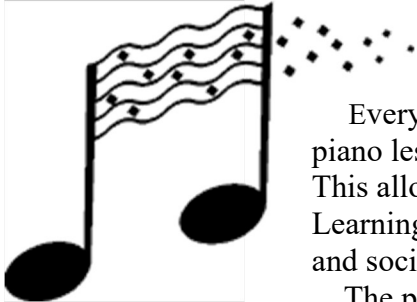


Music Notes



From Mr. Bontjes

Fall 2023



Welcome to Piano Lab!

Every Kindergarten through sixth grade student at Giacoma School will receive piano lessons in a lab setting once every four school days as a part of the curriculum. This allows students to learn about music in an engaging, hand-on environment. Learning to play an instrument has also been shown to improve in both the academic and social development of students.

The piano lab is exclusive to Giacoma School. No other school in the area provides this opportunity to their students. Despite their many benefits, there are very few piano labs in public schools. We are extremely fortunate to have piano instruction in Westville.

Please have a discussion with your student about the importance of taking care of the materials provided by the school (computers, iPads, pianos, books, etc.) so that all students can continue to enjoy the learning opportunities that they provide.

Please contact Mr. Bontjes with any questions or concerns you may have.

*"Life is like
a piano.
What you
get out of it
depends on
how you
play it."*

**-Albert
Einstein**



Mr. Bontjes

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Cleaning

We do our best to prevent the spread of germs through the sharing of instruments and headphones in the piano lab. Each student will sanitize their hands on the way into the lab every day. Also, each instrument and headset will be cleaned prior to each use.

Please discuss the importance of keeping shared equipment clean with your student. The safety of your student is very important.

Please contact Mr. Bontjes with any questions or concerns.

Headphones

The school is providing headphones for student use in the piano lab this year. Headphones and keyboards will be cleaned before each use.

If you prefer, students may bring their own headphones. The headphones must have a mini (3.5mm/1/8-inch) plug. Students who wish to use their own headphones will be responsible for their care and for bringing them to class. Students who lose, break, or forget their headphones will be required to use a school set.



Why Study Music?

Nations whose students consistently outperform the United States in tests assessing science achievement are the countries where music is a primary focus of the curriculum. A 1988 test of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement ranked the United States 14th among 17 countries on an instrument testing science achievement of eighth and ninth graders. Our students' scores trailed far behind Poland, Italy, Korea, English-speaking Canada, and nearly every other participating country, with the exception of the Philippines and Hong Kong. The top-performing students on the test were those from Hungary, followed by those from the Netherlands and Japan.

If we examine the top three ranked countries on the test, we see parallels between academic achievement and music education. In a 1988 study cited by Frank Hodson, Chairman of the National Endowment of the Arts, he noted that in grades 1-6, the Japanese require two class periods per week [of music]. Music includes singing, instrumental performance, and appreciation of both western and Japanese music. At middle level, students learn to sing in choruses and play instruments in ensembles.

In the Netherlands, music and art became mandatory subjects in 1968, and mandatory tests in these subjects were implemented in 1976.

In Hungary, with its number one ranking in science achievement for eighth and ninth graders, music education has long been an essential and developmental program implemented nationally by the composer Zoltan Kodaly. Both voice and instrumental training twice a week are compulsory throughout the first eight years of schooling.

The importance of music education to learning in the top-ranked countries seems to contradict the United States' focus on math, science, vocabulary, and technology. Yet, we continue to emphasize the need for computers in every classroom, and more of the same academic emphasis.

PIANO LESSONS AND HOME PRACTICE

Classroom piano instruction will benefit all students both musically and academically, but students who put in the most time and effort on their lessons will receive the greatest benefit. In other words, students who practice at home between lessons will benefit most. With an average cost of \$15.00 per week for private piano lessons, Giacoma students will receive about \$570.00 worth of lessons each year. Quality instruments for home practice are available for less than half that amount.

Our local music store offers a discount on instruments and books to Westville parents wishing to purchase these for practice. Contact Mr. Bontjes for details.

Though parents are welcome to shop anywhere, discount stores should be avoided. They sell toys, not instruments. For a quality instrument, please shop at a reputable musical instrument dealer. A list of suggested instruments is available at jgmusic.weebly.com.



"Without music, life would be a mistake."

- Friedrich Nietzsche



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