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## Music: The Ancient Basis of Education

1 Music has been part of education for thousands of years. The history of education overlaps with music and science. Why should this be? We will better understand this relationship when we consider the beliefs of great thinkers from the past.

2 Philosophers believed that students should learn music. They saw patterns in music that appeared in other parts of the natural world. Music reflected the beauty found in nature. The ancient Greeks used a word similar to “harmony” to describe the most perfect beauty. This kind of beauty had form and balance. There was harmony in ethics, mathematics, and art. The notes of a harmonious chord follow a pattern. A painting shows **harmony** when the colors and lines do not conflict. The ancient Greeks’ idea of harmony could apply to almost any field of study. The ancient Greek philosopher Pythagoras was famous for his views on music. He believed that the entire universe follows the same elegant structure as a piece of music. In his opinion, studying music and studying astronomy were equally important. To him, the movement of the planets was as graceful as a symphony.

3 Plato, another Greek philosopher, said that music should be the first form of learning. He compared the educated mind to a tuned instrument. Children who studied music tuned their minds to think beautiful thoughts. In ancient India, thinkers also connected music to learning. These thinkers used a term similar to “song” for music. They saw song in dance, drama, and speech. According to Hindu belief, life began with sound. Studying sound and song was a way of worshipping. In China, the great Confucian philosopher Xunzi thought music and ethics were linked. He explained that music allows people to express themselves without creating conflicts. Music helped people learn to live together in harmony. A thousand years later, courtiers in medieval Europe studied music as one of the arts of chivalry. Medieval teachers thought music was as important as math.

4 In the last century, many famous scientists and philosophers have been music enthusiasts. Gottfried Leibniz, a German mathematician, said, “Music is a hidden exercise in arithmetic.” In other words, by practicing music, a person learns math. Many other famous intellectuals shared Leibniz’s respect for music. Albert Einstein was a physicist. He studied the violin as a child and kept playing throughout his life. Einstein even said, “If I were not a physicist, I would be a musician.” Ludwig Wittgenstein was a famous philosopher and mathematician. He also loved music. He used many examples from music in his books.

5 These great thinkers understood that music is not just a hobby. It is important to human life. The study of music is as important as the study of math or science. If we want our children to reach such heights of thinking in science, we must educate them in music. Studying music could help them become great thinkers, too. If they study the violin like Einstein, maybe they will make discoveries in physics. All children should have the chance to learn music. Studying music might make a person smarter. No one can say for sure that this is not true.

6 However, the most important reason children should study music is that it inspires us. A mother sings her baby to sleep. A son hears his father singing. A young person hears music on the radio. Each bit of music makes us think and helps us dream. Whatever we want to achieve, we must first imagine. Listening to music, studying music, and making music a part of our lives helps us develop a mind able to imagine. We can imagine how numbers flow together in math. We can imagine how concepts build on each other in science. We imagine the past and the future. By giving children an education in music, we give them the tools to create a beautiful future.

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**Story Title:** Music: The Ancient Basis of Education Put the letter of the correct answer in the empty box beside the question.

Answer	Question	<b><u>RUNNERS</u></b>
	1) Which statement best summarizes the author's point of view about music education? a) Music is unnecessary to education and should be for fun only. b) Music is beneficial to education and children should study music. c) Listening to music is a good way to pass the time and can help you calm down. d) Music is an ancient art that has significance in many cultures.	To solve this, I need to...
	2) In paragraph 3, why does the author MOST LIKELY describe Xunzi's ideas about music? a) To argue that people who listen to music are better people than those who don't b) To demonstrate that listening to music is a good way to support your community c) To give a specific example of a way music is believed to benefit people d) To suggest that a lot of problems in schools are caused by a lack of music education.	To solve this, I need to...
	3) Which statement best summarizes the central idea of paragraph 2? a) Musicians were powerful people in ancient Greek society. b) The ancient Greeks are known for producing beautiful music. c) Music was considered more important in ancient Greece than it is today. d) The ancient Greeks believed that music and nature were closely connected.	To solve this, I need to...
	4) Which BEST describes how paragraph 4 contributes to the author's argument? a) It offers the opinions of music fans. b) It describes the effects music has had on various other fields of study. c) It lists examples of respected experts who have supported music education. d) It compares the careers of musicians to the careers of other kinds of scholars.	To solve this, I need to...
	5) In paragraph 2, what is the best meaning of the word <b><u>harmony</u></b> ? a) Musical notes played together having a pleasant effect b) Agreement or working together c) Chaos and disorganization d) Colorful and bright	To solve this, I need to...

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## Music Is Fun but Not Essential

1 I believe that we should not fund music classes in our schools. I enjoy music. So do my children. However, that does not mean that we should spend our days listening to or playing songs. Music entertains us. Music engages the mind and the emotions. That does not make it an essential subject to study. Music distracts kids from more serious subjects. In the end, the goal of education is to prepare students to enter the workplace. Musicians do not contribute to the economy. Very few companies hire a person to play the violin or sing a song. Music might feed the soul, but it does not put dinner on the table.

2 Surprisingly, many parents insist that we hinder our students with music study. Why would parents do this? They do this because the importance of music in education has been exaggerated by common misunderstandings.

3 One wrong belief is that music was part of a classical education, and so it should be taught in schools today. Many great ancient thinkers did value music education. They encouraged students to study the structure of music. They believed that children should learn the theory of music. For example, teachers in ancient times noticed number patterns in music. They noticed how different lengths of string made different tones. Studying music this way was like studying math. This is not how music is taught today. No ancient teacher would have agreed that playing the banjo increases intelligence. The ancients did not intend that schools should spend thousands of dollars on marching bands at football games. Those bands provide fun for the crowd, but there is no reason schools should foot the bill.

4 That is not the only misunderstanding about the importance of music in learning. A few years ago, researchers studied the effects of listening to classical music. The study showed that some people did better on simple tests after listening to Mozart. The effect only lasted for a few minutes. The improvement was limited to a certain skill. Even though the effect was short-lasting and very limited, people misunderstood the results. The misunderstanding started a craze: the "Mozart effect." Parents bought the music of Mozart to play for their babies. Those parents wasted their money. Not one study supports the idea that music increases intelligence. Listening to Mozart is pleasant, but it won't get the math homework done.

5 In fact, listening to music might even be an obstacle to homework. In the Mozart studies, the people listened in a silent room. Their brains had nothing to do but concentrate on the music. That is far from what happens in real life. First, how many young people listen to Mozart? It is more likely they are listening to some kind of pop or rock music. Also, when young people listen to music now, they often wear headphones or earbuds. They are usually doing something else besides listening: walking, biking, even studying. This kind of music and this kind of listening would not even have the limited, short-lasting "Mozart effect." If the effect of this listening were studied, it would probably show that these listeners are not paying full attention to the music or to their surroundings. How can a student write an essay or complete an algebra problem while plugged into some kind of loud music?

6 Another wrong belief is simply that music should be taught in schools because musicians are smarter. Some musicians may be very intelligent, and others, less so. It does not make sense to say that all musicians are smart. Many intelligent people are not at all musical. I personally know a famous writer and a respected business person who are tone deaf. Neither of these successful individuals would fund music education. Nor should we.

7 If we had money to spare, then we might add music classes as a fun break from serious study. These days, some schools hardly have enough money for basic supplies. We need to spend education dollars wisely, in a way that will most help students prepare for the future. Music has no place in a sound school budget.

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**Story Title:** Should the School Day Start with a Moment of Silence? Put the letter of the correct answer in the empty box beside the question.

Answer	Question	<b><u>RUNNERS</u></b>
	1) Which quote from the passage BEST communicates the author's thesis? a) "I believe that we should not fund music classes in our schools." b) "I enjoy music." c) "In fact, listening to music might even be an obstacle to homework." d) "Also, when young people listen to music now, they often wear headphones or earbuds."	To solve this, I need to...
	2) What is the main purpose of paragraph 5? a) Music is available to modern students in many different forms. b) Music is more likely to hurt educational performance than help it. c) Young people would benefit from expanding their tastes in music. d) It can be dangerous to listen to music while performing other activities.	To solve this, I need to...
	3) Which best describes the author's purpose for writing this essay? a) to argue that music should not be taught in school b) to expose the harm that music can cause to students c) to prove that music is not as educational as it used to be d) to discourage students from trying to become musicians	To solve this, I need to...
	4) Why does the author give details about the "Mozart Effect" in paragraph 4? a) To give an example of how listening to music helps students learn. b) To show how Mozart, a musical expert, supported music education. c) To give evidence on how the "Mozart Effect" does not help students learn as much as many people believe. d) To inform the reader about a well-known study.	To solve this, I need to...
	5) Which best describes the CENTRAL IDEA of the passage? a) Music is not important enough to teach in school. b) People who do not play music are more successful than musicians. c) Playing and studying music can have negative effects on young people. d) Parents should limit the amount of time students spend listening to music.	To solve this, I need to...