

Reaching Jones County's Youth through Music

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Abstract

In response to research conducted by the National Association for Music Education and the Royal Conservatory, the Jones County Agent developed curriculum to teach students the fundamentals of playing guitar. The club consisted of specifically chosen material to allow a beginning guitar player to learn to play in a structured group environment and aid in increasing attention span and memorization abilities.

The eight week program consisted 16 participants who were divided into two groups in order to provide each participant the most attention possible in a group setting.

Program Evaluation

The club was evaluated through a memory and skills based assessment. Qualitative data was received through individual verbal questionnaires and the individual's ability to perform specific skills. The received data was analyzed to determine each participants progress and overall effectiveness. The survey was administered verbally for a portion of the survey, and the remainder of the survey was completed by participants playing.

Introduction

According to the National Association for Music Education students who engage in music education develop memorization skills and stay engaged in their education. Additionally, the Royal Conservatory of Music in Ontario reported that research conducted over the last decade shows that musical study increases the development of speech and reading skills, increases student's attention span, and helps student's ability to empathize for others. The Royal Conservatory report also notates that neuroscientists have indicated that learning to play an instrument leads to changes in the brain that enable students to reach their full cognitive and academic potential. The Jones County Extension Agent instituted the 4-H Guitar Club that would focus on the essential basics of music which included instrument parts, tuning, note progression, chord memorization, strumming and picking patterns, and keys. Students participated in eight lessons where each lesson reinforced and built upon the previous lessons.

Results

Of the 16 students who participated in the program 100% indicated beginning the program with minimal or no prior experience. Furthermore, 100% of participants indicated a gain of knowledge compared to their previous knowledge of the guitar. In order to evaluate the participant's memorization skills, each student was asked to identify the correct notes for each string needed for standard tuning, recite note progression, and to play as many of the 10 chords introduced from memory. In regards to identifying the note for each string needed for standard tuning, 100% of students fulfilled the exercise. When asked to recite note progression, 81% were able to correctly identify the progression of notes. When asked to play as many of the chords presented during each lesson, 50% met the minimum expectation of learning seven chords, and 25% of students exceeded the minimum expectation by memorizing all 10 chords in addition to taking the initiative to learn chords that were not presented.

