

## Why Study Music?

Most elementary students receive music instruction, although it may vary from several times a week to not at all. Research demonstrates that studying music contributes positively to good study skills, language acquisition and retention, and mathematical and abstract reasoning.

Research shows that effective music instruction can and should begin with very young children, even infants. Long before kids go to school they can recognize and produce rhythmic patterns, vocal pitches, simple harmonies, and tempos. The most well regarded early music program is Kindermusik, a program where young children and a parent participate.

An essential ingredient of effective music instruction is making music—the use of simple percussion instruments, like bells at an early age and more complex instruments for older children. Although all children, even from a very young age, benefit from keyboard instruction, and allowing children to choose their instrument maintains their interest and success in music. The goal of music education is not, however, primarily about making each child an excellent musical performer. Quality music education focuses equally on knowledge about music: the understanding of music history, theory, and aesthetics. All of these aspects of music education contribute to the development of the ability to perform, create, interpret, and/or appreciate music.

The benefits of music instruction increase when kids have: access to individual music lessons, regular opportunities to attend musical performances, exposure to professional musicians, and participate in choral or instrumental ensembles (not just extra-curricularly but as part of music class). Many public schools cannot provide these opportunities, but they are sometimes created through partnerships with local professional and youth music groups, and university music programs.

You might want to rent *Mr. Holland's Opus*, a slightly over the top story about a composer/high school music teacher and check out Kindermusik if you have a young child. <http://www.kindermusikcanada.com/>

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