

ISSUE 007



fireworks

The magazine for the BBB community





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Why do people break up with music learning?

BBB is venturing into the world of [Instagram](#) and [TikTok](#) and the new platforms are making us think differently about how we talk about the value of music learning.

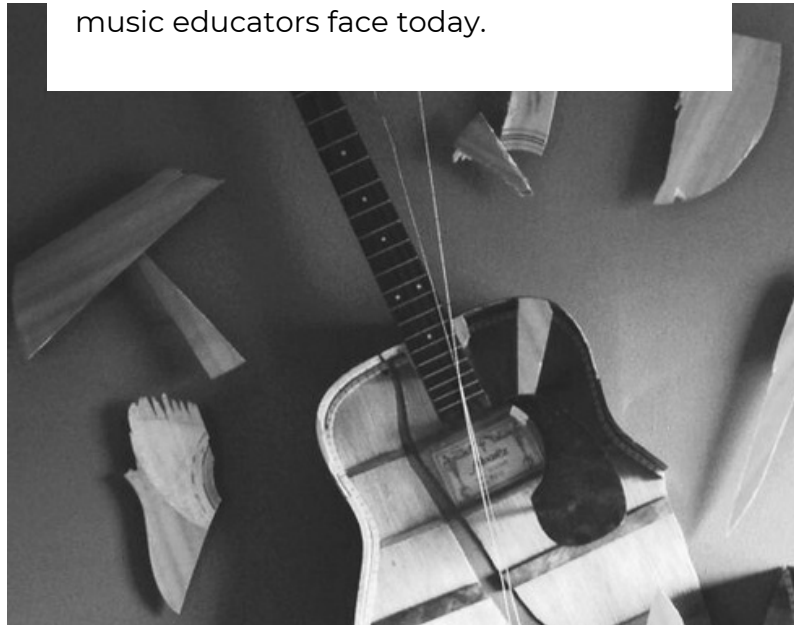
Our highly creative social media coordinator Bebe came up with an idea to complement Valentine's Day and ask two questions - when did you fall in love with music education and why do people break up with music learning?

The answers to the first question were passionate and full of emotion, talking about influential teachers in Year 9 band and inspiring and supportive instrumental teachers. They were wonderful answers, but also pretty predictable.

The answers to the second question were equally as passionate and spoke to the core issues that many music teachers "battle" every year.

We often hear military or war references used when we talk about sustaining a music program through thick and thin, and this is probably because it feels like it is us against the world.

After reading through all the responses, I have taken two to address, as I believe that these answers both raise particularly valid and relevant issues that many music educators face today.



Break up #1

"They see it devalued - low school budgets, poor schedules, limited performance opportunities, double standards compared to athletics, resulting in a situation of high-effort to low-social-value appearance."

Benjamin

Benjamin's comment speaks to that battle, being attacked from all sides while trying to fight the good fight.

It begs the question, why have music learning at a school that takes this approach? I tend to think it is because there is a historical or parental expectation, or it supports a specific aspect of the school culture.

For these reasons no one has thought about the potential of the music program to improve the school in anything from enrolments to positive behaviour, attendance to academic achievement.

In many cases, schools operate and plan in silos, not consulting early and widely enough to make all aspects of the school function for the students.

It is very human to focus, protect and promote the little patch of the school that you may be in charge of, but who oversees the wholistic experience for the students?

Many schools just "run" and we are not entirely sure how, but the process of running a school is just as vital as the product, just like a rehearsal is just as important as the performance.

Could we, as innovative and practical music teachers, help shift the processes used within a school so that the process supports the product and ultimately improves it?

Leaders don't have all the answers, and sometimes they need a problem solver to show them a better way.



Break up #2

"I think a huge reason is because we live in a world of instant gratification. When something is not entertaining all the time or constantly giving us a quick dopamine hit, it can be easy to cast it aside.

Maybe we could say teachers aren't inspiring, but I don't think that's it (maybe in some cases, but def not all!). Learning a new skill—like playing an instrument—takes time, discipline, resilience, and commitment."

Robyn

Robyn's comment has so much depth and speaks to the students that we teach today. Being comfortable with discomfort, and let's face it, learning music is a whole lot of discomfort, is in rapid decline in first-world Western countries.

Being comfortable with discomfort is the descriptive version of persistence and resilience, two areas that schools are focusing on developing and spending a lot of money in the process to deliver for their students.

It does astound me sometimes that schools are not aware of the fact that they already have programs that "teach" persistence and resilience in a profound and permanent way. Music learning develops the mechanisms in the brain that support persistence and resilience.

Think of when a student starts to learn a musical instrument, they have to try and try and try again to get a sound out, and then to coordinate their bodies to change notes, and all of this keeps a student in an uncomfortable state for an extended period of time.

When that student has a breakthrough and gets that note they have been aiming for, the intense shot of dopamine that comes from the reward network makes them feel euphoric.

The brain then says "Great, do you like that feeling? Play that note again!" and suddenly the effort and achievement cycle is fuelled by learning music.

Music learning is not just a tool to teach persistence and resilience, it changes the

brain so students are not afraid or apprehensive about trying something new. Actually the opposite, they seek it out and embrace challenges.

Students who learn music also understand that high reward comes from consistent effort, and are more willing to put in the time and energy to reach a significant and sometimes long-term goal.

If we as music teachers could help students, parents and especially other teachers and leaders to see music learning in this light, maybe our conversations about music learning would be very different.

The more you know, the stronger your voice!

What made you fall in love with music education?



I loved band rehearsal - that was the best part of any school day.



Music gave me an identity and purpose at a very difficult time and I would like to hope I can do the same for children now.



Seeing the face light up when a musical concept clicks into place. When you see the glimpse of your passion reflected back at you.



The impact it has on brain development and mental health



The ability to heal and make a difference in student's lives and give student's opportunities regardless of their demographic.



As the mother of a child on a healing journey from a brain-based illness (PANS/PANDAS), who is also homeschooling her, we have found educational music videos to be a vital component of her learning. This musical curriculum resonates with my daughter. She loves singing and moving to the beat. That's why I love music education.

The more you know

The stronger your voice

