

Music Notes



From Mr. Bontjes

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Music Matters!



"Life is one grand, sweet song, so start the music."

-Ronald Reagan



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All students at Giacoma attend both music and piano lessons as a part of our school curriculum. This is time very well spent. A great deal of research has been conducted in recent years with the aim of evaluating the benefits of music study for children. The results have repeatedly shown that students reap many benefits (both musical and non-musical) as a result of music study. It has also been proven that benefits increase with an early start to music study and are greater for those who study music longer. A few of those results are listed on the back of this newsletter.

These benefits are more than enough reason to include music in our curriculum, but there are even more reasons. A few of them are as follows:

- **Music is all around us.** We learn to read, write, add, and subtract because these skills are necessary in our everyday lives. Music also surrounds us. It is very difficult to make it through a day without coming in contact with music. That music can be designed to influence our moods and decisions. Understanding music helps us to exercise some control over those effects.
- **Music reflects cultures and values.** Studying music from different styles, geographic areas, and periods in history helps us to understand how cultures and values differ and change as well as what unites us as human beings.
- **Discovering interests and talents.** Some students are natural athletes. Some excel at math, science, reading, or writing. Some are natural musicians. Many have interests and talents in several of these areas. Studying a wide variety of topics in school helps students to find and develop interests and talents they may not have discovered without studying them in school.
- **A chance for self-expression.** Much of what students do in school is centered around learning facts. The time spent on this, while important, leaves little time for students to explore creativity, emotion, and expression. Music gives students this opportunity.
- **Appreciation.** Professional athletes make their sport look easy. We only know how skilled they are because we have experienced playing those sports. In the same way, professional musicians make performing music look easy. Only experience in music allows us to appreciate their talents.
- **Recreation.** Many musicians never perform in public. They simply make music for their own enjoyment.

Summer Piano Practice

Our piano lesson book series (*Alfred's Basic Piano Library*) has a "Solo" and a "Recital" book to go with each lesson book. These contain new songs that are on the same difficulty level as what they are studying at school to allow students with a piano to practice over the summer to maintain the skills they have developed through the year. Kindergarten is in the *Prep A* book. 1st and 2nd grades are in *Prep B*. 3rd through 5th grades are in *Level 1B*. 6th grade is in *Level 2*.

Why Study Music?

A Few of the Benefits of Music Study as proven by research



"Where words fail, music speaks."

-Hans Christian Anderson



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1. Teaching music to preschoolers and kindergarten students helps to develop their spatial-temporal reasoning, according to research by Frances Rauscher of the University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh and Gordon Shaw of the University of California at Irvine. This skill is needed to understand geometry, proportions, and how objects fit together in time and space.
- "Research, Music and Policy Debates" by Joan Schmidt, Director National School Boards Association. *Montana School Boards Association Bulletin*, April 1998.
2. Young children who take music lessons show different brain development and improved memory over the course of a year, compared to children who do not receive musical training. Musically trained children performed better in a memory test that is correlated with general intelligence skills such as literacy, verbal memory, visiospatial processing, mathematics and IQ.
- Dr. Laurel Trainor, *Prof. of Psychology, Neuroscience, and Behavior at McMaster Univ.*, 2006
3. On the basis of observations and experiments with newborns, neuroscientists now know that infants are born with neural mechanisms devoted exclusively to music. Studies show that early and ongoing musical training helps organize and develop children's brains.
- Susan Black, "The Musical Mind," *The American School Board Journal*, January, 1997.
4. People who participate in the arts live longer than others, according to a Swedish study.
- *British Medical Journal*, 1996.
5. At-risk children participating in an arts program that includes music show significant increases in self-concept, as measured by the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale.
- *Project ARISE: Meeting the needs of disadvantaged students through the arts*, Auburn University, 1992.
6. The part of the brain responsible for planning, foresight, and coordination is substantially larger for instrumental musicians than for the general public.
- "Music On the Mind," *Newsweek*, July 24, 2000.
7. Students who participate in school band or orchestra have the lowest levels of current and lifelong use of alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs among any group in our society.
- *H. Con. Res 266*, United States Senate, June 13, 2000.
8. Taking a music elective course is a better indicator that a student will stay in college than high SAT scores or high GPA.
- Dr. Denise C. Gardner, *Effect of Music Courses On Retention*, Georgia Tech, 2000.

