
QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ABOUT MUSIC EDUCATION

LINCOLN-WAY WEST HIGH SCHOOL | www.lwwmusic.org

Source: ARTSpeaks | www.artspeaks.net

Q) Does a student need to continue instruction in the Fine Arts during high school if he or she does not plan to pursue those fields in college?

All students study mathematics; how many will become mathematicians? All students study literature; how many will become professional authors or playwrights? All students study American History; how many will become historians or politicians? Is instruction in these content areas useless if the student does not pursue that subject as career? Of course not. High school students need a balanced education to be prepared for life after graduation. Each day adults are faced with opportunities, problems, and situations of all kinds. How individuals deal with those experiences is often a reflection of their education. How well an adult understands and evaluates music, art, and drama as part of an everyday life, or within a formal setting, is also a reflection of education. Appreciation of the Fine Arts is not a natural talent. It must be developed the same way as any other set of knowledge.

Q) Can participation in high school music groups benefit a student when applying for college?

Yes! College administrators are looking beyond test scores and core curriculum grade point averages in determining a student's character, intellectual capacity, creative attitude, and potential for success. Participation in a wide variety of high school programs, especially the Fine Arts, has become a valued measure of student achievement. Research has revealed that high school music students consistently have higher grade point averages than non-music students in the same school, and music students tend to score 30 to 50 points higher than their non-music peers on SAT exams. Students engaged in the purposeful study of music discover that reading, comprehension, and motor skills are strengthened, along with their ability to engage and succeed in other school subjects.

One of the valuable outcomes of music education is the expansion of imagination. The act of music creation demands an enormous amount self-discipline. It teaches students how to handle frustration and failure in pursuit of both tangible and intangible ideas. It requires setting goals, determining a technique, figuring out how to apply it, and continually making evaluations and revisions. In other words, student musicians are constantly applying creative/critical thinking in discovering unique solutions to problems.

Q) What does music offer the average student?

Music is stereotypically regarded as a school subject reserved for a select group of skilled “elite” students. This is untrue! Every student, regardless of skill, is capable of developing some kind of relationship with music, be it creator, performer, or listener. As this relationship is developed, so is the student’s ability to experience and enjoy aspects of life that many people fail to realize.

All high school students should be granted the opportunity “to experience beauty and express emotion” through the Fine Arts. “These experiences, like all education, can never be taken away from them” (Daniel Kohut). Music offers the opportunity to develop aesthetic sensitivity by exploring the world of sound. Beyond the pure enjoyment of the interaction, mastery, and understanding of all areas of music, a musical experience also opens up areas of learning not frequently explored in a traditional school classroom, including: the challenge of taking risks, asking open-ended questions, the excitement of learning to express oneself in new ways, and the exploration a broad range of human relationships.

Most importantly, music offers students the chance to become a part of artistic processes. The opportunity to create music - to combine mind and emotion; cognition and sensory experience; analysis and intuition towards the greater good - is among the most fulfilling and memorable experiences a student can have.

The music course offerings at Lincoln-Way West are designed to provide students these opportunities to a wide variety of musical talents, interests, and backgrounds.

Q) It is possible to participate in athletics and a music ensemble?

Each year music students can be found on the roster of most every sports team sponsored by Lincoln-Way West, including: football, basketball, baseball, swimming, track, cross country, soccer, volleyball, tennis, and wrestling. In addition to athletics, music students frequently participate in academic/extra curricular activities: cheerleaders, poms, yearbook, Mathletes, etc.

Q) What does a student gain from performing music?

Students play an instrument or sing because it is fun! Students regularly can be heard in halls stating that their music class is the most enjoyable part of their day; a break from the usual and traditional. Performance classes are “fusion arenas” where students can apply and integrate knowledge from all subjects towards the greater whole, the performance of high quality music. Participation in a performance ensemble offers a student the opportunity to develop musical skills simultaneously with the development of musical perception. Along with the social benefits, emotional benefits, and enjoyment of performance, one of the great benefits of performing music is the challenge it provides students. No matter how well one learns to perform, there is always room for further improvement.

Lastly, the performance of music can cultivate the self-discipline required of a productive group member or leader, as well as the self-confidence and a sense of pride, accomplishment, and identity. The greatest gift one person can give to another is to share his or her culture. To share artistic creations is to share our deepest values and dreams.