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# Integrating Music into Samoan Primary Schools: Teachers' Perceptions and Potential Benefits

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*SIT Study Abroad*

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2013

# [Integrating Music into Samoan Primary Schools:]

[Teachers' Perceptions and Potential  
Benefits]

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# Teachers' Perceptions and Potential Benefits of Music Integration

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## **ABSTRACT:**

This study explores the knowledge-base of teachers' beliefs and practices of music integration in Samoan primary schools, as well as the potential benefits it provides for young developing minds. Current Samoan teachers' perceptions of the benefits of music are analyzed in light of data proving these benefits in Primary Education. Children gain only as much as teachers incorporate. Social benefits include a more positive learning environment, improved attention and attitude, as well as inspiration and motivation, along with academic benefits of increased verbal memory, abstract reasoning and reading development. Data was collected through a series of interviews, surveying, observation and documentation in seven schools in Samoa. The views of 44 teachers and 7 Head Teachers were analyzed. It was found that integration is common but not frequent. Teachers recognize music provides many academic and social benefits to their students, mirroring many of the studies cited. Incorporating new teaching practices and integrating more music offers obvious benefit and a simple way to engage more students, improve classroom morale and the overall attitude toward learning.

**Elementary Education, Curriculum & Instruction, Music Ed, Music, Multicultural Education**

For all students: that teacher, mentors, parents and citizens will continue to work diligently for our sake, forever improving the global education system.

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|Charlotte, the Head Teacher of Peace Chapel from New Zealand guides me around the school grounds, introducing me to teachers as we go. She knows each student by name. She greets them in *palagi* quips, “what’s up,” and reprimands them, “chill out,” as we weave through students in neat blue and green uniforms. Snaking through yelling boys and girls, we cross into an open field. The schools youngest members play in the field, watched closely by recess monitors. The children see Charlotte coming and start to shriek. Their excitement is infectious and they run to her, heads only coming to her thighs, clinging to her legs and effectively obstructing her mobility. Twenty, then thirty small children surround Charlotte, building off the manic energy of their classmates, all trying for a hug. It’s as though she’s a celebrity and they are her crazed fans, seeking attention. |

|Peace Chapel Primary School, 11-12-13

## INTRODUCTION:

As suggested by observations at Peace Chapel, teachers are some of the most influential people in the development of young children. How teachers structure their lessons influences how students evolve. Students’ view the classroom, their attitudes towards learning, and their study habits are all influenced by a good or bad teacher. An integrated curriculum acknowledges differences in learning styles and treats a child’s development as an interwoven cloth, not boxed into subjects and differing ideas (Brewer, C., 1995). The use of music is an important aspect of integration. This study will explore the benefits music integration brings academically and socially using previous research and the perceptions of teachers. Integration draws connections between content areas to help students’ develop greater understanding of concepts inherent across disciplines (Still, K. & Bobis, J. 2005). The benefits of exposing young minds to music will be explored along with the current perception of these benefits by Samoan primary school teachers. Seeking an alternate perception of teaching and examining proven benefits is the first step to using music more effectively in the classroom. In order for instruction to improve, current outlooks on music instruction must first be brought to light. Children are the future. They deserve quality education that is both interesting and relevant. By exposing proven benefits and analyzing them alongside current teachers’ views, music may be used more frequently in Samoan classroom, accounting for a broader range of learning preferences.



## *Multiple Intelligences Theory – Musical Intelligence*

Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences maintains that intelligence is not one entity but a spectrum of many different forms. Eight forms are recognized, visual-spatial, linguistic, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinaesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, musical and naturalist with an overall focus on understanding rather than rote memorization (Brewer, C., 1995). Although it is unlikely that each form of intelligence will receive equal focus in the classroom, all are believed to be equally deserving of development.

That music is considered a separate intelligence supports the idea that music education is deserving of instructional time-not because of music's benefits to the other intelligences but rather because of its development as a unique intelligence. Those who excel in music intelligence may or may not seek or receive formal music instruction. Rather, individuals with high music intelligence "think music" with greater clarity and are affected more deeply by music, in an aesthetic sense, than those with less music intelligence (Feierabend, M. J., 1995).

Music can make powerful contributions to developing minds and help develop academic and social skills as well as contribute to overall development. Music is a "unique form of communication that can change the way pupils feel, think and act." It is said that children's involvement in music engages and re-engages pupils, increases their self esteem, and maximizes their progress in education, not just in music. (Gove, M. & Vaizey, E, 2012) When accounting for different intelligences, subject integration often occurs, creating meaningful connections among subject areas. Relationships help students build on their prior knowledge and experiences, and leads to more meaningful learning. (Alberta Education, 2007)

### *Subject Integration and its Benefits*

Subject integration connects, interweaves and focuses interdisciplinary themes. It fits hand-in-hand with Gardener's theory of multiple intelligences. Instead of teaching linearly, integration focuses holistically where subjects are connected, just as young learners process the world. "The very notion of 'integration' incorporates the idea of unity between forms of knowledge and the respective disciplines" (Pring, 1973, p. 135). Knowledge and experiences are not compartmentalized by subject but interwoven to create a greater image.

Integration can be described as an approach to teaching and learning that is based on both philosophy and practicality. It can generally be defined as an approach that purposefully draws together knowledge, skills, attitudes and values from within or across subject areas to develop a more powerful understanding of key ideas. Integration occurs when components are connected and related in meaningful ways by both the students and teachers (Alberta Education, 2007).

An interdisciplinary approach to teaching makes education interesting and relevant for young learners. “An integrated curriculum can result in greater intellectual curiosity, improved attitude towards schooling, and enhanced problem-solving skills” (Austin, Hirstein, & Walen, 1997; Kain, 1993). The powers of integration include; benefits of flexibility, scaffolding, unifying students’ knowledge, and teaching how young minds process the world. “Teaching ideas holistically, rather than in fragmented pieces, better reflects how young students’ brains process information” (Alberta Education, 2007). Above all, subject integration makes leanings relevant for students, an important educational priority.

|Rain drums the tin roof as I pass classroom after classroom, silent except for the rain. Children look up from the puddle-filled yard, weeding and raking in the downpour. I reach the end of the motel-style school hall, confusion building as I go. *Where are the teachers? Why are students doing yard work at noon on a Thursday afternoon?* I approach the only adult spotted on campus, a middle aged woman I hope in the Head Teacher, donning an olive green *pulitasi*. “I am Laufitu,” she says triumphantly, obviously unsure as to who I am but hiding her confusion well. She welcomes me to Saleapaga, mistaking me for a ministry worker. |

|Saleapaga Primary School, 11-14-13

## **METHODOLOGY:**

Experiences such as that in Saleapaga were common as language barriers, academic schedules and lack of communication proved difficult. Although many challenges and biases arose, they were handled and solutions or alternate plans were formulated. The original intention of this project was to discover *how* music was being integrated and how this could be improved. Due to time constraints however, it quickly became obvious that writing relevant and beneficial lessons would take months of previous observation and work alongside the curriculum. End of year activities and human subject guidelines necessitated

shifting the focus to the benefits of music integration and teachers' attitudes toward and perceptions of music integration.

The study took place over the course of two weeks in November 2013. Seven primary schools were visited across the island of Upolu in Samoa. A survey, *Teachers' Attitudes Toward Music in the Primary Classroom* (see Appendix), delved into teachers' musical background and opinions about instruction. Eight semi-structured interviews were carried out with Head Teachers and various teachers to investigate their current musical practices and perceptions of possible benefits of music integration.

Of the seven schools visited, two were private in the urban area of Apia, one was private and religious in Apia, two were government in Apia and two were government and rural. The number of surveys from each school varied as some urban schools had as many as 23 teachers while the rural schools had no more than 4 teachers. Although 50 copies were distributed in total, only 44 were collected due to teacher absence and interference with national testing schedules. Five of the seven Head Teachers were interviewed, as well as a few informal interviews of teachers, expanding the ideas expressed on the surveys. Brief observations were made in each participating teachers' classroom as well, and events documented.

Time was the greatest constraint as transportation proved difficult and slow, surveys were not completed promptly, and working around the end of the year testing schedules was challenging. Language was another obstacle. Surveys were administered in English to eliminate complication in translation, but some terms were still misunderstood. Levels of English varied within classrooms. Not all informants understood the term 'integration' as used by the researcher so discussed what current music classes existed, not the ways in which they used music in other subjects.

The researchers' understanding of child development, primary education and music from an American perspective was undoubtedly a bias. Outlooks on 'quality' education, multiple intelligences and integration in this paper are seen from a Western perspective. The question of cultural relevance remains given that most research cited are from Western sources as well. This raises the question of relevance in a Pacific Island nation. Do the benefits still apply? A recognition and awareness of this cultural lens have helped manage these biases, though not eliminated them.

|As I wander the *fales* at the end of school grounds, leaving a trail in the muggy air, I reach a small *fale Samoa*. Forty sets of eyes track my approach, completely ignoring their imploring teacher. Some children wave excitedly, giving away their distraction. A woman of mid 40 sits cross-legged in a blue *pulitasi* at the head of the mat they all sit on. She greets me in a traditional Samoan manner, full of energy and offering. She insists that her Year twos will perform for me. The children stand, girls in dresses and uniform in front, boys in flat-brim hats and dusty tee's in the back. The teacher taps her umbrella on the wooden floor of the *fale*, effectively setting a tempo. She sings "*tasi, lua, tolu, fa...*" setting the pitch and counting the students in. The seven and eight year old girls sing and they all dance, exuding confidence not often found in adults. The girls sing in raspy, fluid Samoan and have perfect flowing wristwork and complicated footwork. They clap in time and keep decent pitch, beaming up as they perform for a *palagi*. |

| Samoa Primary School, Year 2, 11-12-13

## **BENEFITS OF MUSIC INSTRUCTION:**

As experienced at Samoa Primary, music engages students in a multitude of ways, mentally, physically, and emotionally. This connection can "create learning states which enhance understanding of learning material." (Brewer, C. 1995) In Culturally Responsive Classrooms through Art Integration, six benefits associated with the arts are identified: "better reading and language skills, mathematics skills, thinking skills, social skills, motivation to learn, and a positive school environment." (Reif, N. & Grant, L., 2010) Other research has proven academic benefits tied to music including increased memory, and verbal recall. Socially, music allows for creative and emotional expression; creates a more positive learning state, and even increased student motivation. A number of studies have confirmed these positive impacts among other personal benefits, "including increased self reliance, confidence, self-esteem, sense of achievement and ability to relate to others" (Gove, M. & Vaizey, E, 2012). Culturally identity is also promoted through music integration, especially in a country like Samoa whose traditional roots lie in oral and visual arts such as storytelling, song and dance. Reif and Grant mention that "integrating arts into teaching and learning can result in more engaging classrooms for students of all backgrounds" (Reif, N., & Grant, L, 2010).

## *Academic Benefits of Music Integration*

Increased memory skills are the most commonly cited example of intellectual benefits of music instruction. Along with memory, enhanced language skills, increased standardized test scores and verbal recall are commonly improved. A number of studies suggest have found that musical training has benefits for other cognitive domains though, such as mathematics. Various studies of children and adults indicate structural as well as functional differences between the brains of musicians and nonmusicians” (Trainor, J. L., Shahin, J. A., & Roberts, E. L., 2009). In The Importance of Music Education, Dr. Ken Petress cites various national organizations statistical findings throughout his paper. The National Association For Music Education (NAMC) states that music is proven to be beneficial to students in four major categories: “success in society, success in school, success in developing intelligence, and success in life.” They cite a College Entrance Examination Board report which states that “students involved in music education score significantly higher” on standardized national tests. NAMC also found that “musically involved students receive more academic honor than do non-musically involved students” He also cites various neurological sources proving that “music education enhances abstract reasoning needed in learning math and science. Music is shown to cross disciplines in aiding students’ development and performance and these benefits seem to transfer and enhance later lifetime needs.”(Petress, K, 2005). Many sources link music instruction with increased reading skill in youngsters. One such study conducted for a doctorate in Music Therapy entitled, The Effects of Live Music Groups Versus an Educational Children's Television Program on the Emergent Literacy of Young Children, found parallel skills exist in both music and reading. These include “phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, sight identification, orthographic awareness, cueing systems awareness, and fluency. Preliminary studies correlate children’s ability to read with their ability to discriminate pitches accurately” (Register, D., 2004). This suggests that with increased music instruction at a young age, a child may improve skills necessary in learning to read, hence improving their reading skills. Research has also proven this connection, between music and improved reading ability in children. Music is thus linked to the cognitive benefits of abstract reasoning, improved testing, and reading capability but memory is the most cited cognitive benefit of music instruction.

Improved verbal memory and retention, immediate recall, and enhanced cognitive functioning are all benefits found in students receiving music instruction. Musicians have been found to demonstrate enhanced cognitive and psychosocial functioning when compared with non-musicians, demonstrating superior verbal memory ability. The most convincing evidence for academic benefits of music training has been obtained through studies of verbal memory. “The construct of verbal memory consists of acquisition (or learning), immediate recall and delayed recall of verbal or auditory information.” (Rickard, N. S., Vasques, J. T., et. al, 2010) As music is a skill trained largely towards listening, it is logical that recall of auditory information would improve in musical students. Such improvements are catalogued in a variety of papers, including the results of a study published in the *Australian Journal of Music Education* in 2010. The Benefits of a Classroom Based Instrumental Music Program on Verbal Memory of Primary School Children: A Longitudinal Study, pointed out that “previous research has demonstrated a benefit of music training on a number of cognitive functions including verbal memory performance.” After a year-long study of increasing frequency and intensity of classroom-based music instruction of over 140 7-9 year old students, the results were measurable. “The Children's Memory Scale was used to test digit span, verbal learning and immediate and delayed verbal memory. Immediate visual recall was tested using the Benton Visual Designs test.” It was revealed that students receiving the music training program showed significantly better learning and immediate recall for verbal information than did controls. “The children receiving the music training recalled approximately 20% more words from a 16 word list presented three times than their classmates without music training. They also showed better verbal retention ability across two delayed recognition trials” (Rickard, N. S., Vasques, J. T., et. al, 2010). Another study found that students receiving an intensive music training program exhibited significantly better learning and immediate recall for verbal information, than did controls, thus proving the various benefits music instruction has on verbal memory (Carmilleri, P. 2012).

## *Social Benefits of Music Integration*

Numerous studies illuminate the positive impact music has on social and personal development, including increased self reliance, confidence, self-esteem, sense of achievement and ability to relate to others. (Gove, M. & Vaizey, E, 2012) Music can be used in the classroom to set moods, calm disruptive students, and teach valuable personal ideals. Music and Learning: Integrating Music in the Classroom, contends that music will,

establish a positive learning state, create a desired atmosphere, build a sense of anticipation, energize learning activities, change brain wave states, focus concentration, increase attention, improve memory, facilitate a multisensory learning experience, release tension, enhance imagination, align groups, develop rapport, provide inspiration and motivation, add an element of fun, and accentuate theme-oriented units (Brewer, C., 1995).

Along with positive effects, music can bring interest and relevance to the class. Music can improve class attention, attitude and atmosphere; it can be used to obtain the attention of the class as well as acting as a community builder. Additionally, music offers a sense of community, a chance for students to collaborate and connect and a chance for increased cultural understanding and identify. It teaches personal lessons such as self discipline, dedication, teamwork, and continuous improvement. Music also has a hand in discipline in the classroom, as the National Education Longitudinal Study found that musical involvement reduced the number of disruptive students in school. (Petress, K., 2005) Above all, music brings forth an opportunity for creative expression:

The arts are a powerful pathway to accurate observation, communication, and expression. Most importantly, the arts represent a direct connection between creative and analytical thought, and they provide highly successful methods to convey academic ideas in an engaging and substantive manner. Learning, communicating, and questioning in conjunction with the arts develops a dynamic classroom environment where students and teachers alike are excited and engaged in the process (Reif, N. & Grant, L., 2010).

In addition to academic benefits, music integration helps shape the classroom into a compassionate environment, connects students to each other and their cultures while demonstrating personal values of great importance. Music attunes students' interest and even increases motivation while allowing for creative expression.

In previous research, it has commonly been found that teachers with more musical background are more comfortable instructing in the classroom. Although the majority of one study's respondents "agree that music can improve achievement in other disciplines and are supportive of music integration," (Hash, M. P., 2009) they are still wary of taking on the responsibilities. In another study, it was found that preservice teachers held "relatively strong beliefs about the importance of music, including aesthetic, quality-of-life, and social-emotional benefits. Study participants had limited knowledge of music content in general, and higher musical knowledge predicted stronger beliefs about its importance." The survey also found that these teachers' perceptions of music impacted the importance they gave the subject. If they viewed music as an active tool for development and learning it was more often used, where when viewed merely as an enrichment, less worth was given to the subject. (Kim, H. & Kemple, K, 2010).

## **FINDINGS:**

Forty four teachers responded to both close and open-ended questions conducted from November 12<sup>th</sup> until November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2013. Many of the comments on the surveys reflected the ideas mentioned previously. Although background training and experience was not the focus of this study, information was gathered and differences between private and government schools compared. Sixty four percent of private school teachers had previous musical experience or training, while 52% of government teachers did. The most significant difference between government and private school responses was whose responsibility music is to teach. Seventy four percent of government and private school teachers agreed that music was the church's responsibility to teach. Conversely, 96% of private school teachers see music as the schools responsibility to teach while only 73% of government teachers agree with this.



### *Perceptions of Academic Benefits*

The surveys collected data about teachers' perceptions of musical benefits. Teachers experiences with music in their classrooms is based on their responses both in survey and interview form. Teachers see music helping their students' overall development, memory skills, creative expression, and most importantly, grasps their interest. There was also mention of learning preferences from different teachers, as well as developing talents.

Mirroring trends found by Rickard and Vasques in 2010, teachers found music aiding in students' memory skills. As Camilla Tulua, a year 2 teacher at Robert Louis Stevenson School (RLSS) stated:

I have them memorize words then we use them in like nursery rhymes and have them learn those new words. If it's new spelling words, then they say the word then they spell it and we use the beat of the music. Because there's a beat, it's easier for them to remember it, if we do our work and they use the beat instead of just spelling it out. I see them tapping their fingers and toes trying to spell out the word we used with the music. By using music, for them, it's easier for them to memorize words (Tulua, C. RLSS, 11-19-13).

Most teachers experience music aiding their students and see value in integration. Eighty six percent of teachers surveyed agreed that "students who are involved in music are more likely to succeed in academic areas." One teacher said it *can* help, but is not guaranteed and two respondents left this question blank.

When asked if they believe that music aids in children's development, 98% of respondents agreed, that music is beneficial to their students. Teachers mentioned creativity as a positive music brings to their classrooms, one teacher from Peace Chapel Primary said she uses music "as a creative outlet for children. Music is a creative tool to teach students about expression and individual discipline. Music can enable us teachers to assess a students' understanding of curriculum in a different way" (Survey, Yr. 8, Peace Chapel 11-12-13) Even mixed forms of assessment are mentioned, allowing students' more flexibility from the rigid curriculum and rote memorization which has become common in most schools.

A few teachers surveyed also acknowledged learning preferences and hinted at multiple intelligences. A year 6 teacher from Samoa Primary School (SPS) believes music

“teaches a great lesson to those with disabilities and have little connection to the classroom. (Survey, Yr. 2, Peace Chapel 11-12-13) The only pre-school teacher surveyed stated that, “music makes the lessons live and kids enjoy the lessons. Music is like a medicine to other children and also teachers. It can change some childrens’ interests, some don’t like other subjects but they love music” (Survey, Prep, Peace Chapel 11-12-13). Showing how music draws her students interest as well, accounting for different learning preferences. The Head Teacher at Peace Chapel explained her outlook: “I believe that people are all created differently, that we’ve all got different gifts and different talents and not only focusing on the strengths of children and their gifts but their interests as well and a lot of children are quite musical” (C, Peace Chapel, 11-12-13).

Intriguing students through musical integration has already been mentioned when accounting for learning preferences but many other examples were revealed. A Year 2 teacher from RLSS explained how she uses music to get her students attention:

I use music as a different strategy because it’s more effective if you put, like for example when teaching English, a few words, like when I try to teach my class the meaning of words, they’ll sometimes be like ‘boring!’ but if I put meanings in the form of a song, they’ll get it straight away. It’s more effective, teaching nearly all the subjects in the form of music. In math, if I’m counting by 2’s and I say ‘2...4....6...8...10...blah...blah...blah’, up to 100, they’ll go ‘ah, we missed it!’ But if I put it in the form of song, and have a rhythm to it, they’ll pick it up faster. It’s an effective strategy to teach (Simsen, L. RLSS, 11-19-13).

This view was shared by a Year 5 teacher at Peace Chapel although she doesn’t use music in her lessons and has no previous musical training. She does see benefit in using it however, stating that “music can bring interest to a lesson and should be taught because children have different ways of learning and they also have different talents and areas they are good at” (Survey, Yr. 5, Peace Chapel 11-12-13). Many respondents stated that they used music as an introduction to lessons, as this Year 2 teacher put it, “music helps introduce lessons and children enjoy music. I use it to draw the attention of children to the lesson” (Survey, Yr. 2, SPS, 11-12-13). On the whole, teachers from both government and private schools saw music providing their students with academic benefits including increased memory skills, accounting for learning differences, creative expression and holding interest throughout lessons.

### *Perceptions of Social Benefits*

Along with the various academic benefits teachers saw music providing their students, teachers offered insight into the considerable social benefits they see music offering in the classroom as well. Bringing fun, entertainment, discipline, expression, motivation, and a more conducive learning environment were all mentioned. A teacher at Samoa Primary explained how she uses music in her classroom, “for fun and relaxation. Music is an expression of emotions and has potential to draw the attention of children” (Survey, Yr. 5, SPS, 11-12-13). The Head Teacher of Lalomanu Primary has similar views, saying some benefits as students enjoying singing, “it’s fun. They want to be entertained” (Iosefo, M. Lalomanu, 11-15-13). Sue Su’a, one of the Co-Principals of SPS stated, “when children sing, they are very happy. When they dance, they’re moving around, they really start to get motivated as an introduction to lessons” (Su’a, S. Samoa Primary, 11-12-13). Teachers and Head Teachers alike see music providing an element of entertainment in the classroom, which turns to motivation. The Head Teachers at both Saleapaga Primary and Vaimoso Primary mentioned music as a way to gain the interest of their students and to motivate them in the classroom. Amatheia Niko, Head Teacher at Vaimoso explained, “When you say ‘let’s sing a song,’ you can see they wake up but when you say ‘let’s do math problems,’ you can see they’re not very interested” (Niko, A. Vaimoso Primary, 11-19-13).

Closely related to motivational benefits falls discipline where several teachers were cited saying that music “can settle down or discipline students manners” (Survey, Yr. 2, Samoa Primary, 11-12-13). A Year 8 teacher at SPS views music as “a creative tool to teach students about expression and individual discipline” (Survey, Yr. 8, Samoa Primary, 11-12-13). One Head Teacher believes music gives her students’ “a love of life and a love of learning” (Su’a, S. SPS, 11-12-13). A teacher at Peace Chapel stated :

Music is a part of our spiritual and emotional life, as well as the wellbeing of the whole child, all parts of the self. Music has a way of linking us to different parts of the world and different times in history. Music can express an unlimited spectrum of emotions, thoughts, and concepts. Children need ways to express in a variety of ways. Music in the classroom brings a sense of joy, community and togetherness. It brightens the mood, and teaches us more about each other, it allows us creative expression and brings opportunities to praise students (Survey, Yr. 7, Peace Chapel, 11-12-13).

As this teacher mentions, music creates an environment where all children are comfortable and cooperating. A RLSS teacher recognizes that music has helped her

to encourage slow learners to interact and talk more with others. Music can help children feel comfortable with each other and develop their confidence to speak out. Music in the classroom should be fun and educational and make the students feel comfortable with learning and each other (Simsen, L. RLSS, 11-19-13).

Mrs. Simsen explains that in her class, she'll teach about a different country and play that country's music. Students will dance and sing with a partner, learning to work with one another. "The relationship between the children towards each other builds while dancing and singing together" (Simsen, L. RLSS, 11-19-13).

Many teachers also commonly spoke of music as a talent which should be developed. One teacher explained, "music can be taught everywhere. Music is interesting. Music can develop the voice and it can be a talent" (Survey, Yr. 4, Lalomanu, 11-15-13). When asked how to promote music in their schools, two Head Teachers mentioned competitions and talent shows. In Vaimoso, there have been culture nights where students perform song and dance. The Head Teacher believes this is the key to getting more music in the school, "There must be a talent festival for everyone, a competition," she said, explaining how excited students were the previous year. "When we had our culture night last year, they were very interested in the competition" (Nika, A. Vaimoso, 11-19-13). One teacher who had no opinion on whether students who are involved in music are more likely to succeed in other academic areas, noted that "music has always been a part of our lives" and believes that music should "be implemented as part of learning" (Survey, Yr. 3 Peace Chapel, 11-12-13). Every survey respondent, 100 percent, agreed that "participating in musical activities in school serves an important social and cultural function." When asked how important she found music to her students, Sue Su'a, Co-Principal at SPS expressed that music is an "integral part of class, it's also part of the Samoan culture so it comes across regularly in terms of dancing and singing" (Su'a, S. SPS, 11-12-13). As cultural benefits were the most widely acknowledged by teachers, one can begin to see how vital the arts are in Samoan culture. Other social benefits teachers saw their students obtaining through music included motivational, environmental and creative expression, all benefits research has proven.

|Over 50 desks are occupied in the box of a classroom Fa’auuga teaches in. She starts a science lesson, writing words in Samoan and English on the small square of chalk board she has. “*kerosene*,” she says, and the children yell it back, tired of sitting in the heat, “KEROSENE.” She repeats the word and it continues:

“*Kerosene...*”

“KEROSENE...”

“*Kerosene...*”

“KEROSENE...”

Kerosene is added to the growing list on the board. *Penisini, diesel, petrol*. Fa’auuga turns to me suddenly and asks me to teach the students some music. Eyes wander, drag, slump as I walk to the front of the class. I’d be sleeping in this heavy heat too. The students stand upon command and stare expectantly, already surprised by the change in their routine. I have them repeat body parts in English, mimicking the call and response structure their teacher just used, adding movements. Then I sing, slowly at first “*head, shoulders, knees, and toes, knees and toes...*” I pause to see the students smiling, their little bodies mirroring mine in 10 second delay. I finish, noticing the eager silence that quickly fills the room. “*Pese!*” I call, asking the students to sing with me. Slowly, they begin to sing, not matching all the words with the movements but trying all the same. The tune is different than the one they’ve sung before. I run through the song twice, more animated as I go along. I feel accomplished, as though I have made these students day, their enthusiasm is infectious, their smiles contagious. |

|Lalomanu Primary School, Years 1-3, 11-15-13

## DISCUSSION:

Although teacher’s backgrounds and previous musical experience was not a major focus of this paper, teacher’s experience and training were considered. As seen in Lalomanu, there is value placed on musical education, even without much background or training. Nevertheless, research suggests a strong relationship between prior musical experiences and the strength of value placed on the subject exists. One study indicates that “respondents with outside music instruction had stronger beliefs regarding the academic and social benefits of music instruction than respondents with no outside music instruction” (Della, P. Bidner, S., & Devaney, A. T., 2010). Thus, more training teachers could eventually lead to more teachers placing value on the subject. Bringing in professionals for music workshops was common in a few schools but having a Head Teacher who is adamant about the importance of music had the greatest influence. Funding is also a consideration. Samoa Primary School, private school with many resources offers instrumental class in both recorder and ukulele and are putting on a musical this coming year. The three Co-Head

Teachers see value in music and have arranged for workshops for their teachers, seeing payoffs of music commonly integrated into their classrooms. None of the government schools visited had sufficient funds to bring in instruments. However, one school hosted a culture night encouraging students to perform for their community. As culture is intricately tied into everyday lives of Samoans, many teachers believe music brings cultural value to their students. As Reif and Grant found, incorporating music does have cultural benefits including “increased cultural understandings, better self-esteem, and a healthier cultural identity” (Reif, N. & Grant, L., 2010).

Music integration seems to be a simple step to make class more meaningful and productive for young learners. With teacher shortage and lack of resources a common dilemma in primary schools, integration offers a way to incorporate music without extensive preservice training or a new curriculum. With less crowding in the classroom, teachers would be able to focus on improving grade-specific instruction, including the integration of music.

Factors that commonly emerge when integration occurs must be considered and handled along the way however. Teachers must shift their belief system from one that is didactic to one which is founded in constructivism. “Rather than asking students to follow the steps of procedure, memorize facts, or verify given principles or laws, students work together to discover knowledge, applying their knowledge as they solve real world problems” (Loepp, F. L., 1999). Head Teachers must make concerted efforts to support their staff in transition and shift ideals from memorization to understanding and connection. With a shift towards an integrated curriculum, teachers will gain freedom in the classroom to interweave subjects and work music in.

When asking Head Teachers how they would incorporate more music into their schools, one answered “a competition” where students prepare and perform for the school and a larger community audience. Incorporating performances into Samoan schools would be an effective strategy to implement more music. Classes would spend time preparing numbers; the community would become involved as the students engage their families and neighbours. Getting the whole village behind music is key, once teachers see how enthusiastic their students and families are, they will include it in their lessons more often. Along with competitions and performances, a variety of integration techniques exist which could be implemented more frequently to increase music in the classroom. Performances and

competitions are a form of social integration where music acts as a vehicle for “participation in school or community events.” The subservient approach is a form of integration where music is used as a “vehicle for other academic objectives.” This was found in classrooms through teaching vocabulary through song but could be increased for more frequent musical opportunity. The affective style of music integration uses song to change the “overall mood of the classroom, such as trying to create a calm atmosphere after recess or using the music to achieve goals such as creative expression or building self-esteem” (Giles, M. A. & Frego, D. R. J. 2004).

## **CONCLUSION:**

As a nation that places such great value on the arts, it won't be long before the classroom mirrors the desires of the people. Music offers scores of benefits in the classroom, academically, socially and culturally. As discussed, teachers with more musical background are more comfortable instructing in the classroom. As Hash discovered, those with higher musical knowledge hold stronger beliefs about its importance as well. (Hash, M. P., 2009) Therefore, there is no downfall to increasing preservice teachers' musical education as a strategy to increase music integration in Samoan schools. In a perfect world, all schools would have adequate funding and training programs to incorporate both instrumental and music programs but integration is the first step in getting there. By utilizing different styles of integration such as the subservient approach where music is a medium for other academic goals, children will reap the benefits music has to offer without extensive training or additional funding. By utilizing the affective integration approach to affect the overall mood of the classroom or the social style where students reap social benefits from music integration more often, Samoan classrooms will soon become more effective. Learning will become meaningful, relevant and fun for students.

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## GLOSSARY:

**Palagi:** White person, an outsider to Samoa.

**Puletasi:** Traditional women's dress, normally a long skirt and matching shirt.

**Fale:** A traditional Samoan home. Originally an open oval building with wooden posts holding up a domed thatch roof.

**"Tasi, lua, tolu, fa:"** One, two, three, four.

**Pese:** Sing.

## APPENDIX:

### Teachers' Attitudes Toward Music in the Primary Classroom

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Village: \_\_\_\_\_ Grades Taught: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Other responsibilities: \_\_\_\_\_

Education or Training: Tick all the apply

\_\_\_ Teacher's Training College      \_\_\_ NUS Faculty of Education Teaching Certificate

\_\_\_ Bachelor of Education      \_\_\_ Overseas Certificate

Describe \_\_\_\_\_.

Number of years teaching:

\_\_\_ 1-5    \_\_\_ 6-10    \_\_\_ 11-15    \_\_\_ 16-20    \_\_\_ Over 20 years

What is your favorite subject to teach?

\_\_\_ English    \_\_\_ Math    \_\_\_ Basic Science    \_\_\_ Social Science    \_\_\_ Samoan

Why? \_\_\_\_\_.

Describe the music program at your school:

Do you use music in your lessons?                      YES [ ]                      NO [ ]

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

How do you use music in teaching? \_\_\_\_\_

Should more music be taught in Primary School?                      YES [ ]                      NO [ ]

Do you have music experience and/training?                      YES [ ]                      NO [ ]

Participating in musical activities in school serves an important social and cultural function.

AGREE [ ]                      DISAGREE [ ]

Students who are involved in music are more likely to succeed in academic areas.

AGREE [ ]                      DISAGREE [ ]

Music is the church's responsibility to teach.                      AGREE [ ]                      DISAGREE [ ]

Music is the school's responsibility to teach.                      AGREE [ ]                      DISAGREE [ ]

Music aids in childrens' development                      AGREE [ ]                      DISAGREE [ ]

Music should be taught as a separate subject in Primary School

AGREE [ ]                      DISAGREE [ ]

Please answer the following as you see fit regarding music in the primary classroom.

Music is \_\_\_\_\_

Music has \_\_\_\_\_

Music can \_\_\_\_\_

Music should \_\_\_\_\_

Music in the classroom should \_\_\_\_\_