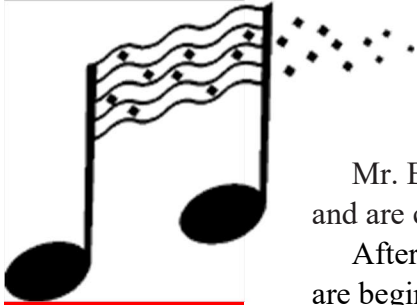


# Music Notes



From Mr. Bontjes

Winter 2024



## Piano News

### What We're Learning

Mr. Bontjes is proud of the students' progress in piano! They have learned a lot and are continuing to learn and improve their musical skills.

After learning about the black key groups on the piano, Kindergarten students are beginning to learn to name and play the white keys on the piano.

First grade classes are learning to read and play notes on the Grand Staff, which is a combination both the treble (G-clef) and bass (F-clef) staff. This is the standard for reading and writing piano music.

Second grade students are learning to read and play notes more efficiently. They have learned to play more than one note in a hand at the same time and are beginning to play with both hands at the same time!

Third grade students are refining their skills at playing songs that include multiple notes with the same hand and with both hands at the same time.

Fourth grade students are playing more complicated songs requiring both hands at the same time and both white and black keys.

Fifth grade students are increasing their skill at reading and playing more complicated songs and are beginning to incorporate the sustain pedal (foot pedal) into their songs as they play.

Sixth grade students have progressed to a new, more advanced, book. (This is the first time a sixth-grade class has made it this far this early in the year!) They are currently working on music that includes more complicated rhythms.

As students learn to read music and perform it on the piano, they are also learning music terms, music history, and music theory.

### Don't Forget:

Your support is very important to the students' continued development in piano and in all their subjects. Your interest and approval mean the world to your student as they relate stories of their day at school! It gives them a sense of pride as well as motivation to do their best!

### Music in our Schools

NAfME, the National Association for Music Education, has designated March as "*Music In Our Schools Month*." It is a time to celebrate our students' access to music education during the school day. The study of music has many benefits beyond musical appreciation and knowledge. Some of these are featured on the reverse side of each newsletter. Please thank our administrators and school board members for allowing our students access to music study in school.

*"Music is the universal language of mankind."*

*-Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*



**Mr. Bontjes**

267-2154 ext. 1049

[jgmusic.weebly.com](http://jgmusic.weebly.com)

[bontjes@gowestville.org](mailto:bontjes@gowestville.org)

# Why Study Music?

## The Brain-Music Connection

How does music boost the intellect and enhance learning? Does it stimulate an area of the brain associated with creativity? Are children's musical preferences wired into the brain or culturally determined? Do musicians' brains differ from those of other people?

Tracing brain development through childhood provides some clues to this question. From around age nine to eleven, auditory pathways undergo a spurt of neural integration, enhancing speech and listening. Choral reading, poetry, and varieties of pronunciation and dialect become important, as the brain and auditory system begin to process the voices and the wisdom of the world at large. Children who have never heard dialects or foreign language tend to regard such unfamiliar speech as weird for the rest of their lives. Hearing a variety of dialects on TV or at the movies helps slightly, but learning to sing simple folk songs in Japanese, Swahili, German, or even regional accents like those of Texas enable the brain to encode new sounds – and thereby understand the world more fully.

During this stage, the *corpus callosum*, the bridge between the left and right sides of the brain, completes its development, allowing both hemispheres to respond to an event simultaneously. Recent studies have found that the corpus callosum of musicians is thicker and more fully developed than in other people, reinforcing the idea that music enlarges existing neural pathways and stimulates learning and creativity.

The *planum temporale*, located in the temporal lobe of the brain, is also more pronounced in musicians. This area of the brain appears to be associated with language processing and might also “categorize” sounds, suggesting a link between language and music. Studies like this, notes science writer Richard A. Knox, are “part of a growing body of evidence indicating that human brains are designed to process, appreciate, and eventually create music – an activity whose importance for the species scientists are only beginning to appreciate in biological terms.”

Sources:

“Brain: Music of the Hemispheres,” *Discover*, March 1994

“Music of the Hemispheres,” James Shreeve, *Discover*, October 1996

“Sweet Taste in Music May Be Human Trait, Harvard Study Finds,”

Richard A. Knox, *Boston Globe*, September 1996



## Wrong Keyboard?

Think buying your kids a computer to open their minds to the wonders of science and logic? Maybe you better buy a piano keyboard instead. A team of psychologists exploring the link between music and intelligence has found that piano instruction is far superior to computer instruction in enhancing the kind of abstract reasoning skills a child will need for excelling in math and science later on.

In a two-year experiment, one group of preschoolers was given private piano and singing lessons and another got private computer lessons. The musically trained kids scored 34% higher than the others on tests measuring the higher brain functions critical in science, math and engineering. (*Popular Science*, June 1997)

## New Research Results

Educational research is being conducted constantly. In February of 2016, an excellent article was published which details the results of some of the most recent research about the benefits of music study. The article can be found on Mr. Bontjes' classroom website. Click the “Why Music?” tab and look for “Benefits of Music Study.”



“Music produces a kind of pleasure which human nature cannot do without.”

-Confucius



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