

Students Help Reveal Stunning Benefits of Band and Chorus

Music courses have tremendous positive impact according to research and the personal experiences of two University School students. Here are just a few of our combined findings.

Music Classes Help Students Perform Better Academically

Sarah Gordon, University School senior:

“Music helps you retain information and have better math skills.

“Learning how to read music is one of the more beneficial things I've learned in my life because it seems to translate from the stage to the classroom to life.

“You also learn extreme team work skills, and gain a confidence that may help you make a better presentation in English or answer a question in science class.

“Just this year, Mr. Walker started an honors band. Members run the band through musical warm-up exercises every morning. All three [participants] were shy, but this has caused them to take initiative and develop leadership skills.”

Research:

- Students of the arts outperform their non-arts peers on the SAT according to reports by the College Entrance Board. (To the tune of 57 points higher on verbal and 41 on the math portion.)¹
- Music is the only one of the seven intelligences identified in the brain that utilizes all seven simultaneously. Thus students who participate in music courses exercise more of their brain than in any other course they take in school.¹
- Sight-reading has been referred to as a “game of mental anticipation.” Good sight-reading helps students to process key information quickly and efficiently, providing an overview of tasks that lay ahead.²
- Considering med school? Physician and biologist Lewis Thomas studied the undergrad majors of med school applicants and found that 66% of music majors who applied were admitted, the HIGHEST percentage of any group. (44% of biochemistry majors were admitted.) - as reported in “The Case for Music in the Schools,” Phi Delta Kappan¹

Music Classes Broaden Student Horizons

Zachary Laurence, University School junior:

“There are numerous peers who would have never normally done theater, but who ended up doing so because they had so much fun in chorus.

“You may not typically see football players play piano in public schools, but at USchool, they allow you the opportunity to do all these different things. Last year, we had a bunch of football players, and they loved it.

“When you’re in chorus, you feed off each other’s emotions and abilities and learn to blend. You make a lot of friends, and you have fun. When people join, they wonder ‘why haven’t I been doing this the entire time?’

“You won’t have stage fright anymore after having sung Mozart in front of the student body.”

Research:

- "The musician is continually making decisions on tempo, tone, intonation, style, rhythm, balance, phrasing, and feeling--training the brain to become incredibly good at organizing and conducting numerous activities at once. Dedicated practice of this orchestration can have a great payoff for lifelong attentional skills, intelligence, and ability for self-knowledge and expression."
- Ratey John J., MD. A User's Guide to the Brain.³
- "The very best engineers and technical designers in the Silicon Valley industry are, nearly without exception, practicing musicians." - Grant Venerable, The Paradox of the Silicon Savior.³

Music Classes Can Lead to Scholarships & Professional Careers

Sarah:

"No matter what kind of singer you are, you want to have the musical knowledge that Mr. Gress and Mr. Walker teach because they are your #1 supporters.

"You learn to control your voice, your diaphragm, and you learn how to dissect music so while you're jamming or having fun, you are making music correctly.

"My sister (Annie Gordon, Class of '08) is a senior now at Oberlin Conservatory of Music. She just received a huge scholarship to go to Carnegie Mellon University where she will continue her flute studies in hopes of joining an orchestra when she graduates. We are so proud of her, and a lot of her success is thanks to Mr. Walker.

"By the way, her best friend (Samantha Leibowitz, Class of '08) is a senior at NYU's Steinhardt School of Music and she also is going to graduate school for Opera thanks to Mr. Gress.

"These teachers truly touch your lives and open your eyes through their classes. You can even find something you may want to do for the rest of your life."

Research:

- Band and chorus reinforce skills of cooperation -- highly-sought-after qualities in today's business world, especially in high-tech contexts.¹
- Want a call-back? Session players for the TV and recording industry must read fluently as time and money are precious.²
- "SMASH" opening credits: "She may be green, but she certainly is trained."

Surprise Benefit:

- Sight reading provides quick-scanning and trouble spot recognition analogous with advanced driving skills.²

Final Note: Chorus opportunities at University School begin as early as second grade, and band opportunities begin as early as fourth grade. In Middle School, the options expand to include Strings (orchestra), Concert Band, Chorus and Guitar programs. In Upper School, the same options apply but students may also participate in Jazz.

References:

1. The Benefits of Being in a Band. (n.d.) Retrieved May 7, 2012, from <http://www.lincoln.leon.k12.fl.us/classes/band/pdf/Benefits.pdf>
2. Sight Reading Explained. (n.d.) Retrieved May 7, 2012 from <http://www.squidoo.com/sight-reading-explained>
3. Benefits of Music Education. (n.d.) Retrieved May 7, 2012 from <http://www.childrensmusicworkshop.com/advocacy/benefits.html>.