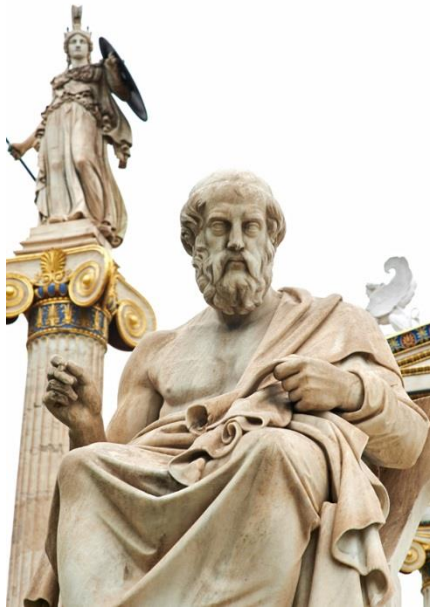


# MUSIC IS A MORAL LAW

By: Ashley Bleoaja



Plato once said, “Music is a moral law. It gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, a charm to sadness, and life to everything. It is the essence of order, and leads to all that is good, just and beautiful, of which it is the invisible, but nevertheless dazzling, passionate, and eternal form.” Music is more than just notes strung together to make a melody. Music can heal. It is often a means of personal expression when words alone fail to communicate what one feels. Yet, even more than that, music is capable of developing the mind in ways few other methods of learning can. According to PBS, research has found that learning music facilitates learning other subjects and enhances skills that children inevitably use in other areas. The effect of music education on language development can be seen in the brain. Recent studies have clearly indicated that musical training physically develops the part of the left side of the brain known to be involved with processing language, and can actually wire the brain’s circuits in specific ways. Linking familiar songs to new information can also help imprint information on young minds. (Children’s Music Workshop)

Since the brain of a child engaged in musical training works harder, and thus differently, than that of a nonmusical child, it is found that children who study a musical instrument during childhood exhibit a higher IQ later on in life. An article written by the PBS also states students in elementary schools with superior music education programs scored around 22 percent higher in English and 20 percent higher in math scores on standardized tests, compared to schools with low-quality music programs, regardless of socioeconomic disparities among the schools or school districts, according to a study published in 2007 by Christopher Johnson, professor of music education and music therapy at the University of Kansas. Music requires great concentration, diligence, and focus, and these skills formed through music education also benefit other aspects of students’ lives.

Music education in public schools is vital to the well-rounded development of American children. But more than just offering classes, teachers and program leaders must encourage students to actively participate in their lesson plans. According to the Time Magazine, a new study from Northwestern University revealed that in order to fully reap the cognitive benefits of a music class, kids can’t just sit there and let the sound of music wash over them. They have to be actively engaged in the music and participate in the class. “Even in a group of highly motivated students, small variations in music engagement — attendance and class participation — predicted the strength of neural processing after music training,” said Nina Kraus, director of Northwestern’s Auditory Neuroscience Laboratory. Active participation and meaningful engagement translate into children being highly involved in their musical training.

Schools that have music programs have an attendance rate of 93.3% compared to 84.9% in schools without music programs. Children are known to perform better and have more preferable results in activities and schoolwork if they are involved in the learning of a musical instrument. Schools must intentionally work towards providing their students the opportunities to grow in their academic studies, social situations, and personal lives as well. Music education is a key to a more well-rounded and successful life for all students.