

Waco Arts Initiative Programs: The Music Program

2010 marked the beginning of a new facet to Waco Arts Initiative: The WAI Music Program. The music program began when Grace Ladd approached Savion Wright, current music director at WAI, with the idea of adding a music program to WAI after she saw him playing his guitar and singing with two of his friends. Savion jumped at the opportunity to share music with children, and since then, the music program has grown to include piano instructors, drummers, ukulele instructors, violinists, and guitarists, most of who are Baylor students.

Children in WAI's music program are assigned individual mentors. The children choose an instrument to learn, and their mentor instructs them in their chosen instrument. Mentors also teach the children musical concepts such as chords, rhythm, tempo, and sheet music reading. Students familiarize themselves with a range of musical genres by learning a song from a different genre each week. Mentors begin with more recognizable genres, such as pop, teaching the children songs by artists such as Michael Jackson. Mentors then introduce other genres, such as classical, and children learn classical pieces by composers such as Mozart.

Music classes at WAI are divided into two segments: group instruction and individual instruction. During individual instruction, children work with their mentors to learn and practice songs on their instruments. Group instruction, however, serves multiple purposes. Group instruction provides a way for the children to develop their social skills. Group instruction also reinforces the concepts children learn during previous music classes and individual instruction. During group instruction, the children are given group activities, including instrumental games, such as learning to identify different instruments, and tempo games, such as learning to keep rhythm by counting.

WAI believes that music, like art, is a vital part of a child's education. Music sharpens a child's analytical skills because it requires mathematical and critical thinking. Statistics show that if a child plays a musical instrument, he or she has a 30% more chance of graduating high school, a 15% more chance of graduating college, and a 10% more chance of going on to graduate or professional school. Moreover, the music program at WAI also teaches children valuable life lessons such as dedication, respect, and learning to take pride in one's individuality. Music truly impacts lives, and through the music program at WAI, children grow to be talented, responsible members of their community.