaching tool.

The next question I would like answer is, *Who should learn music in schools?* I believe that everyone should learn music. It is beneficial for everyone, even if teachers need to go above and beyond the usual routine to teach exceptional students. Teachers can use a wide variety of tools to help teach music, including multimedia. By doing this for the exceptional student it could also have a positive effect on the other students in the class. By including exceptional students in your classroom you are enriching the learning experience for all of your students. Multimedia has become a necessity in education, and should be included in music education. This can be done by having students compose on computer programs which allow students to listen to, adjust, and change music on a computer. But multimedia does not just contain itself to computers but it is a part of anything that can be used to help facilitate learning. Music is a basic part of life, and it is all around everyone. Simply knowing about music adds to the students' knowledge of the world and will provide them a well rounded education. They will start to hear music all around them and know what they are hearing and be able to appreciate it further.

Another question I would like address is: *Who should teach music in schools?* In short, I believe that music teachers should be musicians who love music, but most importantly they music love spreading the joy of music. First of all, to be a musician you should love music. You should also understand the basic concepts of music. And, as a teacher, you should know different ways of explaining the same thing. For example, if one student does not understand your first explanation you can explain it in a different way so that, hopefully, everyone can understand. This should be true of all teachers. Teachers should know the basics of other subjects so that they can relate their subject to others, and also create a team process of learning for their students. Teachers should also love to spread the knowledge of their subject, in this case music. Music teachers should want to impart their knowledge and joy of music to their students and help the students become the best people they can be. By doing this the students will have an excellent education and be knowledgeable in many areas.

The last question I would like to discuss is: *How can teachers assess music?* There are many different ways to asses for learning. Paper and pencil tests work for some subjects and it can even work with some parts of music education, such as music theory. Stephan P. Barnicle*, a music teacher in Connecticut, advocates for teachers assessing students' sight-singing ability. Sight singing is an intricate part of understanding music notation, from theory to performance. Ann Burbridge*, a choir director from Texas, suggests assessing performance along with pencil and paper tests. Performance is one aspect that is hard to assess, but Burbridge suggests using a rubric to grade this kind of student work. By doing this, teachers can teach students what is important in the performance of music.

Music is a wonderful subject to learn about, and to teach. I personally love to see my students' face light up when they learn something new, or finally understand something they did not once understand. It is very satisfying to see the students who are excited about music. I feel that by teaching music I can help all of my students become better, more intellectual people. I also believe that by teaching, showing, and spreading my joy of music I can inspire some of my students to continue their music education.

*Articles can be found in Spotlight on Assessment in Music Education. A publication from MENC.