

Why teach music in a keyboard lab?

There has been some interesting research comparing a traditional general music curriculum with one taught through keyboards. In short, keyboard music education has been found to teach music more effectively, encourage more creativity and provide more personal satisfaction than a traditional course.

It is not hard to see why.

Firstly, traditional methods have often focussed on writing about music and responding to the music of others. Kids want to play music. The heart of music is in its practice; the keyboard lab offers this.

Keyboards offer a variety of learning situations within individual and group formats. Headphones encourage personal engagement and give the teacher environmental sanity. Students have reported a deep level of satisfaction working on keyboards. They are playing 'real' music. By and large, students do not consider tuned percussion or recorders/tin whistle 'real' music. They want an authentic experience.

Research studies point to strong correlations between keyboard playing and other benefits such as:

- improvement in musicality
- higher musical achievement
- more confidence in musical abilities and creativity
- greater changes in positive attitude toward music
- greater cognitive development in music
- greater gains in pitch discrimination
- reduction in stress levels more so than resting or reading
- self-esteem and confidence
- more popular and enjoyable
- pattern recognition and spatial reasoning
- mathematical and scientific concepts

Keyboard lab classes offer individualised learning and continuous learning throughout the years, and enough complexity and variety to engage an individual throughout the school life (and beyond). Keyboard programs have been shown to be more effective in encouraging musical interest than traditional programs, resulting in greater possibilities for life-long music making. Students are more likely to take this music 'home' with them.

Keyboard labs are inexpensive to set up, and although appropriate curriculum materials have been sparse in the past, *Music and Keyboard in the Classroom* addresses this. The course has been proven effective, is easy to teach, and enjoyable for the teacher.

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