

One job at the price of two

Business



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Raising his baton to the band that sits before him, the director plunges the baton down just as the ensemble draws a deep breath, and the music begins.

This overwhelming feeling in the moments of silence waiting for the director's downbeat is phenomenal. So few people will ever experience it, and today that number is rapidly decreasing due to the declining quality of music programs across the country. Decrepit instrumental and choral programs in the United States are primarily cultivated by schools combining the instrumental and choral teaching jobs in only one position. It seems as if everything is either downsized or eliminated because of today's current economy, resulting in many educators losing their jobs. To make up for lost positions, schools, primarily those in rural areas, have combined the position of teaching choir and band. This is an unfortunate cut, as study in these subjects is supported by overwhelming evidence that overall academic performance increases significantly.

According to www.childrensmusicworkshop.com, there are numerous benefits by providing children with a proper music education. They include teamwork, pride, accomplishment, responsibility, self-expression, and creativity. Not only is social and personal achievement gained through a strong music program, but intellectual growth as well.

At Mission Viejo High School in Southern California in 1981, the overall grade point average of music students was 3.59 and for non-music students the overall grade point average was 2.91. This same study also found that 16%

of the music students had a 4.0 overall grade point average and only 5% of the non-music students had a 4.

0 overall grade point average. A study conducted in the Albuquerque, New Mexico public schools compared all areas of the California Test of Basic Skills found that music students in an instrumental class for two or more years scored significantly higher on the test than non-music students. In support of this, Dr. Frank Wilson, assistant clinical professor neurology at the University of California School of Medicine, shared recent data from UCLA brain scan research studies which shows that music more fully involves brain functions (both left and right hemispheres) than any other activities studied. With mounting pressure of government programs such as No Child Left Behind it would make sense to support our music programs as they seem to be the easiest way of increasing test scores and grade point averages.

Music students, scholars with more extracurricular experience, have an advantage when it comes to college resumes as well. However, because this kind of information concerning the positive impact of music is so unknown to the public, school administrations and school boards simply dismiss instrumental and choral programs as just another extra, unneeded class, whose positions can be combined as one. What leadership also doesn't understand is the immense demand that both of these roles have. Now, both of these jobs combined has become teaching over twenty grades in two subjects no longer covered on daily basis for each class. This gives the teacher roughly 90 minutes a week of class time with a single class. Because the one teacher is now spread so thin, adequate time to address learning is no longer an option.

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Since he or she is on a tight schedule, time is very limited. Effective teachers provide warm-ups, scales, and create educational opportunities by practicing pieces for concert, pep band, auditions, and other performances, but because time in class is so limited, the possibility that any real learning retained is slim due to inadequate class time. If time in class weren't incomplete enough, the teacher's time planning for all the classes taken on has naturally reduced as well. Teachers with bachelor's degrees in music education are qualified to teach both instrumental and choral. However, since the majority of majors concentrate on only one of these fields, it makes it harder to teach in the area that they feel uncomfortable. This is comparable to say, one person coaching both cross-country and track full-time by himself or herself with no coaching help.

One unfamiliar with cross-country and track might group the two sports together as just running. Just as an outsider would think choral and instrumental are the exact same things, music, right? Wrong. In track, there are over a dozen events to coach, meets to plan for and attend, and workouts to prepare. With just one person coaching, having a solid track program is unattainable. Now imagine the same person coaching cross-country on top of attempting to single-handedly coach track.

It just does not work. The same applies to the position of teaching both choral and instrumental music. Those educators in the position of teaching two different subjects, stressful and exhausted, will focus more on their weak subject and neglect their strength. Undertaking this job includes teaching seven classes a day, from grades kindergarten up to high school age in two subjects. Planning for those classes, which includes finding suitable sheet <https://assignbuster.com/one-job-at-the-price-of-two/>

music and warm-ups, preparing for three concerts (all three including different class levels of band and choir), planning for marching in parades and/or marching competitions by finding appropriate music and creating marching drills, searching for pep band music and arranging play lists for football and basketball games, not to mention dedicating his or her Friday nights to those games, and preparing concert competition music and working with students after school in private lessons; this all being just the first semester of the school year.

Multiple concerts, pep band, marching band, and auditions make the job even harder as band and choir's aspect range outreaches farther than the classroom alone. Coordinating all that listed previously with lesson plans for over 20 grades, he or she is now responsible for what can amount to over 200 pupils, ranging from kindergarten to high school age. At the same time the teacher has obtained a full-schedule of two different jobs, the time and effort spent on lesson plans sharply declines. Spread so thin, the teacher no longer has the preparation he or she used to due to teaching and making plans for kindergarten through high school in two subjects. Now, his or her quality of teaching is likely to be compromised due to being overextended.

Since the only public insight to the school's music program is through performances such as concerts, competitions, and pep band, much is on the line. It is then revealed through these presentations if the director in position is falling short on his or her job. Therefore, school leadership and other public figures will assume the music program is deplorable, and see further reason to cut funding. Not to mention any potential members are now turned away due to the disappointment being poorly showcased. Although fault often

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rests in the director for a mediocre performance, a poor production is met with ridicule towards musicians in the ensemble. For young ensembles, second-rate concerts are the fault of the director, who is fully responsible for education administered.

Today, the highest priority for some school systems seems to be one of saving money and not educating children. Imagine the world without music, it might not be a distant reality. The next generation is receiving an education that doesn't include expression, creativity, teamwork, and listening. If schools continue with this pattern of making two people's jobs into one, music education will continue to decline, and the melody of our future music programs will decrescendo into nothingness.