

# Huntington North Bands

Concerts: HU Thur 5/3, Jazz Explosion Fri 5/4, HNHS

Bands Mon 5/7

## Music crosses Academic boundaries

Posted on [February 29, 2012](#)

We are supposed to teach across academic-specific areas. WE DO:

- We recently played music from the movie, "The King's Speech", music by Beethoven (historic, iconic, classical) and learned some of the HISTORY of the movie, i.e. WWII, the king's stuttering problem and the artistic effect of the music behind the speech [only in the movie] as we watched that particular movie clip. That's **HISTORY** and **THEATER**.
- We played a piece called "Andante" which is an ITALIAN term indicating tempo, or speed. Andante is faster than Adagio but slower than Allegro. Many of the musical terms that we find in our music are a foreign language, historically predominantly Italian. Musicians must understand that fortissimo is louder than forte, which means they also learn the suffix 'issimo'. Allegretto is a "little bit" allegro. Dolce is nearly the opposite of marcato and if you get crescendo and decrescendo backwards, you can ruin the entire effect. If the music page tells you to rallantando and you accelerando instead, you crash. If you miss a fermata or play through a cessura, you'll be embarrassed. Not only are there vocab words, but there are abbreviations for them as well; f, ff, <, >, ^, //. **FOREIGN LANGUAGE**.
- Music is **CULTURAL**. One of our concert bands is playing a piece called "Africa; Ceremony, Song and Ritual...". There are 26 different drumming assignments. We have reviewed pictures of African drums, watched/listened to video/sound clips and taken class time to understand how that complex sound is really not much more than several more simple rhythms layered on top of each other, often in compound meters of simultaneous duple and triple rhythms (did you get that?). The music calls for "native sounds" in one place and humming in another. If we were to correctly perform "Andante" and "Africa" in the same concert, not a single audience participant should have trouble determining which piece is European and which is African. That's **WORLD GEOGRAPHY**. To play/understand Jazz music necessitates some **SOCIAL STUDIES** understanding of New Orleans and how the import of slave music morphed into a style of music that the whole world understands

originated in the USA. There is an academically valid reason why much of jazz, especially originally, was not written down. **HISTORY AGAIN?**

- Music notation is a **LANGUAGE**. Every mark on the music page has a name. Notes make phrases just as letters form words. Phrases go together to make themes as words make sentences and paragraphs. You must be **MUSICALLY** literate to read our language. **THAT IS LITERACY**.
- Music is **MATHMATICAL**. When we read those markings, in addition to telling us what sound to make, they also tell us how to group them together rhythmically. It takes two sixteenths to make an eighth, two eights to make a quarter, two quarters to make a half and two half notes to equal a whole. **MATH**.
- Music is **EMOTIONAL**. Performed well, “Stars and Stripes” will evoke a significantly different response than “Taps”, or the jazz version of “Sing, Sing, Sing”. Music is used at **BIRTH**days and at funerals; to represent victory or emote defeat. It can make us cheer or cry. ....but **ONLY** if the musicians understand and convey the emotion in what/how they play. **PSYCHOLOGY/THEATRE!**
- To talk **DRAMA**, we could discuss Marching Band or Show Choir.
- We tune our instruments because we know that out of tune notes together make an ugly sound, the understanding of which requires a basic understanding of sound waves and frequency. **PHYSICS**. We lengthen or shorten the instruments to match pitch. Understanding vibrations, frequencies and how the length of the instrument adjusts pitch is **SCIENCE**.

There are volumes on how music enhances understanding in other subjects, especially language and math.... but that’s not today’s topic. **MUSIC IS LITERACY**. When we teach music, read music, perform music.... we are demonstrating academic understanding at least equivalent to a variety of school subjects.

In an article adapted from a Research Project, (<http://www.musickit.com/resources/forumart.html>),

*Music is, demonstrably, a language. It is in fact an extremely sophisticated language. It has its own “grammar” and a logic dictated by the harmonic patterns of various frequencies (itches) sounded simultaneously and in series. We react to these patterns with marked physical and emotional responses. It communicates and in fact encodes and replicates harmonic events in time. Sounds, as we have known from at least the time of Pythagoras, have structure and mathematical relationships to each other...”*



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2 THOUGHTS ON "MUSIC CROSSES ACADEMIC BOUNDARIES"

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