

What a Music Education Means to Me:

I first picked up a violin in fourth grade, the year our elementary school let students play in orchestra or band. It was a little half size violin that we rented from a music store since I would outgrow it in a year. I know I sounded awful at first; I didn't have control over the bow and the finesse necessary to change strings without letting out an awful screeching noise. My fingers were clumsy and hadn't memorized the placements necessary to play the notes in tune. Everyone in my orchestra class sounded awful at first, to be honest, but we did not care. Playing our instruments was special, unlike anything we had ever done before. It was not like playing a sport, because there was this new level of creativity involved. It was not like sitting in math or reading class, because we were always actively using parts of ourselves and our instruments in an attempt to make something beautiful.

Over the years, I kept with the violin even though some of my friends dropped out. I was fortunate enough to get private lessons from a gifted and patient instructor and join district level honors orchestras. In high school, I even got the opportunity to travel across the country on tours and play at Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis. There were many times that I got frustrated and thought I might quit because I wanted to spend more time with my friends, I was tired of practicing or I wanted to join another activity. But something always stopped me. Years later, when I look back, I think it was because playing the violin made my life seem, well, in tune.

I grew up in the Twin Cities, and was lucky enough to go to school in a district with a robust music education program. So when I hear about the cutting of music education in San Diego it saddens me because I am sorry for the children who will not get to experience all the benefits of music that I did. None of what I did would have been possible without the resources my public school district provided for music education. I wonder that if I had not had access to an extensive music education program in my public school, with all the opportunities to play at so many different levels, would I be the same person I am today?

I do not know if I would have the same appreciation for beauty, not just in music, but in the people and things around me.. I do not know if I would have done as well in school. I was mostly an A student in grade school, a trend that has continued into college. Music helped me focus, it gave me balance, and always relieved my stress before taking on a big test. And I do not know if I would have the confidence that I do today. Hearing the result of pouring my heart and soul into a solo or arrangement gave me confidence in myself and my creative abilities.

That's what my music education did for me, and is why I believe it is important all children have access to such an important resource.