



**CENTRE COUNTY PREVENTION COALITION**  
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**July 28, 2010 – Music is Fun**

John Kovalchik has taught music in the State College Area school district for 39 years. This weekly column, published on Wednesdays, is a collaboration of Centre County *Communities That Care* serving Bald Eagle, Bellefonte, Penns Valley, and Philipsburg-Osceola Area School Districts, and Care Partnership: Centre Region *Communities That Care* serving the State College Area School District.

A well-rounded education should include three facets: Academics, Athletics and the Arts. Our legislators tell us what academics are important by what they deem necessary to test to see if a school is making adequate yearly progress or winning the race to the top. Athletics are important. Why else do we have “Sports” pages and news segments dedicated to sports? The difference between those sports and physical education for the masses can be addressed in a book at a later time. Where do the Arts fit?

All artistic outlets eventually aid the student in essentially the same way. Since I was in the fourth grade, I have been what some people would label as a “band geek”. I will address arts education from my perspective as a musician and music teacher.

Music has always been fun. All right, maybe not all the hours of practicing, but even there, I took the time to play a few things that were fun for me. I also learned self-discipline. I learned that the hard work is eventually worth it. No one used the term “Instant gratification” when I was a kid. We also had not yet learned how studying music aids in the raising of math and reading scores. No one had yet informed us that we were using more of our brain while playing an instrument than any other activity in which we may have been participating. We studied music for its own intrinsic values.

As I got better, more and more opportunities were presented to me. I developed many new friendships with people who worked as hard as I did and we all enjoyed the fruits of our labors together. Concerts and parades that were acclaimed by adjudicators helped to bolster self-esteem in a valid way.

Students have informed me over and over again how they didn’t understand why they had to work so hard. Students are often told that there is nothing in school that requires as much attention to detail as a group as when they are performing together in a musical ensemble. We are not yet including group brain surgery in the curriculum. Their moment of revelation had not yet occurred. When it did, they were truly amazed at how good it made them feel.

Many students are grateful when they discover how many lessons in life they have learned through their participation in music and music ensembles. A short list of these skills would include: self-discipline, analytical thinking, creativity, appreciation of aesthetic value, cooperation, and listening. They may also include learning to deal with failure and disappointment. If you didn’t make the cut this time, what are you going to do about it?

Studying music is a life-long activity that helps an individual in so many ways. Let's not forget what I said originally. Music is fun.

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