

WHAT EVERY PARENT SHOULD KNOW ABOUT INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

**We All Want our Children to Have the
Very Best Preparation for Adulthood
That is Possible...**

Evidence accumulated since 1915, when the band and orchestra movement first became a part of our educational system, leaves little doubt that instrumental music is an extremely essential part of educating the child as a whole.

The National Education Association lists seven cardinal principles of education upon which all academic matter is evaluated. Instrumental music is the one subject that is basic to all seven areas.

1. HEALTH

Poise, posture and exercises that stimulate the circulatory, respiratory and muscular systems are all beneficially affected by musical training.

2. COMMAND OF FUNDAMENTAL PROCESSES

Playing a musical instrument develops coordination of brain, eyes, ears, lips, tongue, breathing and fingers; more fundamental processes than any other functional school training.

3. PREPARATION FOR A VOCATION

There are many professional opportunities in the field of music, plus a lifetime of personal enjoyment through playing and creating music. In any profession or trade, musical training is a valuable asset.

4. WORTHY HOME MEMBERSHIP

All the beneficial results of participating in a musical group carry over into a child's family and adult life. Working together harmoniously, sharing joyful experiences, and respect for others in the group are but a few that contribute to refinement and happiness.

5. WORTHY USE OF LEISURE TIME

Playing a musical instrument obviously is a worthy use of leisure time. As William J. Burn, a nationally known criminologist has stated: "A city with a maximum of good music is a city with a minimum of crime."

6. CIVIC EDUCATION

Respect for authority and willing cooperation are basic band and orchestral requirements. Here is an activity of self-government where the individual learns how to work and play for the good of all.

7. ETHICAL CHARACTER

Every child in the musical group carries a definite and essential responsibility for playing a musical part correctly. Upon his shoulders rests the performance of the whole group, and there is no room for "cribbing" of another's lessons. The old adage, "To thine own self be true", aptly describes what every child musician must necessarily be.

Educational surveys reveal that all parents faced with the decision of whether or not their child should join the school's instrumental music program have certain basic questions they want answered. The following are those questions most frequently asked:

How old should a child be to start studying music?

Your child will determine this. When he or she says to you, "I want to join the school band or orchestra." or, "I wish I could play a trumpet (or violin) like my friend Johnny." Then, your child is old enough! Desire and eagerness to start musical training is the greatest indication that your child is old enough. Consult with the music teachers in your school. They are professionally trained and experienced in knowing what is right for your child.

Statistics show that children who continue their musical training through college generally start to study between the ages of 7 through 11. At these ages, the opportunity for study with other children of the same age in the regular school day is the best motivation. Any person of any age, however, can learn to enjoy the satisfaction of playing a musical instrument.

When can my child start participating in school?

Half Hollow Hills starts its full instrumental music program in the fourth grade for band and the second half of third grade for certain string instruments. At the beginning of the school year, the music staff will be demonstrating the various instruments and recruiting students for group lessons. These lessons will occur on a weekly basis during the school day and start just as soon as a master schedule can be compiled in September.

Does my child need talent to play?

Your child needs no more talent to play a musical instrument than he needs to learn any other subject in school, or to learn tennis, dancing, baseball, football, basketball or riding a bicycle. All these things can be taught to a child. Some perform better than others, some learn faster, some are gifted and become professionals--but, if a child has the desire to play music, he will play, and his life will be richer because of it.

All youthful learning processes require stimulation and encouragement from the teacher and the child's parents. Musical training is no exception. There are millions of children actively playing musical instruments in bands and orchestras throughout the world. Few have any more talent than your child.

What instrument should my child play?

Let your child indicate his or her preference, then consult a qualified counselor. In most cases, the counselor will go along with the child, inasmuch as desire is of utmost importance. Your school music educator, is a qualified counselor, and will be happy to answer any questions you may have. During the recruitment process, a letter will be sent home explaining what choices are available at school.

In some cases, a child will be asked to study some instrument other than the one he or she requested. This

will be for a good reason. It may be the conformation of his teeth, his lip contours or any of several other physical factors. If a child is asked to change, you'll find that almost always he will do so willingly under the guidance of an experienced counselor. Children, however, should never be forced to play an instrument in which they have no interest.

Will music interfere with his or her other studies?

Quite the contrary. Musical training will help your child in other studies. It develops healthy habits that greatly influence their approach to other studies. Children will learn to discipline their minds, concentrate, and be more alert.

For example: A child learns to coordinate his brain, eyes, ears, lips, breath, tongue and fingers while playing a wind instrument. He learns to make decisions such as loudness, softness, rhythm and tempo. He is compelled to concentrate on an action before a muscular action takes place. This training, of itself, will improve his reading, make it more rhythmic and better coordinated.

Almost without exception, the average grades of children involved in music programs are above those of other students in the same age group. These music students score an average 48 points higher on their verbal SAT's and 56 points higher on math SAT scores. This fact has been borne out in every school where studies have been made, and is well known among educators.

Will music help my child later in a business or professional career?

It is likely that no other school study will help your child more in his or her overall development than music training. Music gives children a background of culture and refinement that will provide advantages throughout their lives. Observe school musicians at a concert. Note their poise in performing. Notice their posture and grooming, and how well disciplined they are. Upon every member's shoulders rests the success or failure of the entire group, and they know it. These essentials in the adult business or professional world are the ones that count most. No other subject in the school curriculum teaches these values more precisely than music.

What career opportunities are there in music?

If your child should decide to make music a career, there are any number of avenues he or she can follow, such as music education, music therapy and performance. The symphony orchestra, the concert stage, the television studio and the recording studio are some of the many performing occupations open to professional musicians. Others include music research, instrument manufacturing and repair, sales and administration.

Will music enhance my child's social development?

Music will certainly go a long way toward this goal. Social dysfunction has at its roots the young "problem child"--the shy or the overly aggressive child. Group activities such as band and orchestra are a great help in young children's adjustment to the world around them. Their emotional needs demand that they belong to a group and the "togetherness" and activity in a musical group do a great deal toward dispelling shyness. Likewise, an overly aggressive child learns to respect the desires and feelings of other children, and in their desire to become accepted into the group they learn to defer to others. Membership in a musical group makes worthy use of leisure time and teaches respect for authority, two powerful factors that can affect social interaction.

Are private lessons necessary?

Private lessons are not absolutely essential, due to the high quality of music instruction in our school systems. But, as in any form of learning, private tutoring is always invaluable.

What do I do if my child does not want to practice?

No child likes to practice or study--after all, a child's business is "play". If you allow a child to do as he wishes he would not only give up music after his first enthusiasm wears thin; he would also give up arithmetic, geography, brushing his teeth and any other activity that requires self-discipline. A child needs parental guidance and supervision in anything he does. Musical training is no exception.

Your child's teacher will help you if your child's enthusiasm should wane. There are also several successful home remedies, such as creating a pleasant atmosphere for practicing. Parents should also try not to summon the child to practice from an activity he is enjoying immensely at the moment. This will cause him to regard the music practice session as a punishment. Give your child some attention when practicing and lend encouragement. Every child loves an appreciative audience, particularly his mom and dad. Encouragement, guidance, appreciation and understanding are the keys to your child's entire approach to all forms of education, music not excepted.

Do I have to buy an instrument before my child can start?

Students choosing the flute, clarinet, alto saxophone, trumpet, violin, viola, cello and percussion, must have access to these instruments. They may be rented or purchased at local music stores. Most music stores have a trial plan that permits the child to prove his or her interest and ability before complete purchase of an instrument. All better music stores also have convenient time payment plans, or lease plans with an "option to buy". (A list of local vendors is given to all students interested in the program.)

The district owns and maintains a number of the more expensive instruments. These are provided at NO COST to students. Parents are, however, responsible for loss of or damage to an instrument while it is assigned to their child. These instruments include the oboe, bass clarinet, bassoon, tenor saxophone, baritone saxophone, french horn, trombone, euphonium, tuba and string bass. District policy permits us to provide these instruments for the first year of study. Once a child makes a commitment to an instrument, it should be rented or purchased. However, due to the cost, we attempt to provide equipment for more than the first year of study whenever possible.

What brand of musical instrument should I buy?

There are many good brands of musical instruments being manufactured today. Your child's teacher will be happy to provide you with a listing of prominent manufacturers who make quality instruments at reasonable prices. One note of caution: beware of the "bargain brand" instrument. Nothing can discourage a child quicker than a musical instrument so poorly made that even a professional could not play it properly.

What store should I buy or rent from?

A list of local vendors will be provided in a recruitment letter at the beginning of the year. These stores all have an excellent reputation and have asked to be put on our list. They can help you in finding the right instrument for your child, but remember, be sure to shop around and compare prices!

If you should have any further questions regarding the Half Hollow Hills instrumental music program, feel free to call Dr. Darlene Lilla, Director of Fine Arts, at (631) 592-3185 weekdays between 8:00 am

and 4:00 pm. You may also call your school and set up an appointment with one of the instrumental music teachers.