

Benefits of the Council Rock Music Education Program

Music education in Council Rock not only provides students with many benefits, but it can also lead to an experience that ranks as the performance of a lifetime. In addition to the positive effect that Council Rock's elementary through secondary concerts have on both listeners and the school district's reputation, research shows that students who are involved in music perform better in school and on standardized tests. Those who elect to take music in high school get the added bonus of an opportunity to perform on the world stage.

Music helps students get better grades overall. Some research has shown that studying and creating music may help people who play music develop more interaction between the left and right side of the brain and improve their capacity to learn other subjects because music encompasses all facets of academia:

- Music is science – it is exact and demands exact acoustics. A musical score is a chart, graphing that shows frequencies, intensities, volume, melody and harmony within the control of time.
- Music is math – rhythm is based on fractions of time that are done instantaneously, too quickly to be worked out on paper.
- Music is a foreign language – terms are in Italian, German or French. Musical notation is a type of shorthand, its own language. Music is the universal language.
- Music is history – music reflects the period of its creation and the culture and country of origin.
- Music is physical education – requiring incredible coordination – fingers, hands, arms, lip, cheek and muscles. It also requires control of back, stomach and chest muscles.
- Music is art – music takes all the technical parts and creates emotion

Research shows that music students perform better on standardized tests. Recent research speaks to why this happens; students who can differentiate musical sounds have the ability to discriminate between outside distractions in a classroom and focus on listening to the teacher. Additionally students learn discipline, time management, teamwork and working toward a common goal.

In Pennsylvania, comparisons of PSSA scores have been made between music students and non-music students. These comparisons in April 2007 show the following PSSA aggregate scores:

	Reading	Math
Music Students	1525.64	1487.02
Non-music Students	1350.28	1353.03

In Council Rock, the secondary students who invest many hours as part of choir, band and orchestra, while finding a social niche during their high school years, are also high achievers in state assessments. A large percentage of the top academic performers and students recognized by the National Merit Corporation are music students.

In Council Rock's elementary music program all kindergarten through sixth grade students take music class, and music students participate in many classroom and musical performances from "Teddy Bear Picnics" and Flag Day Celebrations, to musical theater. Elementary instrumental students have a ½ hour "pull out" program for music lessons each week. Each elementary school also has winter and spring instrumental and choir concerts.

Elementary choir participation encompasses all but a handful of the 5,854 students in 5th and 6th grades. Approximately 1,868 elementary students participate in instrumental music from 3rd through 6th grade. Beginners (1st year students) comprise 884 of those students.

Each of the 2,003 middle school students takes classroom music as part of their arts rotation. Of those, 401 are involved in instrumental groups while 298 are part of the choir groups. The student commitment at this level is primarily during the Resource Activity (RA) period at the start of the school day. Music is a choice that students make over clubs, homework or other RA activities. Many of these students participate in more than one band activity and therefore are committing to doing this for as much as five days a week. There are also occasional before and after school practices and evening rehearsals leading up to their two concerts each year.

In high school, music can be an elective or a co-curricular. Both high schools offer courses such as Music Appreciation, Musical Theater, and Guitar that are open to all students in high school, but the heart of the music program is the students who take band, choir and orchestra classes. Unlike any other subjects at the high school, these three music curriculum offerings are co-curricular and have a required time commitment after school and, possibly, on weekends. The student's out-of-class requirement contributes to their in-class grade.

Council Rock North and South have: 656 students enrolled in co-curricular music classes: 247 students involved in band, 261 in choir and 148 in orchestra. The numbers above only represent students who are in those classes. Many more participate in extra curricular groups such as Master Singers, Jazz Band, Lab Band, etc. Additionally, some music students choose to drop in to other groups during their lunch periods. For example, a band member may also play with the orchestra or an orchestra member might be part of the Chorale.

In high school the level of out-of-class commitment to music hits its peak. Band, choir, and orchestra classes require extra out of class commitments. While all students are expected to practice their music at home, the choir, orchestra and concert band require two days a month throughout the school year. Leading up to the two concerts each year, this requirement rises to four commitments a month, or approximately a day each week after school.

A comprehensive list of every music group's additional performances would be difficult to outline within this newsletter, but the highlights include both North and South orchestra's participation at an adjudication festival for area high schools hosted at South. South has recently performed with the Philadelphia Orchestra and at the PMEA Convention in Hershey.

Choir members have an extensive performance schedule of community concerts especially during holidays, go to numerous adjudications, and sing at special events including Veteran's and Memorial Day remembrances. Choir members may also perform in smaller vocal groups and some are active in music theatre presentations.

Marching band begins the second week of August and runs through the first week of November, non-stop. Students rehearse three to four days a week after school; attend all home and away football games, and four to five competitions, on Saturdays in the fall. Marching band also performs at a handful of parades throughout the year and concerts in the fall and spring.

Symphonic band, the higher level band class, attends PMEA adjudication events and performs in the spring concert. Jazz band members meet only after school and have an extensive performance schedule at jazz festivals in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

The highlight of a student's music participation is the high school music trip. Students in marching band, choir and orchestra have the opportunity to go on a trip once every four years. In the past few years, South's band has performed in Ireland, the orchestra in Italy and the choir in England. North's choir has performed in China, band in Spain and orchestra in England. Next year North's band will head to Buenos Aires, Argentina and South's orchestra will go to Paris and Cannes in France.

The high school music Trip requires comprehensive planning. While these trips are the highlight of the student's high school years, they require many hours of coordination and planning. From the staff, planning time begins up to a year in advance, looking into venues and cost proposals, to fundraising for each trip, to coordination of moving hundreds of students, instruments, music stands, equipment and uniforms to a foreign country, everything must be completely organized. Once there, students have some flexibility to see the area, but many hours of practice and performances also occur.

Music trips have many benefits for students:

- Encouraging self discipline and developing group discipline
- Developing an awareness of the group's benefit
- Maintaining a strict schedule and planning ahead
- Packing, moving and maintaining equipment and uniforms
- Developing personal responsibility and following directions
- Achieving personal and group goals
- Working together for maximum group effectiveness

Trips to other countries have additional benefits:

- Exposing students to new cultural and culinary experiences
- Providing interaction with students from another country
- Providing foreign language experiences
- Reinforcing history lessons
- Performing at outstanding performance venues
- The opportunity to represent the United States on the world stage

Kudos to Council Rock's excellent music program! Citizens For Education thanks Mr. Lee Hauslein, Music Curriculum Coordinator, and Mr. Rick Bogle, Music Department Head at CRHS North, for meeting with us to fill us in on all that music in Council Rock encompasses. They are just two of the many dedicated Council Rock music teachers at all levels, from kindergarten to twelfth grade, who, together with hard working students, are responsible for the high quality of the music program; a program that benefits students outside of music class, reaps many awards, and enhances the reputation and recognition of Council Rock.