Sing Up Primary

Sing Up Membership will:
★ Improve learning outcomes for pupils across the curriculum
★ Support musical learning
★ Bring magic to concerts & celebrations
★ Improve children's wellbeing and happiness in school

www.singup.org

The side effects of music

If playing in a drum circle increases oxytocin and learning an instrument decreases aggression, what else might be possible?

Dr Dawn Rose

Within schools, learning an instrument is sometimes seen as a form of brain training. However, increasing a child's intelligence is only one aspect of development - and of providing a rounded education. While music may indeed 'make you smarter', encouraging students to learn an instrument may support other important aspects of their development too.

Considering whether a student has a particular musical 'talent' may be unhelpful, as it presumes too from thinking about the potential that involvement in music holds for all children, including those with the unservicing ability to hit the triangle at just the wrong time, every time. While it may be the case that if you practise for 10,000 hours you'll become a musical expert, what about children who practice and play for fun, but might never be described as, or septo to be, musicians?

Fluid intelligence

On the cognitive front, there's evidence that learning music increases a child's fluid intelligence. This involves skills such as problem solving, undoubtedly important if we want our children to develop flexible thinking. Playing an instrument also develops children's fine and gross motor skills, as well as helping them to understand the nature and consequence of the force they use (when they blow or strum, for example) - skills that sporty kids may pick up elsewhere.

Brain development

Learning an instrument in an individual setting helps children develop the skills of co-ordination and planning and executing complex sequences. It also supports children's brain development by encouraging them to constantly monitor auditory, visual and tactile information all at the same time - no mean feat.

Social bonding

Playing music in a group and working towards something as an end of term performance supports children's social skills. In fact, singing in a choir or playing as a family, or in other group formats, has been proved beneficial for mental health.

All this evidence points to the fact that engaging in music promotes wellbeing and positive mental health.

Dr Dawn Rose

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Health music

All this evidence points to the fact that engaging in music promotes wellbeing and positive mental health. It provides opportunities to meaningful interactions and the chance to accomplish something. It is the process that is important, and this is known as 'flow'. In this, people who don't identify as musicians can also benefit by working with musicians, through therapeutic song writing, for example.

Investing in musical learning does require long-term support. Children often need help to learn how to gain pleasure from practising. However, if young people can be encouraged to enjoy the process of learning, it can help them to apply themselves to other areas. Back in 2012, the government set out its national plan for music and committed to providing all children with an instrument. Regardless of the success of this, local music hubs have been provided with extra funding to fulfil local needs - we just need to access them.

There is a promising future for the use of music to support wellbeing. Nurturing a culture of creativity in schools supports the development of important personal skills, and can make our children more engaged and fulfilled, ultimately supporting their psychological wellbeing.

Dr Dawn Rose

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