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LONGMONT, COLORADO, UNITED STATES

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ST. VRAIN VALLEY SCHOOLS
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CRESCENDO

ADVANCING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH MUSIC

BY KERRI MCDERMID
PHOTOS BY AARON FORD

cre·scen·do

/krə'SHen,dō/

noun

noun: crescendo; plural noun: crescendos; plural noun: crescendi

- the loudest point reached in a gradually increasing sound.
- the highest point reached in a progressive increase of intensity.
- a gradual increase in loudness in a piece of music.

IN JILL FISCHABER'S MORNING ORCHESTRA CLASS at Altona Middle School, the low buzz of plucked strings and student chatter gives way to the piercing sound of a sustained 'A' note as the violins and violas bring their instruments to their chins, the cellos and basses sit a little taller in their chairs, and everyone brings their bows to their strings to begin the start of class tuning – A, D, G, C, and E.

The daily ritual of tuning or vocal warm-ups takes place every day in classrooms across St. Vrain Valley Schools, where opportunities for students to engage in music programs is a priority for ensuring students

receive a robust educational experience. Beyond the beauty that is created when students bring their individual voices and tones together to create a unified sound, high-quality music education has a significant, lasting impact on the future success and achievement of students who pursue their artistic passions.

Research has shown strong ties between music participation and the advancement of language development, literacy, numeracy, measures of intelligence, creativity, fine motor coordination, concentration, self-confidence, emotional sensitivity, social skills, teamwork, self-discipline, and relaxation¹.



Photo (Left): Mead Elementary second grade students (left to right), Natalie Crane, Brock Anderson, Aaron Palacios, and Lucelia Johnson learn the foundations of music on the xylophone.

Photo (Right): Mead Unified Percussion students, Kylee Mendez and Cole Smith, make their performance debut at Band Night.

Additionally, students who participate in music scored an average of 31 points higher on their SAT², and there is a strong relationship between student participation in the arts and higher GPAs and academic achievement³.

“Music in public schools has a huge impact on student involvement. It is a place where students can try something new, find new ways to express themselves, and meet others with the same interests,” said Fischaber. “For many students, finding something they are passionate about makes all the difference in their education. Studies show that music students tend to be more organized and perform better academically. For many, it can also be a reason for them to come to school.”

Across the district, the rituals of daily music practice take on a different rhythm as members of the Mead High School marching band not only ensure that their shoelaces are tied and their instruments are tuned, but that they are marching in sync to the 85 other members of the troupe.

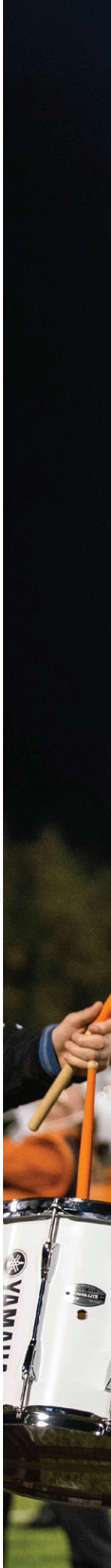
“Band has impacted me as a leader, a friend, a daughter, a student, and as the person I am today. It created a family of people who I can learn from and grow with, where I can also teach others to become a leader and a better person,” shared Alyssa Diaz, a sophomore at Mead High School and clarinet player in the Mead High Marching Band. “Band teaches skills inside and outside of music, such as problem solving and learning to be a leader to people other than my fellow band members. Music education has shown me that I can achieve great things and use my talents to help others – or even just put a smile on someone’s face.”

Across St. Vrain Valley Schools, 54 percent of secondary students participate in over 180 music classes – a rate that is significantly higher when you also include other arts programs such as theater, dance, and visual arts. At the elementary school level, all students receive a high-quality music education experience and in many classrooms, music is integrated through other subjects such as STEM and language arts.

“While students take great pride in the exalted experience of a great performance, they also treasure being a part of an inclusive ensemble that welcomes and values all members,” said Chad Lemons, band director at Mead High School. “Many of my former students continue to play music after high school and several are music majors – two of them hoping to return to teach in St. Vrain. I hope all of my students are inspired to follow their arrow wherever it points.”

This year, Mead High School is also starting the district’s first Unified Percussion Ensemble that pairs a special education student with a general education student to learn and perform music together. Modeled after the district’s highly-successful Unified Sports program, Lemons hopes that the students coming together to create music and develop a shared passion for the arts will continue to strengthen the community and enrich the lives of all who share in that joy.

“Music education ignites an intrinsic motivation in our students that impacts so much more than test scores, attendance rates, and academic engagement,” shared Lemons. “In a society of instant gratification, music continues to challenge our students to reveal the reward of perseverance.” 🎓




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**CHAD LEMONS
BAND DIRECTOR
MEAD HIGH SCHOOL**



By the Numbers
IMPACT OF THE ARTS

 **19,603**

secondary student enrollments in a visual or performing arts class (some students may enroll in more than one class).

.....

 **271**

secondary classes in visual and performing arts.

.....

 **44**

All-State musicians in the 2018-2019 school year.

.....

 **66**

elementary music and art programs available for students.

¹Hallam, S. (2010). The power of music: Its impact on the intellectual, social and personal development of children and young people. *International Journal of Music Education*, 28(3), 269–289. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0255761410370658>.

²College Board. (2012). 2012 College-bound seniors total group profile report. Retrieved from <https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/digitalServices/pdf/research/TotalGroup-2012.pdf>.

³Hanover Research. (2016). The impact of arts and athletics participation on student success. Retrieved from <https://www.gssaweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/The-Impact-Of-Arts-And-Athletics-Participation-On-Student-Success.pdf>.