

“Why is Music Important?” What would you say?

*“Music . . . can name the unnameable and communicate the unknowable.” — Leonard Bernstein*

Recently while attending the 2018 MMEA In-Service President Brian Reeves asked me to speak to the benefits of music education for a video he would like to produce as an advocacy and marketing/promotional piece. Great idea Brian!! I didn't have a lot of time to prepare and I wasn't too concerned because certainly I have talked about this enough that I could easily supply at least 5 minutes of convincing dialogue on a topic that I believe in. So the camera turns on and I realize that I really was not as ready as I thought. I remember years ago being encouraged to develop what was called an “elevator speech” a brief statement that you had at your disposal if you had two minutes with a policy maker in which you could make an impact. I think at one point I had a pretty good one but the words are not as ready as they once were. So standing in front of that camera and sounding pretty uninformed I realized that first I should have taken more time to prepare and that if this is something that I believe in so adamantly about then I needed get my facts in order and be ready to tell the world when the opportunity would arise.

So, if you were asked the question, “Why is music important?” What would you say? Could you answer? Could you give a concise response that would encapsulate your personal belief or, perhaps, a more global response that substantiated the essential place of music in all cultures? Or, what if you were asked to articulate in twenty-five words or less why what you do every day really matters? How would you respond? Could you put it into words? If you can't, you should! So should I and so should all of us that obviously believe music plays a vital role in the development of our children.

We live so close to the world of music education and music making that we lose sight of its priceless and essential place in our lives. We know how to clean our ensembles, prepare for the next concert, auditions, assessments, budgets. All essential and necessary but these routine aspects of our daily lives get in the way of “why music is important.”

Help can be found from several sources. The Broader Minded, “Think beyond the Bubbles” ([www.broaderminded.com](http://www.broaderminded.com)) Advocacy campaign developed by NAFME is a terrific resource of ideas and documentation of the benefits of music in educating the whole student. It speaks to facts based on research as to how music improves academic achievement, brain development and how it helps students stay in school. 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are documented. Inherent benefits such as decision making, process orientation, multiple ways of knowing, emotional awareness and grit.

I appreciate all of that stuff but what about the value of giving expression to a thought or a feeling without words, the values of phrasing that expression so that it can be understood and felt by others. Why is it that music helps a text have more meaning. Music exists and remains indispensable because it is an essential element of the human experience.

This statement should be personal. Music speaks to each of us differently. Research and facts are good but why has it been important for you and your students is the essence of a good statement. I am going rework my statement so I'm ready next year when President Reeves asks or when an opportunity presents itself with an administrator.

The musician is constantly adjusting decisions on tempo, tone, style, rhythm, phrasing, and feeling – training the brain to become incredibly good at organizing and conducting numerous activities at once. Dedicated practice can have a great payoff for lifelong attention skills, intelligence, and ability for self-knowledge and expression.

*From A User's Guide to the Brain, May 31, 2003; Ratey, John J., MD*

Music enhances the process of learning. The systems it nourishes, which include our integrated sensory, attention, cognitive, emotional and motor capacities, are shown to be the driving forces behind all other learning. — *From Empathy, Arts and Social Studies, 2000; Konrad, R.R.*

It has been my sincere pleasure to serve MMEA for the past eight years. The Association has been good for me and to me. I am grateful for the experiences and the lessons learned. I encourage you to volunteer and serve MMEA and Music Education in whatever capacity you are comfortable with. It will be the best thing that you ever did for yourself! Thank you MMEA!

Referenece:

Floyd, Richard. *The Artistry of Teaching and Making Music*. 2015. GIA Publications.