Educational Benefits of Playing Marimbas

by Jesse Rowan

- Music is often under-represented in the curriculum, but research shows that learning and experiencing playing music helps children’s academic performance, thinking and problem-solving skills.

- Music can be a creative experience of problem-solving to work out parts that sound good together.

- Children are highly motivated to play marimbas - it’s fun! Children learn best when having fun.

- Playing music helps improve concentration and memory. Marimba playing is strongly based on learning patterns and sequences.

- Regardless of their musical level, children can play simple patterns that can be added together to make a great musical sound.

- Listening skills are greatly enhanced when playing marimbas: players need to listen carefully to play in time together.

- Both sides of the brain are exercised - the hands are alternated most of the time, and crossing of the midline becomes second nature.

- Two or three children can play parts on one marimba together, making them a social and co-operative activity.

- Teachers can teach music with marimbas without extensive musical expertise.

- The science of sound production can be demonstrated and studied through the marimba.

- Marimbas make it easy for children to learn short repeating patterns which work under a melody. A third child can put in simple notes that sound ‘right’ for the bass. Mozart as a young child put it like this: "I am looking for two notes that love each other."

- Learning small parts that contribute to the whole sound of a performance is possible without the usual years of hard work it takes for a musician to have the pleasure of making music with others.

- A whole class can be involved by adding in other percussion instruments, singing and movements for a performance.