

Music education helps increase academic test scores

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I recently attended the All-County Honor Band concert at the Cox Auditorium. Every year I'm amazed at how these middle and high school students can take a day and a half of rehearsing together and turn it into a professional, well-performed concert for the community to enjoy free of charge.

On Jan. 16 we traveled to Salt Lake City to attend Utah's All-State Honor Choir. Again, we were blown away by the talent that surrounded us. There were about 700 voices blending and melding together to the amazement of their listeners.

At both events it was pointed out by organizers that the arts always seem to make it first in line on the chopping block when education departments start looking at where to trim the budget. Because Congress is in session and considering such budget items, I would like to point out a few interesting facts I discovered while researching the subject.

In an online article titled, "The Impact of Music Education on Academic Achievement," it was pointed out that "a number of studies support the contention that students who participate in formal music education have higher academic achievement scores than students who do not participate in formal music education." The study of results from 33 standardized tests found that, "being excused from non-music classes to attend instrumental lessons does not adversely affect academic performance."

Other statistics I discovered pointed out that "students who were exposed to the music-based lessons scored a full 100 percent higher on fractions tests than those who learned in the conventional manner." This comes from music students learning eighth, quarter, half and whole notes, and thus acquiring an understanding of musical fractions. Furthermore, music majors are the most likely group of college graduates to be admitted to medical school. Physician and biologist Lewis Thomas found that 66 percent of music majors who applied to medical schools were admitted, the highest percentage of any group. A study of 7,500 university students showed that music majors scored the highest reading scores among all majors, including English, biology, chemistry and math. (See amc-music.com for sources.)

A study on the "Profile of SAT and Achievement Test Takers and The College Board" revealed that "high school music students score higher on SATs in both verbal and math than their peers." It goes on to explain that in 2001, SAT takers with music performance experience scored 57 points higher on the verbal portion and 41 points

higher on the math portion of the test than students with no musical coursework or performance experience. A 10-year study that tracked 25,000 students showed that music-making improves test scores, according to Dr. James Cattrall at UCLA.

In contrast to these findings, I discovered very little evidence that participation in sports improves academia. According to Bowdoin.edu, "Academic achievement does not seem to be negatively affected by participation in athletics, despite a common perception that athletes do not care about academics." Though many studies show that sports education is important, I found little validation that participation in sports positively affects test scores as visibly as participation in music education. There is need for a well-rounded curriculum which offers budgetary consideration for the arts and sports programs. However, a disproportionate amount school budgets is focused on sports compared to the arts. Arts equals accomplishment.

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