The following is a summary of the research on the effects of pullout instrumental lessons on academic achievement.

**Friedman (1959)** matched an experimental group and a control group of fifth grade students on gender, IQ, and age. A pretest consisting of the math and reading sections of the Stanford Achievement Test indicated no significant differences between the two groups. The experimental group then participated in instrumental pullout lessons for one year. A posttest consisting of the same exam continued to indicate no significant differences among the participants.

**Gropp (1963)** investigated the effect of pullout lessons on the academic achievement of sixth grade IS excused from class once or twice a week for a 30-minute music lesson. Two groups of sixth grade IS (n=230) and NIS (n=230) from 15 elementary schools were matched on the basis of gender, intelligence quotients, and teacher ratings of student characteristics. Scores on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills given the following year indicated no significant difference (p < .05) between the means of IS and NIS. Groff tentatively concluded that withdrawing students from classroom instruction for limited amounts of time for instrumental lessons was not detrimental to academic achievement (see also Pruitt, 1969).

**Robitaille and O’Neal (1981)** compared scores on the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS) of fifth grade IS (n=1205) regularly pulled out of class for instruction with those of the entire student population (N=5,154). Data indicated IS scored higher as a group than did the total sample. In a follow-up study conducted the next school year (1980), a randomly selected sample of IS (n=129) was paired with NIS (n=129) from the same school who had matching scores on the Short Form Test of Academic Aptitude. Comparison of mean scores between the two groups indicated no significant difference, the instrumental group scoring one point higher than the non-instrumental group. A replication of the study in 1986 yielded similar results (Gillespie, 1992). Robitaille and O’Neal concluded that instrumental students excused from other subjects for music instruction did not suffer any loss in academic skills as measured by standardized tests.

**Kvet (1985)** investigated the effect of pullout lessons on academic performance in relation to school district size, location, socioeconomic status, and racial balance. Matched pairs of sixth grade IS (n=175) and NIS (n=175) from four metropolitan school districts were compared using scores of standardized achievement tests for reading, language, and mathematics. Pairs were matched within school districts to test the effects of demographic variables between localities.

Kvet found no significant difference (p > .05) between achievement scores of IS and NIS. Furthermore, no significant difference was found between any of the four school districts. Kvet determined that excluding students from regular classroom activities for the beginning stage of repertoire preparation, did not negatively impact achievement in reading, language, or math for students in a variety of educational settings. He therefore stated that parents, teachers, and school administrators should reevaluate their beliefs regarding pullout lessons and academic achievement.

**Circle (1989)** analyzed sixth grade test scores in reading and math to determine if excusing students for music lessons was detrimental to academic achievement in these areas. Results indicated that mean scores of IS (n=554) were higher than those of the population as a whole (N=1608). Circle noted that had the 554 instrumental music scores been extracted from the 1608 when calculating the mean for the general population, the difference would have been even greater. Circle therefore concluded that pullout lessons at the elementary level were not harmful to students’ academic growth, even if students were removed from classes considered basic.

**Dryden (1992)** and **Holmes (1997)**, like Robitaille and O’Neal (1981), compared scores on the CTBS of fifth grade IS involved in pullout instruction with those of NIS. Dryden found no significant difference (p = .05) in results of the CTBS for IS (n=164) vs. NIS (n=106) with one exception. Band students (n=120) scored significantly higher than orchestra students (n=44) and NIS on reading vocabulary, and significantly higher than NIS on reading total comprehension. Dryden therefore concluded that “excluding elementary students from regular classroom activities to study instrumental music [did] not negatively affect achievement in math or reading” (p. 72). Holmes collected data over a three-year period from nine different buildings in three separate school districts and found that IS receiving pullout instruction for one year (n = 169) scored significantly higher than NIS (n = 222) on the sixth-grade Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills.

Holmes (1997) also utilized Colwell’s Music Achievement Test, Level 1 to compare musical progress of IS after one year of pullout lessons with that of NIS. Results indicated IS attained a higher level of musical achievement than NIS. While these results are not surprising, they do provide objective evidence that small-group lessons are an effective means of instruction.

**Engdahl (1994)** examined the effect of three years of specialized music instruction on the academic achievement of sixth grade students in South Bend, Indiana. Analysis comparing standardized test scores of matched pairs of IS (n = 299) and NIS (n = 299) in grades three and six revealed that students pulled for instrumental instruction experienced no significant loss in achievement compared to NIS. Corral (1998) compared mean scores on the California Test of Basic Skills of fourth, fifth, and sixth grade IS (n = 46) and NIS (n = 177) from two elementary schools. IS were excused for music instruction twice per week for 30 minutes. The author found no significant differences between scores of IS and NIS on the reading, language, mathematics, science, or social studies portions of the test, regardless of school attended or years of instrumental study.

**Goldberg (1996)** compared band performances in two equivalent high school programs with and without the benefit of sectional rehearsals. Both ensembles were tape-recorded in a controlled setting at the beginning stage of repertoire preparation, and again after several weeks of instruction. Independent evaluators rated the pre and posttest performances to determine the achievement level of each group. Based on the amount of improvement in performance quality, Goldberg concluded that adding sectional rehearsals to the instrumental music schedule led to higher levels of musical achievement.

Corral (1998) compared mean scores on the California Test of Basic Skills (CaTBS) of fourth, fifth, and sixth grade IS (n=46) and NIS (n = 177) from two elementary schools. IS were excused for music instruction on a rotating basis twice per week for 30 minutes. Scores from five areas of the CaTBS were analyzed including reading, language comprehension, mathematics comprehension, science, and social studies. No significant difference (p < .05) existed between scores of IS and NIS, regardless of school attended or years of instrumental study. Corral acknowledged, however, that small sample size might have created a possible threat to validity.
Wallick (1998) compared achievement scores of non-string students to those of string students excused twice a week for 30 minutes of music instruction. Fourth grade string students (n=148) and non-string students (n=148) were ability-matched according to their performance on the verbal section of the Cognitive Abilities Test, an assessment significantly correlated with overall success in school. Scores on the writing, reading, mathematics, and citizenship sections of the Ohio Proficiency Test (OPT) were then recorded and compared.

Wallick found a significant difference (p < .05) between the two groups in favor of string students on the reading and citizenship portions of the OPT. No significant difference existed on the writing and mathematics sections. Wallace found compelling evidence that string students pulled from regular academic instruction for music lessons did not suffer negative effects in their academic performance as measured by the OPT.

Cox (2001) compared the scores of fifth grade NIS and IS involved in pullout lessons on the reading, mathematics, and language portions of the Stanford Achievement Test for grades four and five. Although IS had attained a higher level of academic achievement in fourth grade, prior to enrolling in the program, they continued to outscore NIS students in fifth grade and were likely unaffected by missing class time for instrumental instruction.

Hash (2011) examined the effect of pullout instrumental lessons on the academic achievement of eighth-grade band students. Participants (N = 353) included 292 nonband students and 61 band students pulled once per week for music lessons in a single suburban K-8 school district in Midwestern United States. Data indicated that eighth-grade band students achieved significantly higher mean scores on the ACT Explore test than students who dropped band prior to eighth grade (n = 58) or never enrolled in the program (n = 234). In addition, no significant differences existed between all band students and the highest achieving nonband students, or between students who discontinued band after at least 1 year and those who never enrolled. Although band students in this study tended to be more academically successful than nonband students at the outset, these results support the assertion that pullout lessons had no negative effect on academic achievement, regardless of the number of years students participated in the program.

References


For additional information, see:
