

## Tuning-up at Aberfoyle Public School

By Barbara Bulmer

Science has shown that musical training can lead to better brain development for children who start at an early age.

A University of Montreal study found that musicians are more mentally alert. That is not to suggest that every child should strive to be a professional musician but research has shown that musical training can enhance memory, spatial reasoning, literary skills and executive functioning.

Students at Aberfoyle Public School are fortunate to have a teacher who has musical training, who is cognitive of the benefits of music to the young developing brain and who is willing to share her passion for music with her students.

Music and Art teacher Melissa Gray grew up in a Salvation Army family immersed in vocal and brass music. By the age of six she knew that music was going to be an important part of her life.

Melissa said that through music she gained self confidence, a critical piece in child development.

Research has also shown that musical training can reduce stress and anxiety, something children and teachers face daily in the classroom.

Music programs have been eliminated by the province and now exist only if a teacher is passionate about music, has sufficient training and is willing to take it on.



Given the proven benefits of musical training this oversight is short of sight!

With the full support of principal Paul Tribe, Melissa applied to The Royal City Ukulele Club and received an award of thirty ukeleles, including thirty exercise books and thirty carrying cases.

Melissa chose the ukulele because it is trendy, easy to learn and fun to play. She will begin by teaching students chord and note knowledge, and then how to read notes on a Staff.

Melissa also teaches vocal, or choir, brass and hand drum but sadly the instruments are old and need replacing, and without provincial funding that appears to be impossible.

However, Melissa said the school would be grateful for any gently-used instruments that might be looking for a new home and good purpose.

Tuning up from your nose out: G C E A. That's how to tune a ukulele. Grades 1 to 4 will learn to play the ukulele, do vocal (choir) and hand drum. Grades 5 to 8 will learn on orchestral instruments – brass, woodwinds and percussion.

Melissa is also starting a Ukulele Club for interested students. Winter and spring concerts are held each year, and a school musical is held biannually.

Unfortunately, these concerts can't be open to the public due to space restrictions at the school, and financial restrictions to rent any off-campus space.

Teaching is a gift; learning is a privilege, one we often take for granted and carelessly disparage. We are blessed in our Puslinch community to have dedicated teachers throughout Aberfoyle Public School.

Perhaps there is an opportunity here for local service clubs to do a community project to donate much-needed instruments, or to sponsor a concert to raise money to buy instruments

For information Principal Mr. Paul Tribe can be reached at 519-763-7040.

*Photo from Melissa Gray*