

## DOES PLAYING A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT MAKE A CHILD SMARTER ?

by Wendell Harrison

(This article was first presented to the Rochester (N.Y.) City School District. Although it is based on studies relating to participation in band and orchestra programs, the results are equally applicable and important to the study of piano.)

Studies have been done for some time now on basic intelligence as it relates to playing a musical instrument. While once it was said that smart kids are in the band or orchestra, for sometime now neurologists have been finding that the kids are smart because they are in the band or orchestra.

Recently a series of comprehensive skills tests were run on 5,154 fifth-graders in all of Albuquerque's 75 elementary school . . . . and guess what? In every single test area kids who were participating in the school band or orchestra received higher marks than their classmates. **NOT ONLY THAT, BUT THE LONGER THE SCHOOL CHILDREN HAD BEEN IN INSTRUMENTAL PROGRAMS, THE HIGHER THEY SCORED!**

My wife and I just returned from a 15-day tour of Japan. We were most impressed that Japan probably has the highest degree of technology in the world today, a country of 115 million people, and smaller than the state of Montana. In Japan, every school child is required to play a musical instrument between the 4th and 9th grades in school. I am also told that Japanese students consistently score higher on the Musical Aptitude Profile by Edwin Gordon.

The theory of bi-lateralism of the brain has been thought by many to be the reason for increased intelligence in the artistic child. This states that the brain is divided into two halves - - the analytical brain and the subjective/artistic brain. When both halves of the brain are not fed equally, the brain does not develop as a whole, thereby not developing as well in total intelligence.

I recently heard Dr. Frank Wilson, a well-known neurologist speak at a meeting of the American Music Conference in New York City. His feeling that increased intelligence is helped by a child playing a musical instrument is based on the fact that approximately 80 to 90 percent of the brain's motor-control capabilities are devoted to the hands, mouth and throat. He feels that by developing highly refined control in those areas, a child is stimulating almost the entire brain, thereby increasing its total capabilities.

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