**Music Enrichment**

 We all know children have the remarkable capacity to flourish when given the right tools and stimulation from birth to adolescence. Numerous studies, however, point to the fact that learning music, in particular, during early childhood enriches children’s lives providing immediate and long term benefits - academically, socially and emotionally.

This actuality is not hard to believe when you consider the vast elements of music: ***Rhythm***: the measured movement/pulses of music. ***Tempo***: the speed at which music is performed. ***Timbre***: the character of a sound/tone. ***Pitch***: the height or depth of a note related to other notes which helps define melody. And ***Harmony***: which brings pitch together just right and the demand that is put on the brain to decipher and express of all of these elements simultaneously. In fact there is not one cognitive function the brain leaves out while playing or learning a musical piece! This fact has led many neuroscientists, educators and psychologists to conduct controlled studies on the impact music has on child development. Their controlled studies have shown strong evidence that sensory motor control, memory, concentration, vocabulary, auditory, communication, math, science, and reading comprehension skills are enhanced greatly in students studying music when compared with the skills of students who have had no musical training.

With musical elements in mind we can make sense of their findings; rhythm and timing relates to math and movement, pitch, tone and timber relates to vocabulary and communication, tempo and tone relates to mood and emotion. Furthermore, it certainly takes great patients, interpretation, concentration, perseverance and the exercise of memory to study a musical piece with all of its individual elements with the goal of mastering the piece to bring the elements together collectively. This in turn forms positive habits and skills that are essential for performance in various other academic studies (not to mention invaluable life skills as well)! Additionally studying music, singing and practicing an instrument builds self confidence and trust - you have to trust and believe in yourself and the skills you have earned through practicing to keep trying and eventually perform your master piece.

Music is also incredibly culturally based therefore it is educational in this sense as well. When exposed to different forms and genres of music the students imagination is encouraged which leads to stimulating their own improvisational skills as well. Every piece of music has its own message and emotion - children pick this up naturally and this innate ability helps them with their own self expression and connects them with their own emotions and sense of self. Music is a magical tool and when taught in a nurtured, fun loving and encouraging atmosphere it is exciting to know that children gain all of these benefits and more – naturally.

***~Karla Leger***

