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Effects of Music Education on the Academic Achievement
of Elementary School Students

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Senior Capstone
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Abstract

There are many benefits that music education can bring to the classroom. However, due to current legislation such as the No Child Left Behind Act and other political powers, music education classes are diminishing along with positive outlets for emotional and cognitive support they have on elementary school students. The purpose of this senior capstone is to examine the benefits of music education on the academic achievement of elementary school students through the use of literature reviews, teacher interviews, and student surveys. The findings reveal that music education can foster student learning beyond the classroom as well as to their future careers.

Key Words: elementary, music, academic achievement

Introduction and Background

“ABCDEFGH...”. Imagine a group of preschool students sitting in a circle singing the alphabet song, learning the order of the twenty-six letters. They are happy and enjoying their time together as they are singing as a class. Students have been using songs to learn the basics of education from decades ago. As music has been a fascinating aspect of society since the beginning of time, it is also a common way to express emotion whether it be through lyrics or orchestras. By transcribing song lyrics into ‘lyrics at rest’ on the page (as opposed to those ‘in motion’ in performance), we can pay close attention to the effects of meter, rhythm, sound, and figurative language (Kreilkamp, 2017). Lyrics are poetry with music attached to it because musicians pay attention to meter, rhythm, sound, and figurative language. Songs are similar to poetry as it is a way to foster relationships through personal communications through self-expression. Child-centered motions to have musical creativity in the classroom bring specific influences on the curriculum, to find a way to move forward in understanding the development of key ideas through music (Cox, 1999). Unfortunately, the older children become, the less likely of a chance that they will have music education in their schooling.

One of the main reasons children go to school today is to teach them basic functioning skills to be a member of society. In order for adults to get a job and start a career, they must start out as children and go to school. Without a musical background in schools, students will not have the maximum brain function, long-term memory or an improvement of brain change. Studies have shown that students are more alert in class when they have music throughout their daily lessons.

Two hundred and forty-nine students were involved in a study, divided into a control group and an experimental group. Both groups attended the same videotaped lecture, with

the addition of classical music for the experimental group. Just after the lecture, both groups had to fill out a multiple choice questionnaire (MCQ) aimed to assess their learning during the lecture. The MCQ score of the experimental group was significantly higher than that of the control group. (Dosseville, 2012, p. 260).

It is a teacher's best interest to teach some sort of music to their students, to keep them awake and alert to learn other subjects. When students have music in their lives starting at a young age, they have a higher chance of processing and producing speech sounds, retaining information, controlling behaviors, improvement for decision making and problem-solving and decrease their chances of dyslexia. For example, specific classroom activities that involve music and reading helps teachers enhance both reading and music skills (Gauthier, 2005).

There should be no surprise that music has multiple positive aspects when in schools. When students have the opportunity to learn music, they are excited and happy to take a break from learning "by the book" and just sitting all day listening to the teacher lecture. During a project in my class, students had the opportunity to take a song that is completely unrelated to a specific event, and make it relative in a clear example of understanding and long-lasting knowledge (Ferroni, 2013). As research has shown, music increases the blood flow in the brain. Studies have found that short bursts of music increase the blood flow to the left hemisphere of the brain. That can be helpful when you need a burst of energy (Scott, 2004). This could be wonderful for teachers when they see their students slowing down or falling asleep. When schools incorporate music in its curriculum, it allows students to relax and decrease their stress and anxiety about school. For students, music classes are not necessarily something they participate in for a grade, or to put on a college application but students participate in music classes because they enjoy them and want to be there (Kalivretenos, 2015). Students enjoy being

apart of a community of musicians however when a school does not have that, students no longer find happiness in coming to school, let alone receiving an education.

The decline of music education began back in the 2001- 2002 school year when the U.S. Congress enacted the No Child Left Behind Act, (NCLB) under President George W. Bush. Ever since then, music programs across the country have been washed out. The primary purpose of the NCLB was to close the achievement gap among public school students, essentially leaving no child behind. However, this made closing the achievement gap to be tied to basic school funding based upon a school's adequate yearly progress (AYP) within the four main subjects: math, science, language arts, and social studies. All subjects (including music) that are not tied to funding received less attention in schools which is unfortunate. For low-income students, public education may be the only opportunity for students to learn music education for free because they cannot afford music lessons because they are among the most expensive activities for children (Olsen, 2017). Not teaching music education deprives low-income students of yet another aspect of public education that they could use to succeed. Children from low-income families, who might benefit the most from such services, remain the least likely to receive them (Magnuson, 2010). Low- income schools may not have enough funds for full music education programs, but that is no excuse why teachers cannot integrate music into their curriculum. As I had eight years of music education in my schools, I am passionate about the arts. It is devastating to me when I learn about schools that do not have music education programs for their students. I feel like their education is getting robbed. I was fortunate enough that when I did my service learning through California State University Monterey Bay (CSUMB), I was at a school that had

music education for its' students. I got to observe how music education differed from when I took music education and how it has changed over time especially in schools that can afford it.

As a future teacher, and as a prospective civil servant to my community, my primary research question is: How does music education affect the academic achievement of elementary school students? Related questions are: What does research show about the effects of music education on the academic achievement of students at the elementary school level? What happened after the No Child Left Behind legislation was enacted? How has it affected music education at the school district level and the students' attrition? Are there some changes in music education? According to teachers, how does music education affect the academic achievement of students and the growth of their learning? What could teachers do to integrate music across the curriculum and outside the classroom? Are there resources available for teachers to include music education in the curriculum? In order to answer these questions, I will start with a review of the current academic literature on this topic.

Literature Review

In this Literature Review section, there will be a discussion on how students can benefit from music education during their schooling through the section *Benefits of the Music Education on Academic Achievement*. There will also be a discussion on how the No Child Left Behind Act affected music education in schools through the section *No Child Left Behind and its Effects on the Music Department*. There will be another discussion on what kind of State Content Standards music education has in the state of California through the section *State Content Standards and the Music Education*. The last part of this Literature Review will discuss how music education is

declining in schools and how that affects children's education through the section *Decline of Music Education in Education Today*.

There are many benefits that music education can bring to the classroom. However, due to current legislation such as the No Child Left Behind Act and other political powers, music education classes are diminishing, along with positive outlets for emotional and cognitive support they can have on elementary school students. A well-rounded education should include a specific amount of time to teach music education with equal opportunities and experiences for all students. Music education encourages students to express themselves through a different form of communication. Music can also reflect how students feel emotionally and physiologically while developing how to problem solve in different ways. Students with circumstances such as disabilities and who are English Language Learners may be able to connect more with other students through the use of music. This allows all students to collaborate with others who may not feel comfortable communicating without music. Young people participate in arts activities has increasingly come to be viewed as capable of playing a valuable role in both re-engaging 'at-risk' youth with mainstream education and providing a means through which communities might combat social exclusion (Rimmer, 2009). Yet, with all the accounts for benefits, there is not enough time or money to foster students' needs within the normal amount of music education needed to support their education. In public education, music has been added to the common core standards but in a very small dose. However, teachers tend to ignore this part of the common core standards to focus more on the academic portion of teaching.

Benefits of the Music Education on Academic Achievement

Since music is defined by sound and time, when added to education, this can involve being taught how to play an instrument, singing or using body parts to make a sound. Music education is an important feature in improving the academic achievement of elementary school students. Music education allows multiple subjects to connect over the curriculum, helps accelerate the learning process and promotes group problem-solving in a less pressured setting. It is shown that the concept of improvisation in relation to personal and social identity may be transferred to forms of community engagement through music (Smilde, 2016). School curriculum was built to be able to teach students to apply what they have been taught to the outside world after they are done with their education. Finding students own musical individuality can have teachers foster practices such as critical thinking skills they can use long term (Woodford, 1996). When students are able to have music education combined with academic learning, they are more willing to be more creative in all situations, take bigger risks and use their critical thinking skills more. According to a retired teacher of more than forty years of K-12 teaching in the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) and is currently working part-time again, Mr. Pannone states that “there have been studies done that have shown instrumental music has increased academic achievement. One place that this has been proven was in the Harmony Project of the Bay Area. Students who played instruments scored at least ten points higher on tests than students who did not play an instrument” [Mr. Pannone, personal communication, March 22, 2019]. [See Appendix 1]. Music education increases the growth of students learning by bringing multi intelligence at once. According to a retired elementary school teacher of thirty-seven years in the SFUSD, Ms. Giambruno “ music education is multidisciplinary where it can cross over to different subjects to allow students to learn music

through math, history or reading.” [Ms. Giambruno, personal communication, March 19, 2019]. [See Appendix 1]. Music not only brings multiculturalism within the classroom but also gives students a break from learning the academics directly.

Teaching students music education in schools allows students to use their brain in a different way. It approaches the “whole” child while teaches students an understanding of the arts in physical aspects. For example, according to a teacher of thirty-five years in the SFUSD, Ms. Pacini states that “teaching music allows students to develop fine motor skills and changes their attitude towards academics”. [Ms. Pacini, personal communication, March 22, 2019]. [See Appendix 1]. As students learn about music, they may find themselves gifted in a different way other than in academics. Students who struggle with academics may find themselves feeling connected with music and more socially accepted. When students find joy in music class, they may start coming to school just to be in band or choir because as they start to enjoy learning music, this could be their favorite part of their day.

As students stay in school because of music, attendance rates increase. Students tend to never miss their music classes because it is their “bright” spot of their day. As they find creativity and release self-expression in music, it increases their self-esteem of doing something outside the classroom. According to a retired teacher who taught twenty-four years in music and twenty years in music for middle school in the SFUSD, Mr. Giambruno “when students show emotional growth, they express their human experiences that they do not get the opportunity to do so in their academic classes”. [Mr. Giambruno, personal communication, March 19, 2019]. [See Appendix 1]. As students stay in school to learn about music, their test scores also increase. Students who appreciate music in school, tend to show more discipline to practice and become

more skilled. According to Ms. Pacini, “this discipline is transferable to studying their academics. For example, in Texas, it was proven that students who had music education had higher SAT scores”. [Ms. Pacini, personal communication, March 22, 2019]. [See Appendix 1]. Having music education has multiple positive aspects in schools for students to improve on their academic achievements, so it is a shame when music starts to be pulled from schools.

No Child Left Behind and its Effects on the Music Department

When the NCLB act was put to action, there was not enough funding for music education and other programs through the schools in the United States. According to Mr. Pannone “ the NCLB act was a ridiculous goal that put all the responsibility on educators to get all students to the one-hundred proficient level. The intent was good, but there was not enough sufficient research, as it did not take into account teacher limitations” [Mr. Pannone, personal communication, March 22, 2019]. [See Appendix 1]. During this time in schools, multiple students’ were still behind and did not affect the students academic achievement level to increase. Students who were still struggling had to be put into intervention classes which became a never-ending testing cycle. This was President Bush’s attempt to improve test scores for underachieving students. This new education system, tied schools federal funding to how well a school performed on annual standardized state tests.

Standardized state tests are a way to measure schools yearly progress in their students’ academic learning. If schools met a certain score, they were given federal funding. If they did not meet a certain score, the schools funding was cut. As schools funding began to decrease, the arts and music education programs were very vulnerable to cuts in the school as these programs were the first to be cut from schools (Krieg, 2011 p. 660).

Since students are not tested in the standardized tests for music education, they are inordinarily deemed less important in schools. Teachers are now pressured to teach as much information as

possible to students in a year and have no time to do anything fun that has to do with music education. According to an educator for forty-three years and an administrator for twenty years in the SFUSD, Mr. Pacini states “in San Francisco schools, students who were struggling could not take elective classes anymore. They had to take interventive classes instead to strengthen their weaknesses in their academics.” [Mr. Pacini, personal communication, March 22, 2019]. [See Appendix 1]. With the new Common Core standards, teachers now feel pressured more than ever to teach students as much as possible to students in the year, leaving out fun and enjoyable opportunities for students to learn through field trips, art projects and teaching students using the performing arts. Since schools are more focused on reading skills and math arithmetic, during recent attempts to pursue music education as an interdisciplinary subject have been limited due to budget cuts (Jorgensen, 1995). With the focus on schools turned towards testing, the quality of student work has declined as all students want to know is what they will be tested on and when. Over the years, some school faculty have even expressed concern for their students’ education with the lack of music education in schools, but they are influenced by the threat of cutting the school’s budget from low test scores, leaving them to not do anything about it.

A nationwide study, titled “Striking a Chord: The Public’s Hopes and Beliefs for K-12 Music Education in the United States 2015, surveying 1,000 teachers and 800 parents found strong support for music education at all grade levels. According to the survey conducted in January-February 2015, sixty-three percent of teachers and 57 percent of parents believe music education should be a required subject in middle school (Conway, 2010, p. 53).

Teachers are locked down because of all the standards they have to teach to students unfortunately, not many of the standards are connected to music and the arts.

State Content Standards and the Music Education

Standards can be positive and a useful tool when used the right way. They should be spread in all aspects of education and have an equal amount of weight in all subjects. Common core puts creativity back in the classroom, gives students a deep dive in content, ratchets up rigor, is collaborative, advances equity and gets kids college ready (Long, 2013). In the California State Standards, music, dance, theater, and visual arts are all under the Visual and Performing Arts standards while each academic like math and science have their own category setting an unequal balance. In the music category of these standards, students learn how to create, perform, understand, respond and connect to music. For example one of the standards include generating simple rhythmic, melodic and harmonic phrases within AB and ABA forms that convey expressive intent (Common Core State Standards, 2013). This standard allows students to understand different forms of music by creating rhythms and melodies while teaching students about music vocabulary. This allows students to learn with a diverse type of thinking, weaving their own emotion and creativity into their work. While some teachers involve music in their classroom through videos or CD's, it is rare that schools have full music programs for their students.

Decline of Music Education in Education Today

Without music education in our curriculum, schools are not properly giving our students a well-rounded education. A child lacking education in music cannot attain full creative knowledge. Music education also increases cognitive process, promotes risk-taking, increases self-confidence, motivation, focus, collaborative learning and persistence in completing tasks (Wilsoon, 2018). It is important for students to enter the workforce with at least a bare minimum of basic music education. In contrast, listening to music with lyrics may actually help people

working on repetitive or mundane tasks, perhaps because the distracting nature of lyrical music can provide a kind of relief from the monotony of boring work (Grills, 2017). Schools are depriving students to learn about music education therefore, affecting this country's future workforce and welfare. It is important that students are given the opportunity to be exposed to all subjects to discover their strengths and weaknesses. This also allows students to develop an interest in subjects they may not know about before they go to school. School is supposed to give students the time and space to try to new things that they may not be able to when they get a job. It is a time where students are given the opportunity to explore what they want to do with their lives. It should allow students to be excited to learn and not just feel pressured to know math and reading. Academics such as math and reading are critical for students to learn to succeed in the work world, but school should appeal to students creative sides too. According to Ms. Pacini "music education opens students to discover who they are as a person while giving them the freedom to use their musicianship ability [Ms. Pacini personal communication, March 22, 2019]. [See Appendix 1]. Teaching students about music not only prepares them for success in their lives when they are no longer students but also requires them to analyze the music they are currently listening to and what type of music they will listen to in the future.

Music today is easily attainable, with cellphone streaming, Youtube or soundtracks within movies. This generation of music is filled with not only explicit language but also filled with messages containing sex, drugs or money.

Most of it has a great beat, catchy lyrics, and the type of music is what we grew up within our generation. The music is repetitive, and the lyrics sometimes involve swearing and the same typical situations, like "going to a club tonight", "let's get this party started", or the typical thought that every song has to be about love, falling in love, being in love, or something having to do with love (Gianna, 2011).

If music education is taught in school students can learn about a different taste of music and academic and music teachers can teach students about classical composers like Bach or Mozart and how they left an impact around the world. This opens up the opportunity for students not only to learn about music but a major history lesson during the eras these composers were alive, producing a multi-disciplinary education. Students are so caught up with listening to music that they have a hard time disconnecting themselves in class. As stated by Ms. Pacini “when I taught high school, I had to tell my students constantly to take out their earbuds and listen to what I had to say. If it wasn’t for me, my students probably would have never even listened to music from Bach or Mozart, so I am glad that I could open up their range of music genres and expose different composers to them even if it was just for one year”. [Ms. Pacini, personal communication, March 22, 2019]. [See Appendix 1]. The benefits of integrating music within the curriculum or in music classes can be of many positive outcomes, but it is up to the teachers and schools to offer that opportunity to their students.

Even though politicians are constantly making changes to the public school education system, and the NCLB is no longer in play, the effects of it do not seem to be disappearing anytime soon. Research has shown, that it is no longer possible for music teaching specialists to be in all schools and it is rare when school districts do have them. If a school does not recognize the value of music education, the risk of music suffering from serious budget cuts is heightened. Too often, school leaders and parents lack a true understanding of the importance of music education in a child’s development (Pergola, 2014). So now the responsibility is on the academic teachers to involve music in their curriculum and classroom. However, researchers concluded that teachers do not feel confident in their own skills to teach music; therefore teacher training

programs are needed to foster basic music skills. Though there appears to be many workshops and writing compositions on how to approach teaching, there seem to be no published teachers' manuals or curricula on how to blend and teach music in the classroom (Minor, 2007). Educators need to take initiative to teach music to their students in order to give their students the best education possible.

Methods and Procedures

Since the time I took GWAR in junior year, I have known what topic I wanted to do my capstone on if the opportunity arose. I felt I would be more organized in writing my capstone if I had my topic in mind since junior year, so I have been thinking and brainstorming about for a year. As I was working on my prospectus paper with the help of Dr. Thao, I was able to develop a clear and concise topic. To answer my primary and secondary research questions, I collected many peer-reviewed articles and books that were related to my questions. I also interview three retired teachers, a part-time teacher, and one full-time administrator. I also conducted a survey for college students to answer questions pertaining to my research questions. Through my library research, I was able to collect current information related to my topic. As I was doing my research, I had a few obstacles along the way, however that did not keep me from completing my research thoroughly.

Throughout the course of my interviews, I wanted to make sure I asked questions pertaining to the benefits regarding the implementation of music education in the curriculum and what it did to students' growth of learning. I wanted to ask my teachers what information they knew about the NCLB act because this was when funding for music started to decrease. I also wanted to know why they felt music was necessary to have in schools in order for students to

succeed to the best of their ability (See Appendix 1 for Teacher/Principal Interview Questions). After I conducted the interviews, I conducted an anonymous survey with college students around campus to find out how they felt about the importance of having music education in schools (See Appendix 2 for Student Survey Questions). I was interested to compare how young adult opinions differed from teachers opinions on having music education in schools. I wanted to find out if students felt music education helps them retain information if they feel there is enough music education in schools and if not how much should be added. I was interested in learning if these students felt that music education can affect the self-confidence and self-esteem of students. I wanted to ask college students because I feel that college students have a wide range of educational experiences and are in the process of completing a higher form of education, so they are quite knowledgeable with what is happening in the public school education system.

When developing my interview questions, I wanted to make sure to have questions that began with “how” and “what” because those are open-ended questions. I wanted the teachers to be able to explain their answers and not be stuck saying “yes” or “no”. I did build one closed-ended question, but I had my interviewees explain why they said their specific answers. When I was done developing my questions I thought about who I wanted to interview and I wanted to have a wide range of participants. I also wanted to make sure that I interviewed teachers that were either elementary teachers or music teachers, so they could relate to my topic. I also wanted someone who was not a teacher but someone who worked in the school district like a superintendent or a principal to give some insight about their opinions on the education system.

When developing my survey questions, I knew my questions had to be short and simple because college students do not have that much time to take a long survey. I also wanted to make

my questions easy to answer, so I thought closed-ended questions would be the best. However, I did want to develop some open-ended questions, so my participants could critically think and help me with my research. I did not want to have only “yes” or “no” questions, so I develop some statements and allowed students to choose how much they agreed with my statement. For example, students could choose strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree or disagree. I did not put “neutral” for any questions because I knew that if students saw that, more than likely they would pick that answer because they would not know or care to answer the question. This way they were forced to chose something that I could work within my data. I also wanted to have diverse answers, so I had questions that students could answer with a number amount. After developing my survey questions, Dr. Thao explained in class that if we sent out one hundred surveys, we would only get about 15% of them answered. I did not like those odds, so I felt if I went about my day and asked everyone that I saw per day, I would get way more answers than just 15%. I also felt this way was more personal instead of sending an email because this way I would ask my friends or whoever I would see right then and there. All they had to do was to take two minutes out of their day to fill it out and it would be over. Since I know a large number of people this way was the easiest for me and it was more exciting. I got to see the excitement my friends had on filling out my survey and being apart of my capstone.

After I established my questions, I was thinking about what the best way to conduct my survey was on a fast-paced campus. I was wondering if I should go old-fashioned and print out copies of my questions to have them feel it out by hand. I would then collect the papers and tally up the answers, but I thought that would take more time from me to figure out the percentages. Dr. Thao recommended that we use SurveyMonkey for our surveys but I never used that before.

I remember getting multiple surveys from google forms from people on campus and other people doing their capstone that way, so I thought I try it out because I use google docs and Gmail all the time. If I could not figure out google forms, then I would try SurveyMonkey. Setting up google forms was quite simple and very organized, so I decided to use google forms. I would always have my phone with me wherever I would go, and since I would have my survey on my phone, it was always easy access for me to give students to answer my survey. After I got my first couple of surveys, I wanted to see how google forms were giving me the results. I learned that they calculated the answers for me with the percentages and laid out all the written questions in the order that I receive them. Google forms saved me time and space with my answers and was a safe place for me to collect my data. Between the vast amount of research I conducted, the interviews and the survey, I believe that my approach has helped me to thoroughly answer my primary and secondary research questions and gave me completed results.

Results, Findings, and Discussion

Using my methods and procedures of interviewing and surveying, my secondary research questions will be answered in this next section. I will describe my results and findings by answering questions relating to my primary research question. My secondary research questions were developed with the help of Professor Thao as I wanted to make sure that my secondary research questions related to my primary research question and topic. These questions relate to my topic because they ask about the No Child Left Behind Act, the integration with music inside and outside the classroom and what kind of resources are available for teachers to teach music education.

What does research show about the effects of music education on the academic achievement of students at the elementary school level?

Through my research, my results indicate that not only do teachers but also students believe that music education can enhance students learning through integrating it in the curriculum. Having music education is necessary for students to receive all the benefits of a well-rounded education. Instruction of music education allows “brain breaks” for students to regain their strength and attention to improve their focus on their work. This allows a break from the drilling and memorization that happens in schools. As stated by Ms. Pacini “this gives an opportunity for students to shine in an area, because they do not shine in any other area in school”. [Ms. Pacini personal communication, March 22, 2019]. [See Appendix 1]. This gives students time to find motivation and well-deserved recognition among peers in another area. Through the conduction of a student survey [see Appendix 2], based upon sixty college participants of all ages, I have found that fifty-three percent (52%) strongly agree and forty-four percent (43%) agree that music education can help with the academic achievement in elementary schools. In addition to the students believing that music education is critical to their education, “music helps students relax. It is a time where students and teachers do not feel the pressure as much as academics. No one fears failure during this part of the day” [Mr. Giambruno, personal communication, March 19, 2019]. [See Appendix 1]. Music education is generally left out of the curriculum because of the amount of accountability that is placed on learning language arts and math which is measured in testing. In public schools, the joy of learning has decreased as students just go to school to get out. The mandates of the NCLB legislation have taken away the cognitive and emotional benefits that education has to offer. Students tend to become burnt out

faster as they advanced to each grade level and it seems going to school and learning becomes a job versus an educational learning opportunity.

The changes that are evident from joy-filled kindergartens to highly-structured upper elementary school classes have been evident. Students feeling good about learning and themselves, becomes discouraged, alienated, bored, or intimidated and ultimately learn to feel bad about school and lose the joy they once felt about discovery learning (Willis, 2019).

It is apparent that when students have music in their lives, they find more joy in their schooling as they gain more opportunities to learn. Music education opens the doors for students to learn about the world in a safe environment while learning about different people and cultures around the world.

What happened after the No Child Left Behind legislation was enacted? How has it affected music education at the school district level and the students' attrition? Are there some changes in music education?

Nowadays, teachers tend to save music to when they have time. For holidays, and the end of the year teachers put on performances to show their community members the music ability of their children. Schools only do musical activities when they have time for a special occasion, so when a school does not have time, students do not have music in their school lives at all.

It should not matter whether children attend a science magnet middle school, a for-profit elementary charter school, or a technical high school specializing in left-handed pipefitters schools should make time to teach music. This right is the most important non-negotiable in education. Children have a right to study music, a core subject. Children simply cannot achieve success, much less lead full lives without a balanced education that includes music and the other arts (Shuler, 2012, p. 8).

Unfortunately, it is hard to come by education that has any music involved these days. For example, when I was in elementary school the NCLB act was not put into place yet. My teachers had time to go on field trips and allow us to do fun activities. My school had a music program

that children could be apart of starting in the fourth grade. Education was colorful and fun for students because there was not substantial pressure from the government. It was stimulating unlike today, where students become hostile or angry towards their education. According to Mr. Giambruno, “when I first starting teaching, students enjoyed coming to school every day to learn. As the politicians changed the outcomes, teachers and students started to change their attitude outcomes as well [Mr. Giambruno, personal communication, March 19, 2019]. [See Appendix 1]. The consequences of not involving the arts will affect children long term.

According to my research fifty-six (56%) of students picked ten (ten being the highest) for how strongly they believed it is important to have music education in schools [Student Survey].

[Appendix 2]. Their creative instincts will be hindered and will lose a generation that cares for the arts. Students will not have the opportunity to learn about symphonies, ballets or the theater and will be less likely to appreciate cultures around the world. According to Mr. Pannone “children will go to school then go home, focused on passing their tests grades, not concern about what artists are doing in their community [Mr. Pannone, personal communication, March 22, 2019]. [See Appendix 1]. Recently, schools have cut out entire subjects to have enough time to focus on important topics for state testing. As Mr. Pannone states “learning is not about retaining something for long periods of time anymore. It is about if students can remember something until testing is over. No one cares if they can’t remember it for the next school year.

All the educators care about is the test scores. [Mr. Pannone, personal communication, March 22, 2019]. [See Appendix 1]. Students are now turned off with the amount of pressure is put on them to do well on tests which, therefore puts more pressure on the teachers to make the students focus so they can retain specific information for a short period of time.

According to teachers, how does music education affect the academic achievement of students and the growth of their learning?

Continuing with my research, forty-seven percent (47%) agree and forty-two percent (42%) strongly agree that music education can help increase test scores [Student Survey]. [Appendix 2]. Students, therefore are not as likely to get pushed farther behind in school when music is involved, as they express themselves freely using their emotions to enhance their learning. When students are given the opportunity to express themselves through music, students can center their energy and show flexibility through their process of learning through playing instruments or singing songs. This gives them focus to engage in learning in other ways besides sitting at a desk all day. This also gives teachers endless possibilities to teach their students through song and dance making each learning day unique. As students who are mostly aural (auditory-musical) learners, this is a great way for them to understand subjects without falling behind. Since technology has blossomed, teachers can now use songs from the internet to teach math, science and review lessons. Teachers have all these tools at their disposal and it is unfortunate when they go to waste and do not get used. Cultivating in children the capacity to render visual images of a musical piece requires that these children also acquire some musical and graphical knowledge and skills (Gutanu, 2015). By cultivating connections between music and academics subjects, educators are having their students develop traits necessary to become lifelong learners. Bringing music into the curriculum and classroom develops creative scenarios for students to critically think about different eras in time and how composers and songwriters used music to express themselves and solve difficult situations. Overall in my research, forty-two percent (42%) of students thought elementary schools should have music education at least three

times a week in order to fully activate the whole child learning [Student Survey]. [Appendix 2]. By not providing content in isolation, integration allows knowledge to flow from one domain to another. Creating different ways for students to learn through music, allows active hands-on experiences for children. From my research, a poll showed that fifty-two percent (52%) strongly agree and thirty-seven percent (37%) agree that music education can improve attendance rates [Student Survey]. [Appendix 2]. This allows students to enhance brain development by appealing to different sensory parts of the body like their ears and voice, changing their view and attitudes towards learning in school.

What could teachers do to integrate music across the curriculum and outside the classroom? Are there resources available for teachers to include music education in the curriculum?

Music schooling is a field in which networks of groups of individuals may share common purposes, meanings, and/or action ideas (Froehlich, 2009, p. 89). As students learn the value of music and how it can help them learn, they will not weep the emotional stress that school can cause them. As stated by Mr. Pannone, “it does not matter if students sing or play in tune, but matters, if they take these new, found learning experiences and not only apply them somewhere else but also enjoy themselves when they are learning something new through music” [Mr. Pannone, personal communication, March 22, 2019]. [See Appendix 1]. Having music in the classroom acts as an aid for student learning and can allow students to be a master at a specific topic. Some ways that students can learn through songs are music videos, playing guitar, or listening to a CD player [Student Survey]. [Appendix 2]. Music encourages students to learn in other ways by using their imagination. In my research, fifteen of those students felt that if they had any music education it would have helped with their academic success [Student Survey].

[Appendix 2]. Past research shows that relating sounds to visual images or words assists students in remembering lessons. From my research, thirteen of them wished they had some sort of music education in their elementary schooling, to help them remember lessons that they quickly forgot [Student Survey]. [Appendix 2]. Music also allows students to critically think about their emotions when they listen to specific types of music and allows them to make personal connections to each song. As stated by Mr. Pacini “when I was working at an art school, the Italian teacher would teach her students songs in order to remember certain words. Students always looked like they were having fun in this class because they learned through music” [Mr. Pacini, personal communication, March 22, 2019]. [See Appendix 1].

Throughout my education experience, music has played a pivotal role in my success. Without it, I would have learned differently and perhaps not done as well as I have in my schooling. Music integrated into my education has taught me about musicians that influenced today’s music, as well as given me multiple opportunities to learn rather than reading a textbook. By having such a personal experience with music education, I have witnessed first hand how music education can influence students at such a young age and how vital it is for them to succeed with their greatest potential. As a future educator, I want my students to come to school, ready to learn and not feel like coming to school is a chore. I want my students to learn how music can help them emotionally and cognitively. I believe that implementing music throughout the curriculum, benefits students tremendously and if students do not get the chance to learn through music, teachers are only negatively affecting the education of future generations. Although students are not officially tested in music, they still have to learn a certain amount of music. If teachers teach the curriculum through music, they will be able to teach more content as

this will save time. The educational needs of young adolescents require that curricula include a more expanded set of multiple integrative approaches, including new literacies that can be challenging, exploratory, integrative, and relevant (Mcdermott, 2017). This does not give educators complete freedom to go into depth about music, but some music education is better than none.

Recommendation

After I connected my research, my recommendation to fix the low amount of music education in schools is for educators to learn how to integrate music into their curriculum. They could do this by songs, dances or videos. Academic teachers should learn how to not only integrate music but also to teach students the value of music in their lives. This benefits students by learning songs relating to the core subjects [Student Survey]. [Appendix 2]. So, not only does music education inspire students to learn, but they also begin to enjoy learning as teachers can incorporate music into any subject. Students and teachers can work together to develop their own songs in a certain subject to help them remember information [Student Survey]. [Appendix 2]. Music education is wise to have in schools because not only do students enjoy it, but it also helps students retain information better, which then lead to increased test scores, therefore increasing the budgets for each school, which then leads to the possibility for schools to build full music programs.

Problems and Limitations

Attaining my information to answer my research questions was without difficulty. However, there were a few hills that I had to go over. Although they did not inhibit me from obtaining the proper information that I needed, this did slow down my research. I feel there are

limited resources that talk about the best way to integrate music into the curriculum. During my research, I came across multiple ways on how to use music education in the classroom, but then I ended up getting confused and started to blend the different ways into one way. I had to be careful to write down all the different ways that I read about and make sure to keep them separate. Another problem I came across is that I thought of tons of questions to ask during my interviews and surveys because I was very excited to do research on this topic. I had to study my questions and critically think what questions were necessary to ask and which related to my research. After I did my interviews and surveys, my brain started to formulate new questions that would have been wise to ask but I missed the opportunity. This was frustrating to me because I felt I was not only letting myself down but also my research down. Also, while some students were answering my survey, some of them were asking me for help, so it got me to critically think about if my questions were clear enough or not.

Currently, in the public education system, multiple people know that music education is important, but no one does anything to advocate to add it back into schools and curriculums. Not many people, express their anger that music education is not being taught. Until people want to make a change and put it into action, nothing will happen. Parents need to urgently fight not only to encourage their children to become involved in music but also to keep music programs in their schools alive and thriving (Surack, 2014). Now that I completed my project, if I had more time I would have asked all my questions if time permitted. However, as a future educator, I feel I am better prepared to add music to my academic curriculum if there is not a music education program in the school I am teaching at. I feel more than well aware of all the benefits music education has on students learning in schools.

Conclusion

From the research, I examined the answer to my primary research question: *How does music education affect the academic achievement of elementary school students?* Not only do teachers believe that music education matters, but also students. Music education can enhance student learning and their cognitive and emotional development. With incorporating music education throughout the school curriculum and schedule, the whole child is educated. Through the integration of music education in schools, students can grow and find their identity in something that matters to them. Music education allows students to explore music in the academic setting and learn new concepts through music. Music is an integral part of our society, that people come across every day. They can use things such as listening to music and having students do a free write on their interpretations and thoughts of a musical piece [Student Survey]. [Appendix 2]. Music can assist students learning in all subjects allowing them to critically think about how society works and how different subjects connects to one another.

Through my methods of researching through peer-reviewed articles, educator interviews, and a student survey, I have exhausted my data and to the best of my ability to satisfy my primary and research questions. My research proves that not only is music education important in students lives, but also that teachers and students agree that music is necessary for students to reach their maximum potential. Through my results, I learned that when teachers bring music into the curriculum, it allows a relationship to build between music and academics. For example, music can be used for math in terms of counting or history in terms of when certain music pieces were composed. When bringing music into the classroom, students are more likely to remember lessons for the rest of their lives. When students remember lessons from what they learn in

school, they are more likely to succeed on state tests and in life. If students increase their test scores, funds would be increased to school districts and perhaps schools could get fully funded music programs. For now, schools who do not have enough funds for full music programs can allow their teachers to teach music education to their students throughout the curriculum, to ensure the next generation is fully educated, ready to have a successful future.

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Appendix 1

Teacher/Principal Interview Questions

- 1 What do you know about the effects of music education and how it can affect the academic achievement of students at the elementary school level?
- 2 What do you know about the No Child Left Behind Act?
- 3 How has this affected music education at the school district level?
- 4 How does music education affect the growth of students learning?
- 5 How can music education affect attendance?
- 6 How does music education increase test scores?
- 7 What are some advantages for students to learn about music education outside the classroom?
Ex: field trips or guest performances
- 8 How many times a week should elementary school students be exposed to some sort of music education?
- 9 Do you find any negatives aspects to having music education in schools? If so what?
- 10 What are some resources available for teachers to include music education in the curriculum if the school has no music program?

Appendix 2

Student Survey Questions

- 1 Did you have any music education in your elementary schooling?
 - a If yes, describe what it was and how many years you had it for
 - b If no, did you wish you had some type of music education in your elementary experience?
 - b If no, do you feel having music education, would have helped you with your academic success?
- 2 Music education can help with academic achievement in elementary schools.
- 3 Music education can help increase test scores.
- 4 Music education in schools can improve attendance rates.
- 5 If a school does not have a music program, what is one way that teachers can incorporate music education in their teaching?
- 6 How strongly do you feel it is important to have music education in elementary schools?
10=very strong
- 7 Do you find any negatives aspects to having music education in schools? If yes, what?
- 8 How many times a week should elementary students be exposed to some sort of music education?