Music and Literacy

Music is related to Literacy Skills

Evidence suggests that listening to music can facilitate learning to read, probably by increasing children's awareness of speech sounds, which is important in learning to "sound out" words (see, e.g., "Music and Cognitive Achievement in Children ", *MRN*, Fall 1994, I(2)). Two other relationships of music to reading have been found by Sheila Douglas and Peter Willatts of the University of Dundee, Scotland. Writing in the *Journal of Research in Reading* (1994, *17*, 99-107), they reported on correlations between musical abilities and reading achievement. Seventy-eight boys and girls (average age eight years) were tested on vocabulary, reading, and spelling and also on some of their musical skills, e.g., ability to detect slight differences among rhythms. The authors found a significant correlation between rhythm performance and both reading and spelling. Because correlations alone do not show a causal relationship, they also ran a small study on the effects of a six month program of music instruction designed to develop auditory, visual and motor skills; control students received instruction designed to develop their discussion skills (e.g., descriptive, imaginative and comparative). At the end of six months, the music students showed a significant improvement in reading compared to the controls, who did not change. These findings suggest that music instruction can cause an improvement in reading.

Utilizing Music to Help Teach Literacy

Based on a Workshop Presented through Young Audiences of Pennsylvania

It is widely recognized that our brains are divided into two hemispheres - commonly referred to as right side/left side - and each tends to control different functions. The right hemisphere plays more of a role in holistic and intuitive functions as well as in processing musical stimuli and developing artistic abilities. The left hemisphere plays a more active role in analytical, verbal, and logical areas (Wikipedia: Lateralization of brain function).

It is also widely recognized that many people, starting from a very early age, experience a strong connection to music. By presenting analytical and logical literacy tasks in a musical format, teachers are able to utilize the functions of both sides of the brain, and thereby generate greater interest and motivation on the part of the student. Reading - other aspects of literacy - becomes, in today's terms, a Whole Brain Activity.

Virtually any component of literacy can be put into a musical format, from learning simple syllables, initial consonants, and short and long vowel sounds to learning texts of poems, stories - both fiction and nonfiction. The activities that result from this pairing of music and literacy-related topics are very much in keeping with the Pennsylvania State Education Standards, both for teaching reading, writing, speaking, and listening, as well as for teaching music. For instance, while working with a song or an orchestrated text, a classroom teacher can teach students to:

"Use knowledge of phonics, word analysis (e.g., root words, prefixes and suffixes), syllabication, picture and context clues to decode and understand new words during reading." (Learning to Read Independently, Grade 3, Pa. State Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening, #1.1);

"Distinguish between essential and nonessential information across a variety of texts, identifying stereotypes and exaggeration where present." (Reading Critically in All Content Areas, Grade 5, Pa. Standards RWSL #1.2);

"Analyze the effect of various literary devices, including Sound techniques (e.g., rhyme, rhythm, meter, alliteration) and Figurative language (e.g., personification, simile, metaphor, hyperbole, allusion)." (Reading, Analyzing and Interpreting Literature. Grade 8, Pa. Standards RWSL #1.3).

By Lou Walinsky. Philadelphia, PA. February, 2011

Many researchers have observed that the learning of music contributes to preschool-age children's awakening to different subject matters, particularly to reading and writing (Cutietta, 1995, 1996; Ribière-Raverlat, 1997). Several studies have established significant correlations between the treatment of musical and linguistic information in early childhood. They indicate that young children who obtain superior results in melodic perception tasks[1] also obtain higher results in phonological awareness and prereading tests (Lamb & Gregory, 1993; Bolduc & Montésinos-Gelet, 2005). Quasi-experimental studies also show that children who participate in musical and first-language interdisciplinary programs develop phonological awareness, word recognition, and invented spelling abilities more efficiently than their classmates who do not participate in such programs (Bolduc, 2006; Register, 2001; Standley & Hughes, 1997). In fact, it seems that musical activities promote the development of auditory perception, phonological memory, and metacognitive knowledge—three components that are equally involved in the development of linguistic abilities (Bernstein, 1976; Fiske, 1993; Lowe, 1995, 1998; Ribière-Raverlat, 1997; Sloboda, 1985).

Music is More

Many studies have shown that music can benefit **cognitive abilities**, particularly **spatial abilities**, **higher reasoning** and **motor skills**, and higher achievements in **language and math**.
Music has also shown **to increase overall intelligence** by shaping the types of attitudes, interests and discipline within children. Many types of music can be inspiring and incredibly motivational, thereby **helping children focus and improve their listening skills**. Music can **give children the self-confidence and self-esteem** they need to succeed in many academic areas or in **defining personality traits** as they grow older.

Music Shapes Character

If you think classical compositions are too complex for kids, then you are not doing justice to your kid's intelligence. Even young kids can understand musical notes and the mood expressed through higher or lower notes. Their brain shows evidence of activity as they listen to a happy, an excited or a sad note. The brain waves created by it make a kid more positive and develop a better attitude. **The power to analyze situations and react accordingly can be induced in kids with classical music for kids**. When we play a patriotic song or one that is motivational, kids respond to it and tend to become self motivated and show great initiation and organizational **skills that would help them become successful in life.** This is why kids music is composed in such a manner that it helps them remain motivated and guided.

Improved standardized test scores

Students of the arts continue to outperform their non-arts peers on the SAT, according to reports by the College Entrance Examination Board. In 2006, SAT takers with coursework/experience in music performance scored 57 points higher on the verbal portion of the test and 43 points higher on the math portion than students with no coursework or experience in the arts. Scores for those with coursework in music appreciation were 62 points higher on the verbal and 41 points higher on the math portion.

The Student Descriptive Questionnaire provided data for these reports.
The College Board, Profile of College-Bound Seniors National Report for 2006.

Higher graduation rates

Schools that have music programs have significantly higher graduation rates than do those without programs (90.2% as compared to 72.9%). In addition, those that rate their programs as "excellent" or "very good" have an even higher graduation rate (90.9%). Schools that have music programs have significantly higher attendance rates than do those without programs (93.3% as compared to 84.9%).

Harris Interactive poll of high school principals conducted Spring 2006;
funded by MENC and NAMM.

The Arts and Career Success

An education rich in the arts and humanities **develops skills that are increasingly crucial to the productivity and competitiveness of the nation's workforce**: the ability to think creatively, communicate effectively and work collaboratively, and to deal with ambiguity and complexity. Arts and humanities education also **develops skills necessary to participate in one of the fastest growing, economically significant set of occupations and industries in the American economy** the arts, cultural and intellectual property section. The creative workforce which includes traditional artist categories **(dancers, musicians, painters, actors, photographers, authors), as well as individuals employed in advertising, architecture, fashion design, film, video, music, publishing and software development** – is growing at a rate more than double that for the rest of the nation's workforces.

Summary of paper by Prof. Ann M. Galligan, Northeastern University, in her paper
Creativity, Culture, Education and the Workforce,
Center for Arts and Culture, December 2001, www.culturalpolicy.org.