

Let the Band Play On

In my opinion, there are many benefits of the band and musical programs. For one, it builds a sense of camaraderie, providing a positive focus for students with similar interests. It's a team activity where students learn to work together for a common good. It provides a safe environment to try out new things and encourages students to assume leadership roles. Music allows for creative expression while at the same time teaching rote memorization.

Studies also show that musical schoolwork impact the way children learn and process knowledge. A U.S. Department of Education study found that students who were involved in instrumental music during their middle and high school years show significantly higher levels of mathematical proficiency by grade 12. Additionally, students who learn to play an instrument develop a great language capacity and a greater ability to learn new languages.

I could go on about the benefits . . . music enhances fine motor skills, sharpens student attentiveness, improves reasoning skills . . . but instead, I asked some middle and high school band students to provide their opinions. Here are some of their answers to three questions:

What do you like best about band?

- I like getting to show my parents everything I've learned when we have a concert. —Harlie Delay, 6th grade
- The teachers and the songs we play are awesome, and playing my instrument is really fun. —Kendra Guy, 6th grade
- I enjoy the teachers and the amount of fun we have. —Abigail Elliott, 6th grade
- You can express yourself on your instrument. —Dawson Whalen, 6th grade
- I like learning the music and hearing the notes come together in a song. —Ivy Tompkins, 6th grade
- I love that we can express ourselves through music. I also love Mr. Weishaar; he has been he best teacher ever! —Rylie Volkman, 6th grade
- I like Mr. Weishaar, our band teacher. He's the best. —Grant Weishaar, 6th grade
- I like all the music we play, and the fun trips we take. —Rae Schwarting, 8th grade
- The thing I like the best about band is that I enjoy music and we get to play fun things. —Bailey Lacy, 7th grade
- It is very fun because our band teach makes it fun and we play fun songs. —Darren Whalen, 8th grade
- I love to learn notes and to wake up every day and get to come to school and play in band for my favorite teacher. —Brittany Ebersole, 7th grade
- Mr. Weishaar is a great band teacher. He can be making jokes and be silly one minute and completely serious the next. Band is always a joy. —Katie Zey, 7th grade

- I really enjoy coming to class to a friendly teacher who's good at what he does. Mr. Weishaar is a great band teacher and I've learned a lot from him. —Jaden Walters, 7th grade
- The ability to enhance my skills in practicing my instrument. I love being able to be a part of making music. —Maura Pastran, 11th grade (please check spelling on name)
- I enjoy being a drum major. It helps me become a leader. I also love all my new friends I've made; I hang out with them in class and outside of school. I also enjoy the music and challenges Mr. Tompkins has for us. —Abigail Young, 10th grade
- I love having opportunities to expand my musical repertoire. I also enjoy the relationships of students in the band. I like the overall mindset of band students because they tend to be very open-minded and fun. It also doesn't hurt that Mr. Tompkins is my favorite teacher. I think that he truly does care about his students, and he is extremely passionate about his job. — Brandon Jones, 10th grade
- Anyone is welcome. I can interact with a wide variety of people. There is always something to improve on. It's all about cooperation and team effort. —Sage Toakach, 11th grade
- Mr. Tompkins and his teaching skills! —Jacob Minson, 9th grade

Why did you enroll in band?

- I thought it would be a fun and new experience. —Kendra Guy, 6th grade
- So I can be smarter and have a good future —Dawson Whalen, 6th grade
- My family is very musical and every time the band came to the schools I was so interested I couldn't wait to join. —Monica Elias, 6th grade
- My mom made me! I thought I would hate it but I started looking forward to coming into band every day. —Kate Luty, 6th grade
- It seemed fun. —Zachary Schultze, 6th grade
- I seemed like it was something fun to do, and it is. —Damian Hartman, 6th grade
- I thought it would be a great experience. —Zachary Gable, 8th grade
- Because I thought it was a fun and interesting thing to be in. —Sam Burt, 8th grade
- I heard from my brother that it was fun. —Ellis Johnson, 8th grade
- I enrolled in band because I thought it would be fun to do something different than sports. —Becca Miller, 7th grade
- I started music when I was five, so band seems like an obvious class for me to take. Music is what my life revolves around and band is another outlet for me to express myself. —Abigail Young, 10th grade
- I enrolled in band because of my love of music. I also like to have such a large class with students in every grade. —Brandon Jones, 10th grade
- To be in a class with people in all grades. Because I want to go into music. There are so many different parts of band (marching band, pep band, honor band,

- concert band, solo/ensemble festivals), so it never gets boring. —Sage Toakach, 11th grade
- I've always enjoyed music and Mr. Tompkins and Mr. Weishaar always make it fun and educational. —Jacob Minson, 9th grade
 - I enrolled in band because this is one of the best band programs in the state and it allows my music skills to grow. —Maura Pastran, 11th grade (please check spelling on name)

How do you see band fitting into your plans for the future?

- I would love to get money for college for playing French horn. —Harlie Delay, 6th grade
- I plan on playing in band in high school and maybe in college. —Kendra Guy, 6th grade
- I'm planning to play for the rest of my life. —Christian Delgato, 6th grade
- I'll play during high school and probably try to get a scholarship. —Emily Burt, 6th grade
- I think band will fit into my plans in the future; it'll be a good start for money in college. If I keep getting better I will probably play for K-State. —Zachary Schultze, 6th grade
- It helps me to learn to work together with others. —Victoria Weltha, 6th grade
- I'm going to play in college and maybe be a band director if I'm good enough. —Luke Kohler, 6th grade
- I want to play in band through high school. I also want to play in the K-State band in college. —Jackson Welsh, 6th grade
- I hope to get a scholarship to college for band. —Cody Wuthnow, 8th grade
- Band will help me with college through scholarships. It will also keep me involved after high school. Band has taught me how to use my trumpet so that it will be with me forever. —Abigail Young, 10th grade
- It will be a large part of my life as I want to be a band director. I want to have an opportunity to make a large impact in people's lives such as the [AMS & AHS] band program and facility have made in my life. —Brandon Jones, 10th grade
- I want to go into musical theatre so my band experience will help me directly in college and beyond. Students learn tons of valuable skills in band, so it is helpful to everyone. Most students will not go into music, but the cooperation, focus, listening, and practice skills they learn in band will definitely help them in any future endeavors. —Sage Toakach, 11th grade
- I will hopefully play band in college; possibly major in it. —Jacob Minson, 9th grade
- I feel that music will always have a role in my life considering that I want to become a band director. —Maura Pastran, 11th grade

For the complete list of student comments, go to Abilene USD 435's website (<http://www.abileneschools.org/USD435/Main.html>)

And, in conclusion, all that seems left to say is . . . let the band play on!

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