Philosophy of Music Education

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Music education is a critical part of every young person’s well-rounded education. As has been the standard for many years, however, music education should not be strictly an ensemble education. It is a multi-faceted, engaging experience that evolves with its students. With a wide array of musical varieties for students to explore, music education can be used as a vehicle for students to reach many different levels of achievement. It is an opportunity for students to grow both in their critical thinking skills and cognitive development. On top of that, because music engages both the left and right side of the brain, it plays a big role for the development of a student’s personality and individual creativity. Lastly, these benefits tie in with the social and communication skills that students gain from interacting with their peers to make music education a needed, influential subject with a plethora of unique benefits.

Music plays a vital role as a standalone vehicle for learning. First of all, it opens up emotional connections in a student’s mind, and allows them to explore themselves in a new way. Secondly, music inhibits a simultaneous use of the both left brain and right brain processes, which is very unique from other content-areas. Students are required to not only use analytical skills to read notation and interpret passages, but also engage in a creative process in order to let emotion and individualism develop in their sounds. This dual-purpose cognitive activation is beneficial to development, and is largely exclusive to the musical experience. Although, while music does have these unique positive traits, it is not limited as a mutually exclusive subject. There is also a huge capacity In terms of co-teaching with other subjects because music utilizes many of the same skills as the other vital curricular areas. For instance, problem solving and critical analysis skills used in mathematics are put in to practice as musicians interpret notes, rhythms, melodic contours, and harmonies which are all based on mathematic relationships. In a similar way, a student’s ability level in other subjects is heightened through the similar practice of skills in a music classroom. As teachers collaborate to create these cross-curricular ties, there is an overarching ideal that they all should strive for: Hold all students to high standards of achievement in order to teach them persistence, hard-work, and goal-setting; however, they should also all have an environment that is not judgmental or overbearing. Students need a safe place so that they can freely develop a sense of self and grow as human beings, while also making mistakes. Mistakes provide the biggest opportunity for growth, so it is of the utmost important that students have a learning environment in which they can make mistakes for the sake of improvement. This is especially true in the music classroom because of its innate relationship with emotions and individual creativity. If music educators provide a community-style learning environment, students will grow as individuals and create a sense of self-efficacy with teacher guidance through a process of trial and error in their classrooms.

In order to accomplish these lessons that music has to offer, the music educator must provide a diverse and accessible classroom learning environment. Julia Eklund Koza (University of Wisconson-Madison) brought up a largely important aspect of this diverse learning in her article *Multicultural Approaches to Music Education*: “...because some music from outside the traditional European American canon does not lend itself easily to large-group performance, multiculturalists may need to carefully reexamine music education’s long-standing emphasis on large ensembles and whole-class activities.” This perfectly encapsulates the fact that not all students will gain something from traditional band, orchestra or choir experiences. That is why it is the responsibility of teachers to help students find their own enjoyment within the musical realm. While many students may benefit from playing the clarinet or trumpet, other students may find their musical passion in audio-engineering, composition, or a numerous amount of other activities. The most important point of all is this: As long as a student is forming a heathy relationship with music, they are enhancing their ability to go out and do their part in leaving the world better than they found it. That is why it is the responsibility of the teacher to facilitate a diverse musical experience within their schools so that students may find their passions within music, and direct those into the investment towards their own futures.

For some people, music is written off as non-essential or extra-curricular. As music educators, it is our job to show the world that this is simply not the case. The viability of music as an advanced, individualized curriculum for developing a student into a productive member of society is all too real for it to be written off as a grade-B, knockoff curriculum. It plays an exponential role in the growth of students, and therefore it should always be regarded on equal playing fields as other subject matters because every student deserves the life changing opportunity that music can provide.