

# **Technology: A Tool for Music Education**

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Technology is changing the way music is taught and performed in schools throughout the country. Many teachers have already incorporated some aspect of technology into their teaching. Others ask, “Why should we introduce change when everything has been working so well?” If everything is working well and students, parents, and administrators are happy, perhaps nothing should change.

If, however, you find that your students are knowledgeable or are asking questions about consumer products such as electronic keyboards, recording software, or music notation software, you might want to keep the lines of communication open. Because our students are frequently using computers and electronic instruments at home and in other subject areas, it makes sense to incorporate this technology into the music curriculum. Remember, the primary reason for learning about music technology is to enable us to meet the needs of our students in a rapidly changing world and to address these needs productively.

## **Why Technology?**

Technology captures the imagination of students and provides motivation for learning. Students bring with them a fascination for computer games and electronic musical instruments. For some students, the computer is regarded as a trusted, objective friend. We can tap into this motivation and fascination by using the same technology to teach musical concepts and skills that students will need to become good listeners and performers.

## **Technology Tools**

The most common technological tools available to music educators are computers and electronic keyboards. Computers are ideal teaching tools for the music curriculum. Software publishers offer a wide range of programs covering every aspect of music, from musicology to marching band half time shows. Electronic keyboards offer many possibilities as learning tools and performance instruments in the music classroom. In an interactive hands-on format, students can use an electronic keyboard to learn about sound, composition, improvisation, and recording. Students, either individually or in groups, can use technology to develop skills and to increase their knowledge in the following ways:

- **BY LEARNING BASIC MUSICAL CONCEPTS.** Students benefit greatly from the exercise/drill features of many software programs. In this context, computers function as an extremely patient teacher’s assistant.

- **BY ARRANGING EXISTING MUSIC OR BY COMPOSING ORIGINAL MUSIC.** Students can experiment with the elements of music and create original musical compositions.
- **BY USING NOTATION SOFTWARE TO PRINT ASSIGNMENTS, ARRANGEMENTS, AND COMPOSITIONS.** In addition to hearing their music, students can print out notated versions of their works.
- **BY CREATING A MULTIMEDIA REPORT.** With appropriate software, students can create reports that include sound, notation, and images.
- **BY ACCESSING ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON THE INTERNET.** Students can also use a modem to access additional information, sound files, and images from educational and research facilities throughout the world.

These are just a few examples that demonstrate how technology can enhance the learning process. All of these examples utilize technology as a means of helping students to improve their musical skills and their understanding of music.

## **Now Is The Time**

You can make technology work for you. Hardware and software manufacturers are continually producing products that are easier to use. Books, periodicals, college courses, in-service courses and summer workshops that focus on technology are available throughout the country. There is no reason to delay getting involved.

We always try to improve the quality of our teaching. With more and more students becoming computer users and with the evolutionary nature of technology yielding more powerful and less expensive computers and electronic instruments, it seems inevitable that technology will continue to play a major role in music education. In 1983, Steve Jobs persuaded Pepsi Cola executive John Sculley to join Apple Computer by asking him, "Do you want to sell sugar water for the rest of your life, or do you want to come with me and change the world?" We now have new tools to enhance our world of music and the world of music education. We can use technology to improve our teaching, enhance our performance, and inspire our students in new and exciting ways.