

Saving Music

Donielle Hetrick

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Instructor: Chris Genre

Essay Type: Proposing Solutions

We are currently on the verge of losing a vital part of our schools. Music programs are in jeopardy. Steadily, they are being pushed further down the priority list of school administrations, especially in primary and secondary schools. According to an article in *Teaching Music*, "cutting elementary music" was included in a list of twenty proposed cuts in one California school district ("Battling").with a consistent trend of downsizing music in the school systems, some schools may soon not have a program. To an individual who has never had the opportunity to learn about and play music, this scenario may not seem so tragic. To them, other curricula may be more valuable to a child's education. After all, what is a music class compared to the mighty scientific and mathematical fields?

As it turns out, music benefits children more than just being able to play "Ode to Joy" on a horn. It spirals out to other pieces of children's needs. According to Bruce Bower, a recent study showed a "statistically significant IQ advantage for music students" (Bower). Music education can have a positive effect on how children do academically. Music for children also provides other stimuli. According to Smith, a child's "emotional" and "physical capacities" also expand as the result of music (5). Children become more dexterous as the result of playing an instrument. They may also develop appreciation and understanding of various genres and forms of music. While musical influence may not create a child genius, it does give children definite advantages.

Why, then, does such a valuable asset to our children's lives hang in the balance?

According to Elliot, "a lack of time" is one of the top reasons why we are losing our music programs in schools (299). When school boards prioritize other curricula over music, there is simply not enough time in the day for music. It is either math or music. Although math may be on top of the food chain, giving students an opportunity to have music should not be neglected. With a few adjustments to the school schedule, we can solve the dilemma of having to choose between important classes and keep an important part of our children's education.

According to Don Biddle, countries around the world are replacing their standard curriculum with classes which they consider more important. Replacing a class such as physical education for music during the school day allows every child to be involved. Some students may not be involved in music because they do not have time for it after school. Since many students are involved in activities outside of school, replacing a class in the daily schedule could allow more time for other extracurricular activities and necessities like homework. A student could then be involved in both city sports and music. If a class could not fully be replaced, an option is to alternate music with another class. Music can easily be alternated with other curriculum over the course of a semester to maximize the benefits of both classes.

An article in *Teaching Music* refers to a school which may hold its program "after school" ("Pay"). By not putting the music program in the regular school day, students have more choices in which classes they can take during the actual school day. They can take more diverse classes which will expand their intellectual horizons. Parents also have the choice of a productive activity like music for their children instead of the traditional daycare. Because the school day is short, students have more time to practice after school is over. It allows for the amount of time needed for students to learn about the music they are playing. Students in turn become more skilled and confident in their musical endeavors.

Another option is to expand the school day. Making the day longer not only eliminates an after school day care, but also allows every child to have the opportunity to be a part of a music program. Since a longer school day allows for more activities, a music class becomes more accessible and students can fit more into their daily schedules. Not only are the fundamental classes incorporated in a student's curriculum, but also important developmental classes like music round out the student's overall school experience. According to Heinz Holtappels, "such a school will offer opportunities to shape the school more intensively; the school becomes a space for learning, playing, and experiencing" (Holtappels).

In charting which path seems the most beneficial, we must remember that music should be made available for every child. In replacing or substituting a class for music, not only are other valuable classes put aside, but there is also the problem of having enough time for students to practice the music. Since music takes a vast amount of time to learn and practice, the time period allotted during school may not be enough to gain the most benefits. On the other hand, after school programs can allow as much time as needed. Yet, there is a dilemma. It does not make the music program available to every student. If we want to make a music program available to all students and still have an adequate amount of time to practice and learn, expanding the school day is the answer. It gives every student the opportunity to excel in music by ensuring enough time to learn and practice.

Music can contribute an infinite amount to children's lives. It releases emotion, builds skills, and even improves intellect. With so many benefits, music is an important part of our school systems. We cannot let "a lack of time" wedge itself between our children and their full education. Therefore, we must become as active as possible to retain our school programs. There is no excuse for denying a child music. All children should have the opportunity to express

themselves through music. Robert B. Smith probably stated it best, "music for every child and every child for music" (14).

Works Cited

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Mr. Genre's Comments: *The assignment for this particular essay was a Classical Argument.*

To be successful, the students had to meet certain basic features including a well-defined issue, a clear position, a convincing argument, a reasonable tone, and to include arguments made by those with opposing views with appropriate responses. Donielle met all of these criteria in an excellent manner, but what truly made the essay stand out was the passion behind her arguments seen only through the writing without becoming maudlin or using emotional appeals. I leave you to read her essay and experience for yourself a true issue worthy of thought.