



Prosper Independent School District

Fine Arts

August 14, 2019

To the Parents of a Prosper ISD Musician,

Hello, my name is John Alstrin and I am the Director of Fine Arts for Prosper ISD. I'm writing to you today in order to help lend my perspective on a commonly misunderstood or underutilized resource that is available to your student musician in Prosper, **Private Lessons**. From 2014-2019, I served as the Director of Bands for Prosper, five of the most enjoyable and personally rewarding years in my twenty-year career in education. The reason that I mention that is to highlight the influence that the private lesson teaching staff in the band program has had in our recent success and the pivotal importance that they play in the success of the individual students in all of our music programs. I credit the professional musicians that comprise the private lesson faculty in Prosper ISD with helping to facilitate the growth of our individual musicians and thus the ability of the larger groups to be competitive at the state and national levels. It is the private lesson teachers that have helped our kids to be named Outstanding Performers and State Champions in UIL, to earn hundreds of thousands of dollars in college scholarships, become All Region, All Area, and All State musicians, and to realize success in a variety of different ways individually with their musical pursuits. But to be clear, only a small percent of the students that benefit from private lesson teachers ever go on to pursue a degree or career in music; a majority of the students we have taking private lessons go on to become engineers, doctors, lawyers, writers, teachers, and most importantly more well-rounded human beings.

The value of a private lesson is quite simple, students receive feedback and instruction in a 1-on-1 setting from a professional musician. But there is so much more to it than that. They are learning how to think, how to react, how to plan, how to problem solve, how to prepare, how to perform, how to sound, how to read, how to stay calm, how to breathe ... and the list goes on and on. Personally, I hold private lesson instructors in the same regard as classroom teachers. The key difference is usually that they hold a performance degree rather than an education degree. This said, they are an expert in meeting students where they are in their musical understanding and playing abilities and custom tailor a growth plan for their continued progress and achievement.

Learning music can be difficult at times; however, much like math, once concepts are unlocked and decoded, students are able to layer and scaffold concepts and eventually learn to create music on their own, develop their own sound and style, and then apply higher level thinking to other subjects and realms. A deeper exploration of music is an investment in the wiring of the brain, for music is where the right and left brain learn to work together in harmony. The benefits of this neural exercise are proven to last for decades after it occurs, it is a life-long, life-improving investment. If you are still skeptical, you might try an internet search for "How music benefits the brain".

I would encourage you to reach out to the director of your student's music program and ask them for a recommendation for a private lesson instructor. As a champion of the arts, a music administrator, and the father of a 6th grade trumpet player, I ask you to join me in giving our kids this opportunity to shine and grow under the tutelage of a professional musician. Who knows what all of the benefits will truly be for your child?

Respectfully yours,

John R. Alstrin
Director of Fine Arts
Prosper ISD

The mission of Prosper Independent School District is to develop and graduate motivated, academically prepared individuals with the strength of character to make contributions to a rapidly changing society through an educational system that maintains high expectations, provides quality instruction, and establishes a safe, orderly, learning environment in the community that lives its name.

The mission of the Prosper Independent School District Fine Arts Department is to support the mission of Prosper ISD by providing unparalleled curriculum and instruction, artistic opportunities, and creative endeavors for our students. As we develop, enrich, and inspire the innate artistic talents that reside in every child, we will instill a lifelong passion for the arts in both our students and our community through innovation and excellence.