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Public Funding For Music Education

Music has been around since man found out that a rock makes noise when it hits something. It has progressed since then, but the concept remains the same: to produce sounds that please the ear and stimulate the mind. Since there has been music, there have been people teaching and learning music. Music underwent massive changes around the time of the Renaissance. After the Renaissance, the music of Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Mozart and all of the other great composers still heard today changed the way people listened to music. Monks and musicians around this time established “rules” for music, still studied today as music theory. Because of this, music holds as much, if not more history than artifacts and architecture. Music is the one unifying language that the entire world shares, because no matter where one is, Beethoven’s “Ninth symphony” is still Beethoven’s “Ninth symphony”. Even though music education is proven to have a profound effect on the body and improve spatial- temporal skills which are necessary to math and science, public funding for music education is being depleted immensely.

Students who have had music education have a proven advantage over students who do not. There have been innumerable studies on the effects of music education on students’ performance in the classroom. One such study of 237 second graders conducted by Amy Graziano, Matthew Peterson and Gordon Shaw compared some students who had been using a math computer game in conjunction with keyboard

lessons to students who were taught with only the game. The students who were taking keyboard lessons scored 27% higher on a math test than their peers. This study led to the conclusion that music training is far superior to computer training in dramatically enhancing children's abstract reasoning skills, necessary to learning math and science (Nelson). Music training is not only beneficial to young children; the College-Bound Seniors National Report of 2001 showed that students in music performance averaged fifty-seven points higher than average in the verbal portions of the SAT and forty-one points higher on sections. Students in music theory classes averaged sixty-three points higher than average on verbal portions of the SAT and forty-four points higher on math sections (Nelson). Not only does music education benefit students in the classroom, but the Texas Commission on Drug and Alcohol Abuse found that band and orchestra students report the lowest lifetime and current use of alcohol, tobacco and other illicit drugs. Music doesn't only effect the behavior of a person. In a study by musicologist Julius Portnoy, music was found to change metabolic rates and blood pressure, as well as effect digestion and energy levels. In the same study, merely fifteen minutes of calm, classical music like Mozart or Brahms was found to have the same affect as a dose of valium.

Music has a proven effect on the brain as well. Researchers under the direction of Lisa Chipongian came up with a vast, complex mathematical equation for the enhancement of the spatial- temporal portion of the brain and, after this equation was put into a computer, it came out sounding like Mozart and having the appearance of a constantly shifting, colorful Native-American design. This led to the conclusion that listening to Mozart can actually boost spatial- temporal intelligence. Further study

proved this conclusion to be correct. What is now called the “Mozart Effect” is being widely used with young children and adults alike. Several studies have shown that listening to Mozart for only ten minutes can boost spatial- temporal intelligence by up to thirty-three percent. Although the majority of this wears off after anywhere from ten to thirty minutes, continued exposure of young children to Mozart has proven to increase their math and reading skills as well as their attention span by up to forty-two percent in comparison to their peers.

Despite all of the readily- available facts that prove how necessary music is to a well- rounded education, funding for music education is being cut to pieces. As schools cut down to make the minimal amount of federal money that they are receiving go as far as possible, music and the arts are among the first to go. According to the National Education Association, Yonkers, NY alone got rid of 233 teaching positions in one year to save money. About 120 of those were music and art teachers. Although the U.S. Senate recently approved \$35.7 million that would have level- funded the Arts Education Program in 2006, the House of Representatives knocked this bill down and approved zero funding for music and arts education. This leaves many music programs with absolutely no public funding whatsoever. The only way these programs can keep going is to do their own fundraising, and one would have to sell a lot of chocolate- chip cookies to buy a violin.

Despite innumerable studies that prove music’s benefits, funding continues to be drained like water out of a bathtub. There is already an immense void in the education of many young people, and if we are not careful, music as we know it will become a thing of the past. So what can be done? Get in touch with a senator from your state and

ask them to support federal funds for music education. Get involved in volunteering in a school in your area. One of the main reasons that music programs are cut out of schools' curriculums is because the schools can't afford to keep the position. You will be touching a little bit of the future and ensuring that music will continue on for at least one more generation.

Works Consulted

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