

## Music lessons cause faster rise in children's IQ: study

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"Wagner's music is better than it sounds," Mark Twain famously said. Parents whose children take music lessons can now say the same: Canadian research shows that children who study music will see their IQ increase faster than those who do not.

The study, published in the journal *Psychological Science*, shows that children who took piano or voice lessons for an entire school year had an additional gain of almost three points more on IQ tests than the average increase a child not taking music lessons would experience.

"Music lessons, taught individually or in small groups, may provide additional boosts in IQ because they are like school but still enjoyable," said Glenn Schellenberg, the author of the study and a professor of psychology at the University of Toronto at the Mississauga campus.

"Moreover, music lessons involve a multiplicity of experiences that could generate improvement in a wide range of activities."

The researcher was quick to add, however, that he does not believe there is anything about music that makes children magically more intelligent, and that parents should not take the study to mean that their children should study music to the exclusion of other activities.

"Honestly, I think children could get the same effect from reading or playing chess, but we didn't study those," Dr. Schellenberg said. "And there are benefits you're going to get from playing soccer that you won't get from playing the piano."

To conduct the study, 144 children were recruited through a newspaper ad offering free weekly arts lessons to six-year-olds. Those children were randomly assigned to four different groups: keyboard lessons, voice lessons, drama classes, or no lessons. (The children getting no lessons were offered them free of charge the next year, after the study was completed).

Children underwent a battery of psychological tests, including intelligence quotient tests, before and after the lessons, which lasted an entire school year.

The study revealed that, during the academic year, the average IQ scores of the children in all four groups increased -- but those taking music lessons had the sharpest rise.

The IQ of children taking voice lessons rose 7.5 points, to an average of 111.4 from 103.8. Among children taking keyboard lessons, the rise was 6.1 points, and with those taking drama it was 5.1 points. The IQ of children who took no lessons rose 3.9 points.

Dr. Schellenberg said he was not surprised by the findings. "I think what you're seeing is the beneficial effect of more schooling."

He said research has repeatedly shown that school attendance bolsters IQ and that instruction is particularly effective when it is done in small groups, as with music and drama.

The researcher said that IQ scores don't tell the whole story. For example, the children who studied drama had big improvements in their social skills, something not seen in the music group.

The association between music and intelligence has been the subject of heated academic discussion for a number of years.

More than a decade ago, Frances Rauscher of the University of Wisconsin made international headlines with her finding that listening to Mozart triggered temporary increases in spatial intelligence.

The so-called Mozart effect spawned a lot of research and a whole subculture of parents playing Mozart music for their babies, even when they are in utero.

Dr. Schellenberg has published papers that challenge the existence of a Mozart effect. He said the new study is a separate line of research, one which examines whether music, and music lessons in particular, have benefits that extend to the non-musical part of the brain.

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