Music’s Physical and Mental Influence on Humans

1. Broad Based Topic: Musical Influence on Human Performance

2. General Purpose: To Inform

3. Specific Purpose: To inform my audience that listening to music, and music education are beneficial to a happier life.

4. Audience Analysis:
   A. Composition -
      • Survey audience was 5 students
      • Electromechanical, Management, Architecture and Construction Management Majors
      • 3 males and 2 females
      • Ages 18-20
   B. Knowledge of Subject –
      • 100 % aware that music influences our behavior
      • AKL of this topic is open to everyone of all ages in that music is widespread and listened to by all races, and ages. The importance of music’s influence on us is focused on teenagers and can be appreciated by adults who listen and enjoy music, have played or written music or
   C. Attitude Toward Subject –
      • Most responses stated that they felt musical education is important in school systems. All answered that they listen to music while performing other tasks, such as studying, driving, working out, or just walking down the street. While most people who never took music courses or played instruments seemed less eager to support music education, they did say that they felt music did influence people.

5. Central Idea: Music has the ability to improve academic performance

6. Main Points:
   A. Define music and describe how music has developed over the past decades.
   B. Give examples of how music is used in daily life from early ages of childhood.
   C. Explain how playing music can enhance academic performance.
7. Sources


Music's Influence On People

A quote by former President Reagan, stated, "Civilizations are most often remembered for their art and thought. I have always believed in the definition of an educated man or woman as one who could, if necessary, redound his or her civilization. That means we must teach our students more than hard facts and floppy disks. We must teach them the rich artistic inheritance of our culture and an appreciation of how fine music enriches both the student who studies it and the society that produces it ... The existence of strong music and fine arts curricula are important to keeping the humanities truly humanizing and liberal arts education truly liberating."

So what is music? Is it the strum of a guitar, or a tap on a drum? What about the chirp of a bird, or footsteps down a hallway? Can it be defined? Music is everywhere around us and is very influential to our lives. Music is a symbol of self-expression and an art that has the ability to calm or excite us. Today we are going to focus on how music has developed from the past from composers such as Bach and Beethoven, to today’s hits of Green Day to Sean Paul, Madonna to Billy Joel. We will also look into the influence of music in daily life from early childhood to present day as well as music’s importance in academic performance. First lets look at how music has changed over the years.

What began as a servant’s form of entertainment to a king and his court, music has changed greatly since it began in the earlier centuries. In the past, music was heard through instruments in symphonic orchestras, mainly featured in plays, operas and concertos. Instrumental sounds are now able to be recreated on computers and recorded onto cd’s, making our way of creating music faster and easier. Past methods of creating music are not the only evolution in music. Expressing music has evolved from live performances, to listening on the radio, 8 tracks, vinyl records to today’s cd’s, ipods and mp3 players. The availability of music in now immense, and can be found everywhere from the internet to a cell phone ringer. One thing that has not changed when it comes to music is the freedom of self-expression and the creative outlet it provides.

So why are people so into music? In today’s society, music can be heard everywhere. Besides the common television commercials, movies, music is also played in waiting rooms, elevators, even on hold phone calls. But is it the fact that we are bombarded daily by music that we listen so much? Or is it the connection we have with the music itself? Most people chose to listen to music that they feel they can personally relate to, or music that makes them feel good.

In a recent survey by the National Music Organization, 100% of students claim to listen to music while doing daily activities such as homework, studying, working out, or just walking around. Most preferred calmer, slower music while doing academic activities and more upbeat music when performing physical
activities. It is a proven fact that music has the ability to slow your heart rate and breathing if it is a slow and soft tempo, therefore the faster and louder the beat, your respiration will increase. But it can also affect your blood pressure, alleviate stress, improve athletic performance, and help people with basic movements post stroke. Not only can people enjoy music that they chose, they can also physically be affected by music.

For most of us, music is incorporated into most of our lives from the time we are babies. Whether it was Sing-Along songs to help us talk and remember lyrics, or soothing rhythms to keep us peaceful as we sleep, music was always there. But can listening to music actually help us? According to a well known neurologist, Frank Wilson, “scan studies indicate that music more fully involves brain functions in both hemisphere’s than any other activity observed.” What does that mean? Well, during the early years of 4 to 7 years old, children are beginning to develop brain connections and music is proven to stimulate both sides of the brain equally, as the left hemisphere explores the structure of the music, and the right hemisphere studies the melody, causing both sides to synchronize and work at the same time.

According to Frances Raucher, a University of California at Irivne psychologist stated that, “Music lessons appear to strengthen the links between brain neurons and build new spatial reasoning.” Spatial intelligence is the ability to form mental images of physical objects. Studies beginning in the 90’s have proven students who listen to music have higher scores on intelligence tests. In a series of studies conducted by the College Board, it was found that music and art students consistently scored significantly higher on both the math and verbal sections of the SAT.

In 1996, research by the College Entrance Examination Board found that on the SAT music students scored fifty-one points higher on the verbal and thirty-nine points higher on the math sections of the test than the national average. Case studies conducted in high schools to assess academic success found that the cumulative GPAs of music students were significantly higher than those of non-music students and that students’ achievement in reading, writing, and math improved when arts are included in the curriculum. The point is that music students reach higher academic achievement levels in academic studies than non-music students.

The National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) recommends that middle and high schools provide vigorous programs in the fine and performing arts. According to the NCEE, there are many reasons why music should be part of primary and secondary education. The most notable are:

Music contributes to the school and community environment (quality of life). Music makes the day more alive and interesting, which in turn leads to more learning. It combines behaviors to promote a higher order of thinking skills. It provides a way to imagine and create and contributes to self-expression and
creativity. Music education can allow for perceptual motor development. Music encourages teamwork and cohesiveness, as well as developing creativity, individuality, discipline and commitment.

Through changes in instruments, evolving technology and vast musical genres, it seems clear that music has certainly taken over the entertainment scene as it has developed over the past. From the early stages of life, music is influential to humans, not only as entertainment, but as well as improving brain functions and increasing academic performance. I'll leave you with another quote, this one by Fred Hargadon, the former dean of admissions for Stanford University who admitted, “We look for students who have taken part in orchestra, symphonic band, chorus and drama, it shows a level of energy and an ability to organize time that we are after here. It shows that they can carry a full academic load and learn something else. It means that these particular students already know how to get involved, and that’s the kind of campus we want to have.” Next time you put on some tunes to clear your head after a long day of classes, think about that.