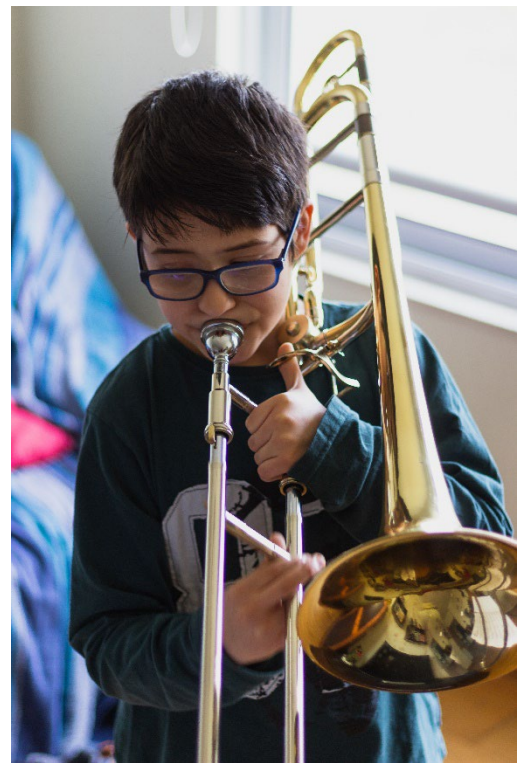# MacPhail Online
School Partnerships

Evaluation Summary 2019-2023

Author: Julia Miller and Ryan Ander-Evans

Wilder Research
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Key findings

The MacPhail Center for Music Online School Partnerships program aims to increase access to high-quality music education for students who attend schools in greater Minnesota in order to improve student interest and knowledge in music, and to improve or maintain positive school engagement and non-academic skills. The program has been providing lessons and working with schools outside the Twin Cities metro region since 2011. Since 2015, Wilder Research and MacPhail have worked collaboratively to develop an annual, responsive evaluation design for Online School Partnerships (OSP).

This high-level review of evaluation data from the 19-20 academic year through the 22-23 academic year demonstrates the consistent year-to-year themes, recommendations for programming, and recommendations for the ongoing evaluation.

- Students consistently demonstrate growth in musical skills, confidence, interest, appreciation, and motivation, as measured by student skill assessments completed by teaching artists, student self-report, and local music educators. Students have also reported some positive impacts related to academic engagement, mental health, and social connections.

  I did see a difference in their confidence with their performance, but also their ease and love for what they were doing seemed to improve. They weren't so nervous the more we worked together. – MacPhail teaching artist in 21-22 evaluation

- Students consistently report being satisfied with OSP. When asked what they like most, students tend to note their own musical growth and positive interactions or relationships with their teaching artist.

  I liked how even though we were distanced you still grow a connection with your lesson teacher. – OSP student in 20-21 evaluation

- Music educator partners also consistently report that MacPhail is a resource and partner for them and their classrooms. The partnership can help relieve some teacher burden by providing additional, quality support for student music instruction.

  I have stopped feeling guilty for not being able to give my "high fliers" the attention they deserve due to my full schedule. I know they will get help from great teachers who are personable and will do their best to help my kids. – Music educator in 22-23 evaluation

- Students, music educators, and teaching artists generally report the technology works well for programming, though there are some areas of improvement, such as better internet and better equipment.

- OSP was generally able to transition well during the COVID-19 pandemic and distance learning by continuing to provide quality programming and support to students and schools.

- Other consistent program suggestions include: opportunities for occasional in-person visits, improved communication and coordination between teaching artists and music educator partners, changes to lessons format like longer lessons or offering summer lessons, offering short downloadable instruction videos for students, and expanding programming.

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Program overview

The MacPhail Center for Music Online School Partnerships program aims to increase access to high-quality music education for students who attend schools in greater Minnesota in order to improve student interest and knowledge in music, and to improve or maintain positive school engagement and non-academic skills. The program has been providing lessons and working with schools outside the Twin Cities metro region since 2011. Schools may choose the type of instruction (individual, sectional, or classroom) that makes sense for them, given the number of students they would like to have participate. The types of lessons provided by the Online School Partnerships (OSP) program are:

- **Class lessons:** These lessons are ongoing and built on method books, handouts, and sequential practice planning. The MacPhail teaching artists consult with the partnering music educators to create ongoing assignments that encourage musicianship and solid playing techniques for the group of students, with a focus on one particular instrument or voice type.

- **Sectionals:** In these lessons, MacPhail teaching artists work to boost the skills of specific sections of choir, band, or jazz bands. They work on repertoire that participating students are playing in large group. These students work on development of sound, rhythmic precision, general musical understanding, and performance skills.

- **Individual lessons:** These lessons offer one-on-one instruction with an instrument or vocal specialist to work on general tone and technique. Teaching artists may also provide support as a student prepares for All-State band or choir and contest preparation.

The MacPhail teaching artists work collaboratively with school music educators to develop curriculum, implement the Online School Partnerships program, and work with students individually, in sectionals, or in large group settings on their music lessons via the internet. Teaching artists teach classes at the partner schools remotely through teleconferencing technology. Classes are typically 30-60 minutes in length, with a MacPhail teaching artist working with students on their repertoire for their ensemble or for an audition, as well as helping students as they develop their musical skills. The session content is based on what the partner schools' music educator would like the teaching artist to cover, and the teaching artist creates the session structure based on the music educator's goals.

Evaluation approach

Wilder Research and MacPhail have worked collaboratively since 2015 to develop an annual, responsive evaluation design for Online School Partnerships. The evaluation generally includes implementation and outcome components, and gathers qualitative and quantitative data to answer the following research questions. The Online School Partnerships program developed a logic model and these research questions reflect program activities and outcomes (see Appendix).

Implementation evaluation key questions

- How well is the Online School Partnerships program being implemented? What are aspects of the program, if any, that need to be adjusted over time?

- How well does the collaboration between MacPhail and the schools function, and how can it be strengthened?

Outcome evaluation key questions

- To what extent does student participation in the Online School Partnerships program affect their interest, motivation, knowledge, and skills in music?

- To what extent does student participation in the Online School Partnerships program affect their attitudes about school (school motivation and engagement) and student non-academic skills?

- To what extent does music educator participation in the Online School Partnerships program affect their growth as an educator, job satisfaction, and ability to handle the many aspects of their work assignment?

Report purpose

The purpose of this report is to tie together multiple years of evaluation data to highlight the ongoing, consistent key findings and recommendations for Online School Partnerships. Evaluation methods have evolved over the years to respond to the needs of the program, as well as external factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This has resulted in a wealth of data that has rarely been reviewed with a holistic, multi-year lens. This high-level review of evaluation data from the 19-20 academic year through the 22-23 academic year demonstrates the consistent year-to-year themes, recommendations for programming, and recommendations for the ongoing evaluation. The Appendix includes links to each annual report from 19-20 on.

Methods

As mentioned, evaluation methods have evolved and adapted over the years. Figure 1 show which methods have been used over the years and a total number of completes.

1. Methods by stakeholder from 19-20 to 22-23

Academic year	MacPhail teaching artists	Music educator partners	Students	Parents
2019-2020	17/30 survey completes, 68/68 student skills assessments	6/9 interviews	40/68 surveys	
2020-2021	23/23 survey completes, 41/216 student skills assessments	6/10 interviews	102/419 surveys	2 interviews
2021-2022	8/16 interviews	3/10 surveys	18/363 surveys	
2022-2023	23/38 skills assessments	4/9 surveys		

General information about each method used:

- **Teaching artist survey:** This survey asked about the overall vision and goals of the program, the collaboration with the partner schools, successes of the Online School Partnerships program, and areas for improvement.

- **Teaching artist interview:** This interview asked about the overall successes of the Online School Partnerships program, benefits for the students and partner schools, and areas for improvement.

- **Music skills assessments:** Skills assessments are for students receiving individual lessons with teaching artists. At the beginning and end of students' time with the Online School Partnerships program, the MacPhail teaching artist they worked with completed skills assessments, looking at a variety of components of students' performance abilities (tone quality, intonation, rhythm, etc.).

- **Music educator interviews:** In these interviews, educators were asked about the value and successes of the program, collaboration with MacPhail, and suggestions for improvement.

- **Music educator survey:** In the survey, educators were asked about the impact of the program on students, their collaboration with MacPhail, value and successes of the program, and suggestions for improvement.

- **Parent interviews:** In 20-21, parent interviews were included to get a more holistic view of student impacts. In these interviews, parents were asked about their family's satisfaction with the program, what they believe their child has gotten out of the experience, and how they believe the program could improve, among other things.

- **Student survey:** This survey measured student satisfaction with the Online School Partnerships program, perceptions of the lessons provided, and interest in music education and school generally. Please note the student survey sample varies from year-to-year. In the 19-20 and 21-22 years there was a majority of students receiving individual, private lessons. In 20-21, there was an increase in the number of students who completed the survey overall, and the majority that completed were students in sectional instruction with OSP (Figure 2).

2. Student survey sample by type of instruction received

Academic year	Individual lessons	Sectionals	Class
2019-2020 (N=40)	83%	20%	0%
2020-2021 (N=102)	26%	67%	10%
2021-2022 (N=18)	72%	33%	0%

Note. Students could receive more than one type of instruction.

Evaluation findings from 2019-2023

Program outputs 2019-2023

OSP has partnered with 27 different schools since the 19-20 academic year. As mentioned previously, schools can choose the type of instruction that is best for their school (individual lessons, sectionals, or classroom). Similarly, not all schools choose to participate in evaluation activities.

Figures 3 and 4 show the total numbers for students served each year and student contact hours. Both peaked in 20-21, due to an increase in online partnerships. The total number of students served is roughly in line with pre-pandemic numbers, while the total student contact hours remains high compared to pre-pandemic numbers.

3. Total number of students served from 2019-2023
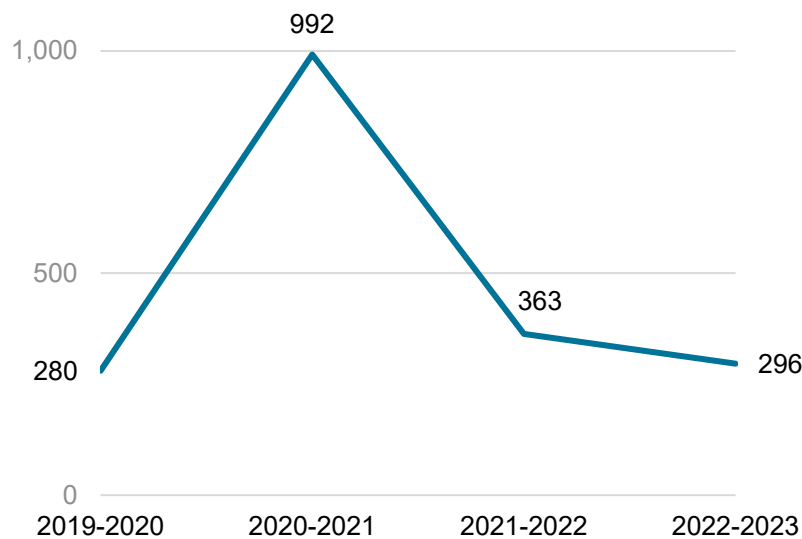
4. Total number of student contact hours from 2019-2023
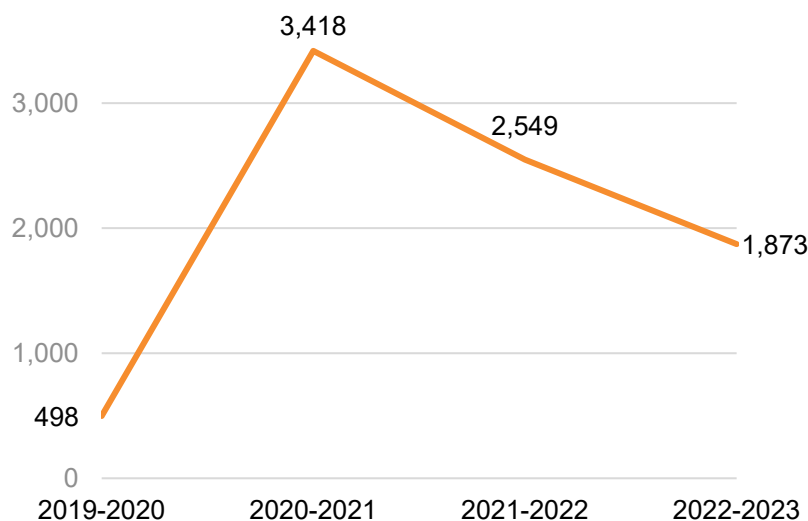
Student outcomes

Students grow in musical skills, knowledge, and confidence

Student skills assessments over the years consistently show students improve in all evaluated music skills from the beginning to end of programming. Figure 5 shows results from the most recent 22-23 academic year, which are similar to academic years 19-20 and 20-21, though skills with the biggest changes has differed over the years. Ability to focus consistently had the highest rating all three years of skills assessments.

5.   Mean scores of pre and post music skills in 22-23 year, in order of smallest to biggest change

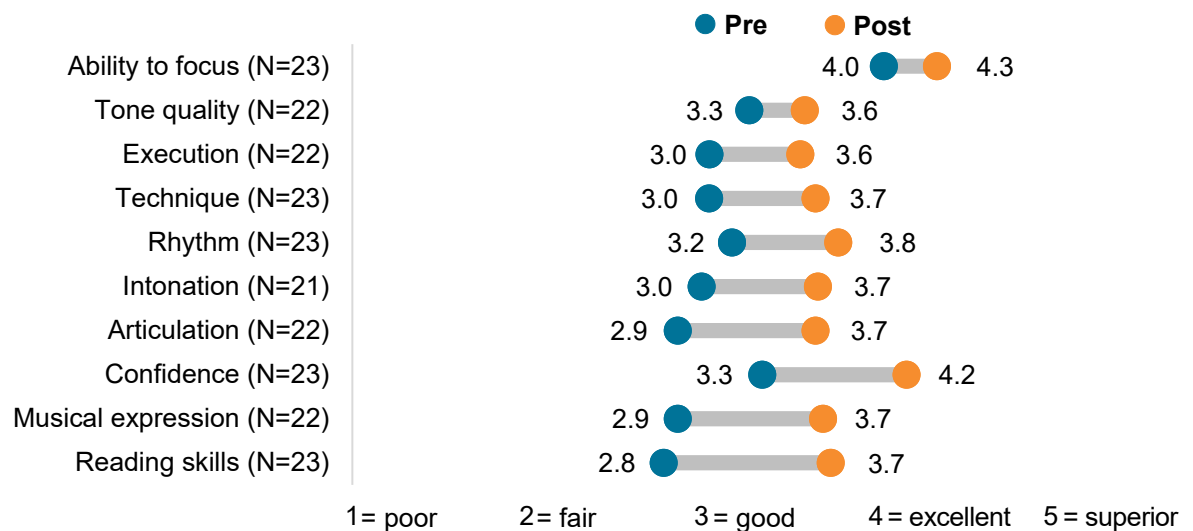|	Pre	Post
Ability to focus (N=23)	4.0	4.3
Tone quality (N=22)	3.3	3.6
Execution (N=22)	3.0	3.6
Technique (N=23)	3.0	3.7
Rhythm (N=23)	3.2	3.8
Intonation (N=21)	3.0	3.7
Articulation (N=22)	2.9	3.7
Confidence (N=23)	3.3	4.2
Musical expression (N=22)	2.9	3.7
Reading skills (N=23)	2.8	3.7

1 = poor   2 = fair   3 = good   4 = excellent   5 = superior

Music educators and teaching artists share that they've seen these improvements in students' skills through surveys and interviews as well. They've noted growth in musical technique, skills, and confidence and that this can be particularly beneficial for students who are eager to improve or who are preparing to audition for ensembles. In the 19-20 evaluation, one music educator noted the growth they've seen is on par with in-person private lessons.

> *I have seen and heard so much improvement in my student's tone quality. They have also been a lot more confident, and shown great leadership for their section in band. – Music educator in 22-23 evaluation*

> *I did see a difference in their confidence with their performance, but also their ease and love for what they were doing seemed to improve. They weren't so nervous the more we worked together. – MacPhail teaching artist in 21-22 evaluation*

Students also self-report their own musical growth. All three years with student survey data available show that a majority of students report learning new skills that have helped them in band/choir (Figure 6). In 21-22, students were asked if they are more confident in music ensembles because of OSP; nearly all students agreed (44% strongly agreed, 44% agreed).

6.   Student report of learning new musical skills

I learned new musical skills that helped me in band/choir.

Year	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
2019-2020 (N=40)	63%	35%	3%		
2020-2021 (N=102)	28%	56%	8%	2%	6%
2021-2022 (N=18)	67%	33%			

■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Don't know
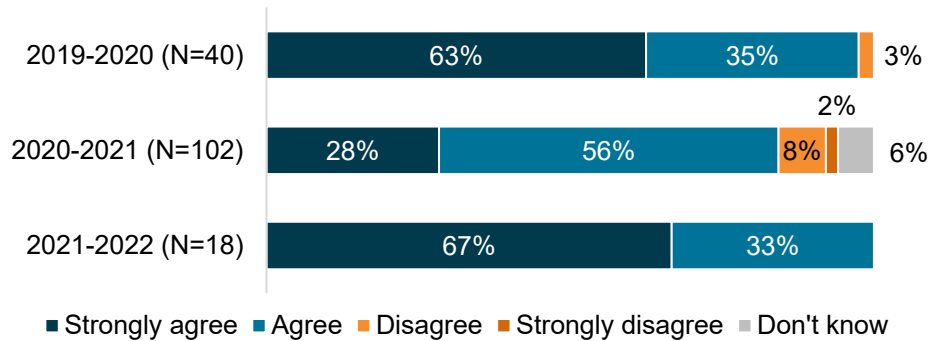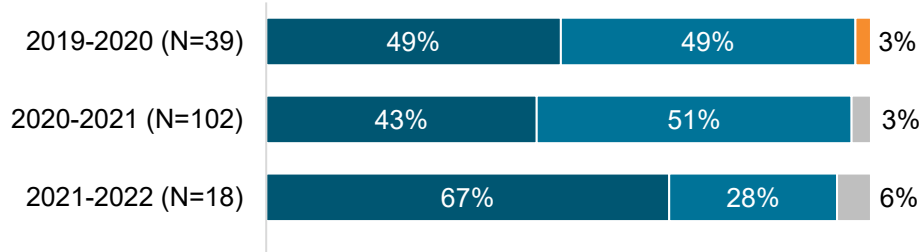
Note. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

The two parents interviewed in 21-22 spoke on how OSP was a way to challenge their students and push the boundaries of their musical skills, in a way that their school alone could not provide.

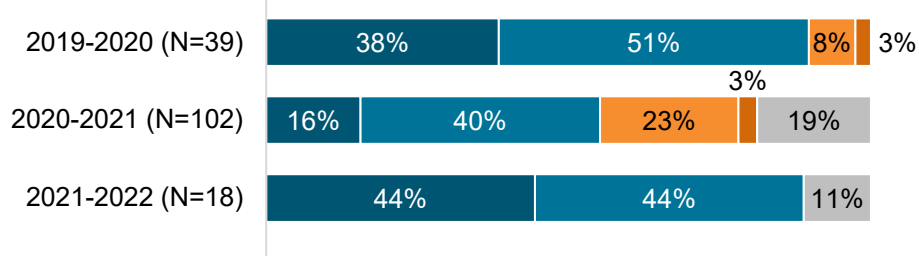## Students grow in musical interest, motivation, and appreciation

Students consistently self-report increased musical interest and appreciation because of OSP. A majority of students each year report they are interested in continuing to develop their music skills, are more motivated to do well one their instruments, and that coming to the online sessions increased their appreciation of music (Figure 7). Similarly, in the 21-22 school year, students were asked if participating in Online School Partnerships made them more motivated to participate in their school music ensemble. A majority agreed (83%), with 17% disagreeing. The 20-21 year consistently had a higher percentage of students that disagreed or reported, "don't know" than the other two years.

7.   Student report of musical interest, motivation, and appreciation

I am interested in continuing to develop my music skills.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know
2019-2020 (N=39)	49%	49%	3%
2020-2021 (N=102)	43%	51%	3%
2021-2022 (N=18)	67%	28%	6%

I am more motivated to do well on my instrument.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
2019-2020 (N=39)	38%	51%	8%	3%	
2020-2021 (N=102)	16%	40%	23%	3%	19%
2021-2022 (N=18)	44%	44%			11%

Coming to the online sessions increased my appreciation of music.
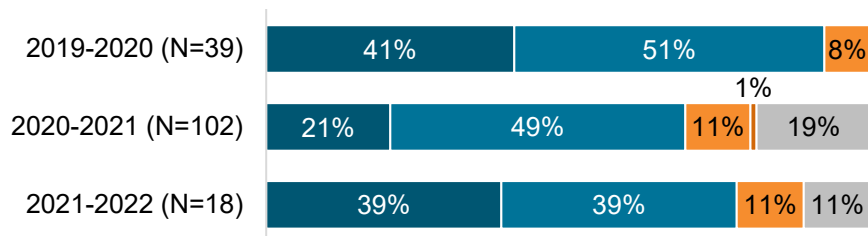
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
2019-2020 (N=39)	41%	51%	8%		
2020-2021 (N=102)	21%	49%	11%	1%	19%
2021-2022 (N=18)	39%	39%	11%		11%

■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Don't know

Note. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Students were also asked about their interest in music after high school graduation. Across all three years, a majority of students report being interested in continuing with their instrument on an informal basis (continuing to play, participating in community groups, etc.) and participating in a college ensemble (Figure 8). A smaller percentage report being interested in a music degree in college (11%-32%). Please note two of these questions were altered across years, so year-to-year changes should be interpreted with caution.

8.   Student interest in music after high school graduation

I am interested in…

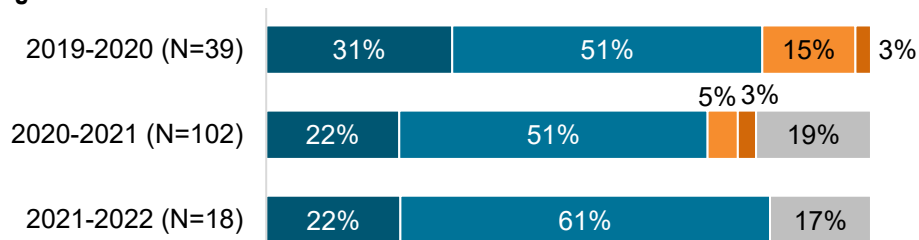**continuing with my instrument on an informal basis after graduating from high school.**[a]

2019-2020 (N=39) 31% 51% 15% 3%
2020-2021 (N=102) 22% 51% 5% 3% 19%
2021-2022 (N=18) 22% 61% 17%

participating in a college-level ensemble after graduating high school, such as a college band, orchestra, or choir.[b]

2019-2020 (N=39) 38% 36% 21% 5%
2020-2021 (N=102) 21% 37% 10% 5% 27%
2021-2022 (N=18) 22% 50% 6%
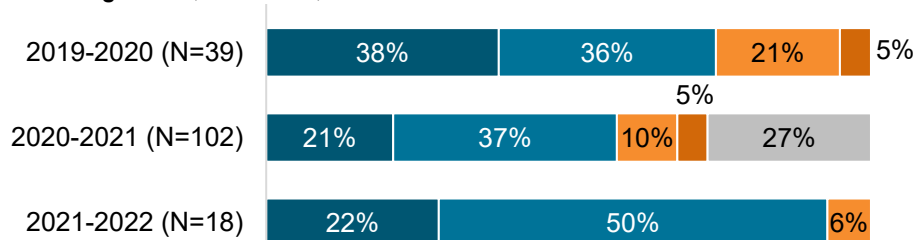
pursuing a college degree in music after graduating from high school.

2019-2020 (N=39) 18% 13% 55% 13%
2020-2021 (N=102) 4% 10% 39% 18% 29%
2021-2022 (N=18) 6% 6% 22% 17% 50%
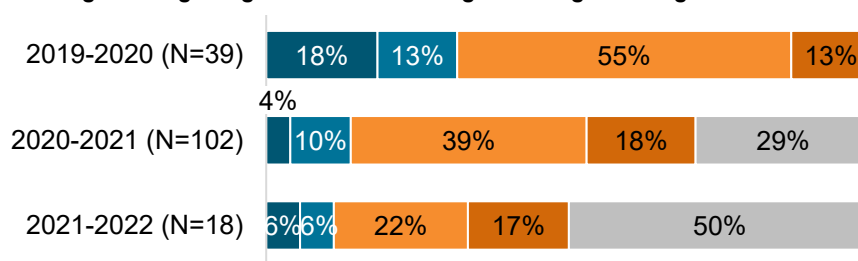
■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Don't know

[a]For the 21-22 school year, this question was altered to "I am interested in continuing with my instrument outside of a college-level ensemble after graduating from high school, like a community group or practicing on my own"

[b]For the 19-20 school year, this question was "I am interested in participating in a college band or orchestra after graduating from high school" before changing for the 20-21 and 21-22 school years.

Note. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

A few students have auditioned for a post-secondary music scholarship or music program. One of the parents spoke about how their child was given a scholarship to participate in a college band, which they believed would not have been possible if not for the Online School Partnerships program.

OSP has some impact on students' academic engagement

A key question in the evaluation over the years is how the program impacts students' attitude toward school, including school engagement and academic motivation. It has been difficult to draw conclusions over the years, because our evaluation design and constraints haven't allowed for the investigation or demonstration of any causal relationship between OSP programming and academic engagement or motivation. Nevertheless, a majority of students tend to self-report that participating Online School Partnerships has made them more motivated to do well in school and more excited to come to school (Figure 9). A smaller proportion of students in the 20-21 year agreed than in the other two years, about half or less than half of students. These questions do have higher levels of disagreement or "don't know" responses than other questions in the student survey. The evaluation for many years also asked students about working hard in school, until this question was removed in 21-22 for not adding useful information to the evaluation results. Nearly all students agreed they work hard in school, suggesting these students may already be academically engaged and motivated.

9. OSP impact on student academic motivation

Participating in the Online School Program made me more motivated to do well in school.

2019-2020 (N=39)	18%	49%	33%
2020-2021 (N=102)	10%	33%	25%	9%	23%
2021-2022 (N=18)	28%	33%	22%	17%
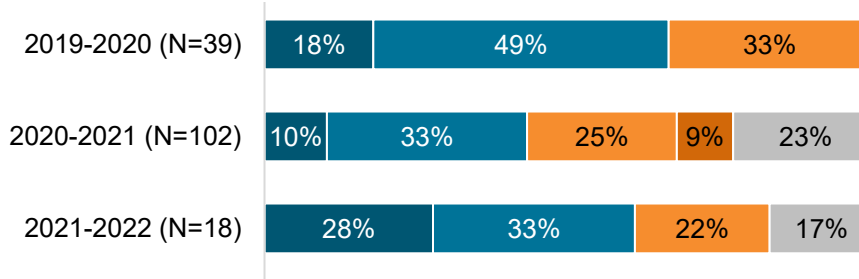
Participating in the Online School Program made me more excited to come to school.

2019-2020 (N=39)	23%	46%	26%	5%
2020-2021 (N=102)	9%	43%	21%	5%	22%
2021-2022 (N=18)	11%	56%	28%	6%

I work hard in school.[a]

2019-2020 (N=39)	62%	38%
2020-2021 (N=102)	56%	39%	5%
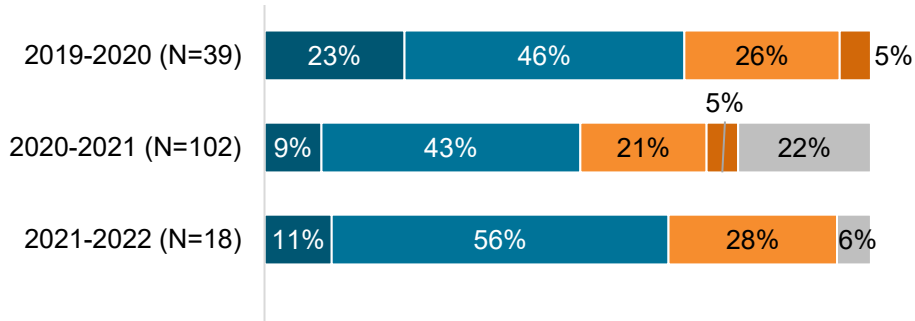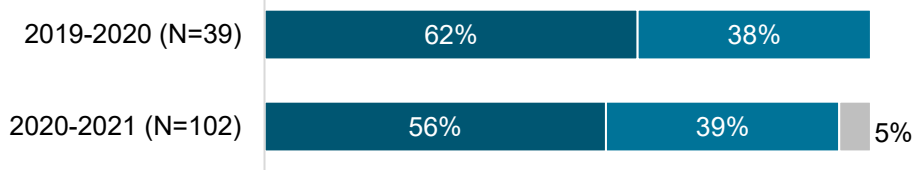
■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Don't know

[a]This question was removed from the survey in the 21-22 school year.

Note. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

In interviews, music educators and parents have shed some light on the link between OSP and academic engagement, tying it to student confidence. Having the opportunity to be challenged and grow in any skill area, like music, can boost student confidence, the ability to take on other challenges, and ultimately help students feel more excited and motivated at school. The two parents interviewed in 20-21 noted that their children were already dedicated students.

> *It's just that self-confidence… I would read into that, that it would certainly be a boost academically. It also instills in them that they have to do hard work to reach their goal… It instills in them that if you put in the time and effort, you can succeed at whatever it is, whether it's music or academics. –Parent interviewed for the 20-21 evaluation*

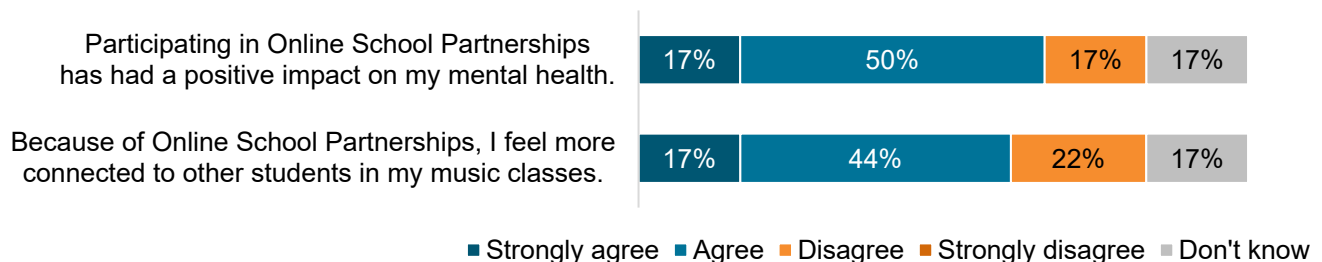## OSP has some impacts on students' mental health and social connections

After the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and a transition to distance learning, an area of interest for this evaluation, and for many across the country, has been student mental health and social connections. During distance learning, OSP was largely able to maintain programming since it was already distanced instruction over the internet. Parents interviewed in 20-21 were the first to raise the idea, at least within the evaluation, that OSP may be having a positive impact on student mental health by helping students cope with the isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic.

> *This year was very difficult with the pandemic, and she was isolated while learning from home. But she looked very happy even though she was practicing her instrument for long hours every day. – Parent interviewed for the 20-21 evaluation*

As this area became a topic of increased interest, questions related to mental health and social connection were added to the student survey in the 21-22 evaluation. About two-thirds of students agreed that OSP had a positive impact on their mental health and that they feel more connected to other students in their music classes (Figure 10).

10. OSP impact on student mental health social connection (N=18)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
Participating in Online School Partnerships has had a positive impact on my mental health.	17%	50%	17%	17%
Because of Online School Partnerships, I feel more connected to other students in my music classes.	17%	44%	22%	17%

■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Don't know

Note. Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Students were asked how OSP impacted their mental health and a few gave examples.

> *My mental health has improved because I have learned new skills that helped me improve my musical performance and gave me more opportunities that I wouldn't have had before. – Online School Partnership student*
>
> *I was more aware of mistakes and able to fix them so I became more confident in myself. – Online School Partnership student*
>
> *My mental health has been greatly impacted by this program for the simple fact of each day when we would have lessons, it made me want to come to school so I could improve. – Online School Partnership student*

One music educator in 21-22 shared that music in general has helped a student cope with high school, writing, "I don't know how she would be doing without her connection to music and the success she feels." It's worth noting this and the students' responses callback to the themes of student confidence and motivation to attend school addressed in the previous section.

Teaching artists are another opportunity for students to strengthen social connections, which is discussed further in the "Program Implementation" section. A key finding is that students and teaching artists build positive relationships with each other.

Other student impacts

Over the years, music educators and teaching artists have shared additional impacts from programming, such as leadership skills, time management, goal setting, accountability, and general maturity, all of which are skills that extend beyond the realm of music. A few have mentioned that OSP provides opportunities for students to connect with people (teaching artists) outside their "bubble" and may help broaden students' worldview.

Program implementation and music educator outcomes

MacPhail is a resource and partner to schools in greater Minnesota

When asked generally about the benefits of OSP, both local school music educators and MacPhail teaching artists highlight that it provides access to quality music education, the main objective of the program. Music educators in particular share the value of having a specialized music instructor available to them, their students, and their schools. This gives music educators an additional resource for them in their work, such as an extra music instructor to teach students, to ask questions, and to get feedback on instruction. Most notably, it allows local music educators to connect students who are advancing musically

with an instructor who is specialized on their instrument for 1:1 lessons, which can relieve some burden or pressure from music educators.

> *I have stopped feeling guilty for not being able to give my "high fliers" the attention they deserve due to my full schedule. I know they will get help from great teachers who are personable and will do their best to help my kids. – Music educator in 22-23 evaluation*

> *Partnering with MacPhail took a lot of the pressure off of me for preparing students for solo ensemble. I still worked with them and helped them learn their part with their accompanist, but all the prep was done with their MacPhail teachers. – Music educator in 22-23 evaluation*

> *As a teacher in a small, rural school, I just don't have lesson time. Knowing [my student] is being taken care of for skill development takes a lot of stress off of me. – Music educator in 21-22 evaluation.*

Some music educators shared how some students receiving specialized individual attention can benefit the whole music program because they work on ensemble pieces together and those students can share their learnings with other students.

> *I have also heard MacPhail students talking to people in their section about things they learned in their lesson, which helps improve the section while working together! – Music educator in 22-23 evaluation*

> *More students that maybe wouldn't do private lessons are able to. It brings our band to a new level because of that, and it also fosters their musical interests because it's accessible to them… People are so aware in our school what the MacPhail program is. It has become a regular part of our band curriculum, and that's a positive for our school. - Music educator in 19-20 evaluation*

Music educators and teaching artists build relationships with one another

Both music educators and teaching artists report they're able to and have built relationships with each other, for many of the reasons listed above. Teaching artists are an extra pair of hands in music programs to support students, both musically and personally as part of a student's support system. Some music educators noted teaching artists go above and beyond for their students, which adds to the relationship and partnership, by listening to recordings outside of lesson time and staying aware of an individual student's goals and priorities. They are also available as an extra resource for music educator to provide feedback or answer questions as needed.

> *I'm the only band director, so when I have questions or need support… I can't know everything. I really rely on these relationships, and they've really helped me with music, instruments, and nuances. They're so approachable for anything. - Music educator in 19-20 evaluation*
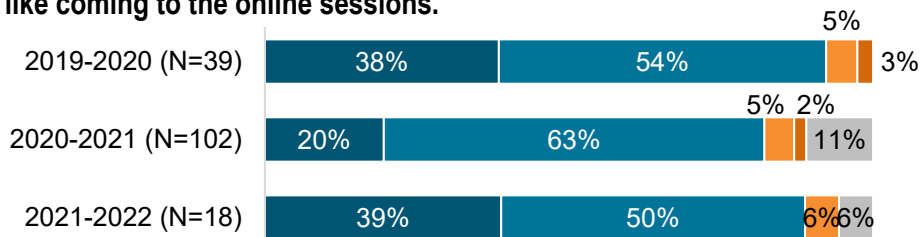
In the music educator survey administered in in 21-22 and 22-23, all respondents agreed that MacPhail is a helpful resource in their work as a music educator, that it is easy for them to collaborate with MacPhail, and that they have a good working relationship with the MacPhail teaching artist.

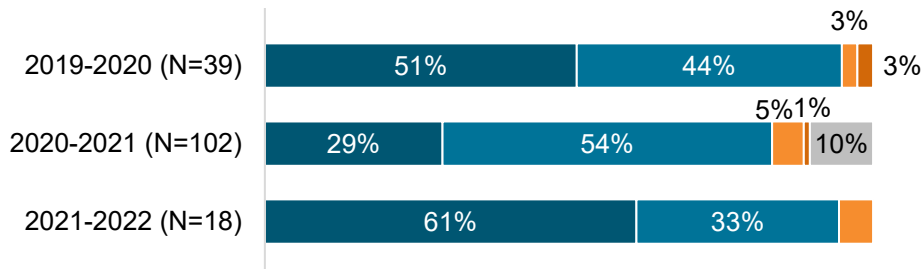## *Students are generally satisfied with the program*

A majority of students consistently report they like coming to the online sessions, they would recommend these sessions to other students, and the technology used for the sessions made it easy to learn (Figure 11). A majority of students in 19-20 and 21-22 also said they were interested in continuing with the program. For the 20-21 year, 43% agreed, while one quarter disagreed and about one-third said they don't know.

11. Student satisfaction with OSP

I like coming to the online sessions.

Year	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
2019-2020 (N=39)	38%	54%	5%	3%	
2020-2021 (N=102)	20%	63%	5%	2%	11%
2021-2022 (N=18)	39%	50%	6%		6%

I would recommend these sessions to other students.

Year	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
2019-2020 (N=39)	51%	44%	3%	3%	
2020-2021 (N=102)	29%	54%	5%	1%	10%
2021-2022 (N=18)	61%	33%			

The technology used for these sessions made it easy to learn.

Year	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
2019-2020 (N=39)	24%	66%	11%		
2020-2021 (N=102)	16%	57%	10%	2%	15%
2021-2022 (N=18)	6%	78%	11%		6%
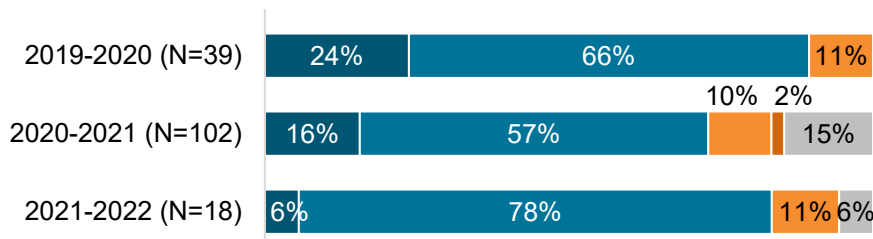
I am interested in continuing with the MacPhail Online Partnerships Program.
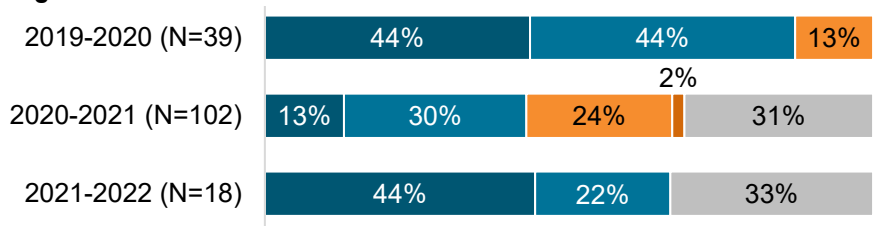
Year	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
2019-2020 (N=39)	44%	44%	13%		
2020-2021 (N=102)	13%	30%	24%	2%	31%
2021-2022 (N=18)	44%	22%			33%

■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Don't know

Note. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Students also consistently report positive perceptions and interactions with their teaching artists. Nearly all students agree that they like their teaching artist, the teaching artist used time well, and set clear expectations for practicing and learning at home (Figure 12).

12. Student satisfaction with teaching artist

I liked the Teaching Artist who led the class.

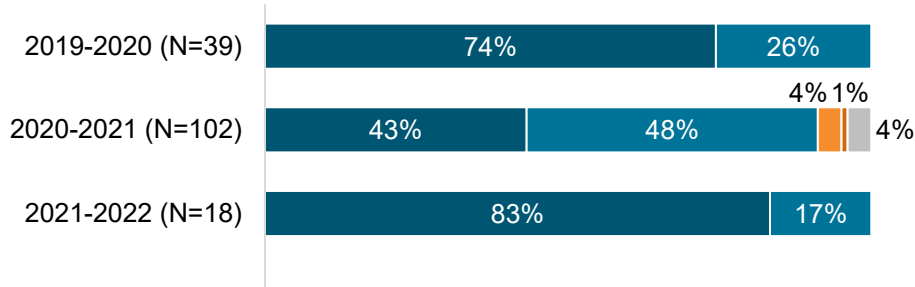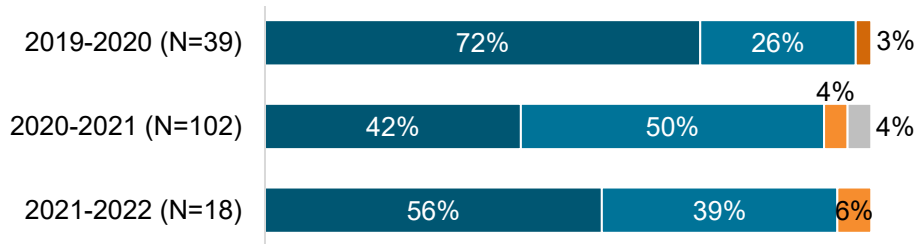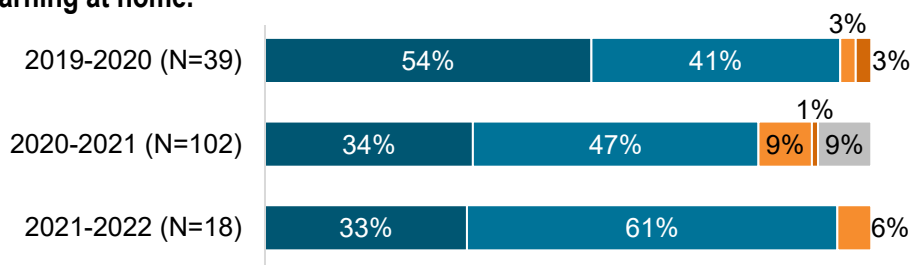|		
2019-2020 (N=39)	74%	26%
2020-2021 (N=102)	43%	48% / 4% / 1% / 4%
2021-2022 (N=18)	83%	17%

The Teaching Artist used class time well.

2019-2020 (N=39)	72%	26% / 3%
2020-2021 (N=102)	42%	50% / 4% / 4%
2021-2022 (N=18)	56%	39% / 6%

The Teaching Artist set clear expectations for practicing and learning at home.

2019-2020 (N=39)	54%	41% / 3% / 3%
2020-2021 (N=102)	34%	47% / 9% / 1% / 9%
2021-2022 (N=18)	33%	61% / 6%

■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Don't know

Note. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Over the years, students were asked what they like most about OSP in open-ended questions. Students consistently mention two areas: developing additional music skills and knowledge, and having positive interactions with their teaching artists. For music skills and knowledge, students have appreciated the chance to work on details they otherwise would not have the opportunity to work on. Students have noted their teaching artists are knowledgeable and efficient teachers, and are friendly and easy to connect with.

> *I enjoyed how our teacher made it fun to practice and was always welcoming.*
> *– OSP Student in 21-22 evaluation*

I could tell my teacher knew a lot about the instrument I play and he really taught me a lot about technique and other skills that have really helped me grow as a musician. – OSP Student in 21-22 evaluation

This program helped me learn and improve, and I still had fun and was able to understand how to do new things. – OSP Student in 20-21 evaluation

I liked how even though we were distanced you still grow a connection with your lesson teacher. – OSP Student in 20-21 evaluation

Students have also appreciated the accessibility and convenience of the online sessions.

Both music educators and teaching artists have also noted this opportunity for relationship building between teaching artists and students. As mentioned previously, a few have noted how teaching artists can become another caring adult in a students' support system to provide support as needed.

The technology for virtual programming works well, with some room for improvement

Teaching artists, music educators, and students have been asked over the years about the effectiveness of the technology in delivering online lessons. The response is overall positive, with many sharing the technology works pretty well. The platform used has changed in recent years, which some noted was a positive switch. Some teaching artists have even expressed surprise that the technology works as well as it does.

[Virtual lessons] met more than my expectations. When I thought about teaching on Zoom, I thought, "Well, that's just not going to work real well and a half hour isn't going to work real well." But it has. – Teaching artist in the 21-22 evaluation

The first time I went and visited a couple of schools in-person, I was so pleased to know that what I thought I was hearing online was pretty close to what I was hearing in person. That was really nice to know that the advice I'd been giving was right on. – Teaching artist in the 21-22 evaluation

Thought the technology largely works well, there are areas for improvement. Though the platform change has largely been a positive development, some teaching artists suggested MacPhail keep looking for improved technologies to facilitate. Internet connection and lag can be an issue, particularly bandwidth at a school or if there's weather interfering with the connection. It can be more difficult to use virtual programs for a group of students, as opposed to individual lessons, since there are more people in a larger area. Quality of equipment can also be a concern, such as microphones, cameras, etc. A few students have also noted teaching artists seem less comfortable or adept with the technology, which can cause issues during a lesson.

Technology during COVID-19 and distance learning specifically is discussed in the following section.

Suggestions for program improvement

Over the years, teaching artists, music educators, and students have been asked about suggestions for improvements to the program. The following are the most common suggestions across 2019-2023 evaluations:

- **Improvements to technology and internet connection.** This includes improvements to internet connection, virtual platform, and equipment used (primarily microphones). Some teaching artists also noted a service to help facilitate smoother scheduling of lessons.

- **Opportunities to visit and connect in person.** The findings of this report, and previous evaluation reports, highlight that a key component of this program is the relationship building between teaching artists, students, and local music educators. Opportunities for in-person visits has been a consistent recommendation over the years as a way to strengthen these relationships. Teaching artists could visit schools, and/or students and music educators could come to MacPhail for lessons or some kind of event. Some music educators have noted conferences are a good way for music educators and teaching artists to connect in person.

- **Deliberate efforts to improve communication and coordination between teaching artists and local music educators.** Teaching artists in particular noted a desire for improved communication and coordination with local music educators, though some acknowledge music educators juggle multiple responsibilities. This can help improve the joint support provided to music students, address last-minute schedule changes, and further integrate MacPhail into local music rooms to be more of a resource for schools. This is an area MacPhail as a whole may be able to support by facilitating intentional kick-off meetings or regular check-ins, gathering contact information for specific teachers or the direct school phone number, or helping set expectations and guidelines for the partnership.

- **Changes to lesson format**, such as extending lessons through the summer or having longer lesson times.

- **Creation of short, downloadable videos for students to have access to on their own time.** For example, recorded lessons on certain skills or techniques, videos on how to properly clean their instrument, rhythm, etc. Having these videos be downloadable was mentioned in the 20-21 school year during distance learning.

- **Expand programming to additional schools.**

Some additional, one-off suggestions include: guidance from MacPhail to schools on teaching different types of music classes (rock band, electronic arts, etc.), facilitating virtual OSP performances, establishing program guidelines with students at the beginning of the program year, providing financial assistance to students to help with instrument and equipment costs, providing financial assistance to schools to purchase sheet music, creating introduction videos for teaching artists about their backgrounds, and resources on how to practice diversity, equity, and inclusion in music education.

COVID-19 Transitions

The COVID-19 pandemic began toward the end of the 19-20 academic year. Some schools and students had completed their yearly programming with OSP when the switch to distance learning happened, while others had to pivot quickly to continue. For the 20-21 academic year, schools across greater Minnesota were approaching distance learning differently or periodically switching between distance and in-person learning, leading to variety in program delivery. Though the program was already virtual, students taking classes from home as opposed to in school presented challenges, especially for rural areas where internet access can be unavailable or unreliable.

Students who reported taking lessons from home in the 20-21 school year answered a series of questions about their experience (Figure 13). A majority of students agreed that their family has access to internet that is high quality and reliable enough for lessons, that they have space available to do lessons at home, and that it was as easy for them to do lessons at home as it was in school. However, about a third of students disagreed that it was as easy for them to take lessons at home as at school.

13. Online lessons during distance learning in 20-21 (N=82)
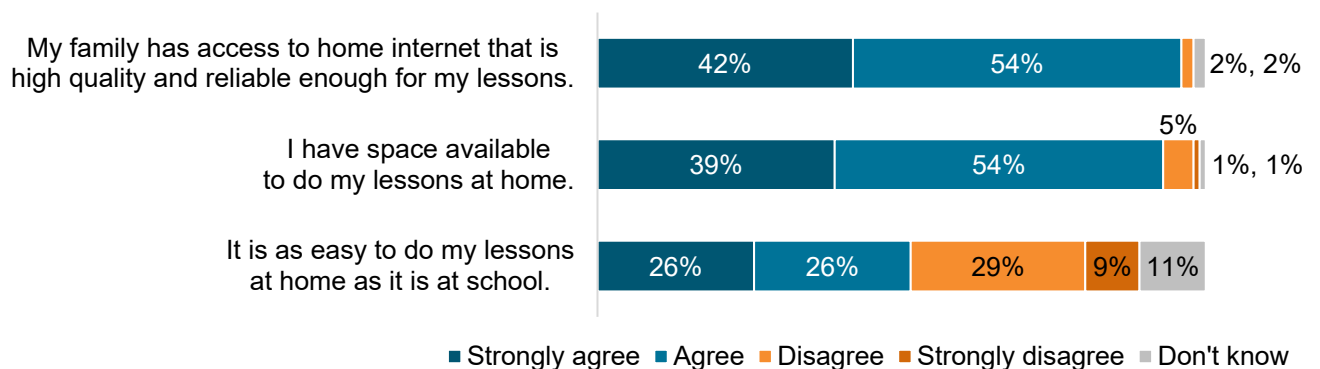
Note. Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Though students overall reported internet at home was high quality and reliable enough to continue lessons, some music educators shared that internet access was a barrier for some of their students.

> *Because it was the case that a lot of students live in poverty and don't have access to great internet, there wasn't really an opportunity to continue [online lessons] during distance learning. – Music educator in the 19-20 evaluation*

MacPhail support during transition to distance learning

Music educators shared that MacPhail was able to provide some support in the transition to distance learning, at least as much as possible. Some music educators shared the transition was so overwhelming they didn't even think to reach out or include MacPhail. Music educators who worked with MacPhail noted that staff were flexible, accommodating, and supportive during the transition. When asked how MacPhail could have better supported the transition, there were few suggestions. Most frequently, music educators shared that the problem was too big for MacPhail to handle or support, since limited internet access in greater Minnesota is a large scale, systemic problem.

As mentioned in previous areas of the report, it appears MacPhail was able to provide a source of relationships and social connection during an isolating time. One parent remarked on how their child seemed happy while practicing, even while distance learning. Teaching artists shared that having a person to regularly check in with and listen to them seemed beneficial for some students.

> *I really appreciate how lessons continued for throughout the pandemic, even from students' homes. Continuity was maintained which was important for them and me! – Teaching artist in the 20-21 evaluation*
>
> *I think it was, in a difficult year, a bright spot. – Music educator in the 20-21 evaluation*

Final thoughts

The evaluation results across academic years 19-20 and 22-23 highlight the consistent outcomes of MacPhail's Online School Partnership program.

Students consistently show growth in musical skills, as well as in musical interest, confidence, appreciation, and motivation. Evidence of this growth was in skills assessments completed by MacPhail teaching artists, student self-report in surveys, observations from music educators, and the two parent interviews completed in 20-21. Other areas with some promising results are student academic engagement, student mental health, and social connections. Students also consistently report satisfaction with the program, citing their own musical growth and their connection with their teaching artist as what they like most about OSP.

Similarly, the results show consistency in program implementation and outcomes for music educators. OSP acts as a partner and resources for music educators in greater Minnesota and relieves some teacher burden, essentially becoming an extra pair of hands, eyes, and ears for their students and ensembles. In terms of technology, students, music educators, and teaching artists generally report the technology works well for programming, though there are some areas of improvement, such as better internet and better equipment.

In terms of the COVID-19 pandemic, OSP experienced upheaval along with many programs and areas of life, but OSP was in a unique position to continue serving students since it was already a virtual program. Results from the evaluations show that OSP was largely still able to provide support and quality programming to students and music educators during distance learning, though internet for students at home was a barrier for some. The student survey results in the 20-21 school year do show lower levels of agreement in student outcomes than in the years before or after. There are a few possible explanations for this change. One is that the 20-21 school year was unique in terms of the COVID-19 pandemic and distance learning, which may have impacted student outcomes. The sample in the 20-21 school year was also primarily students receiving sectional instruction, as opposed to private individual lessons, which may have affected student responses. Differences in student outcomes based on type of instruction received (individual, sectional, or class) is a piece the evaluation will continue to explore in future iterations.

Though the evaluations largely demonstrate positive outcomes and feedback, there are some recommendations. The following have been crafted based on stakeholder responses, the evaluation team's thoughts, and MacPhail input,

- Opportunities for in-person meetings or lessons may further develop relationships for students, teaching artists, and music educators.

- Continue to explore and streamline technology options to enhance the experience.

- Explore additional program delivery options to support students, such as summer lessons, pre-recorded "how to" videos, etc.

- Further examination of the link between OSP and academic engagement, if that remains of interest to MacPhail. Though this has been explored multiple years, it remains difficult to draw broad conclusions.

- Consider ways to further include student and parent voice into the evaluation. Students have largely shared feedback through surveys so far, whereas interviews or focus groups may offer additional deeper insights. For the 20-21 evaluation, an attempt to include parent voice had limited results (two complete interviews), but those two interviews offered additional angles that added to the evaluation.

Appendix

A. MacPhail Online School Partnerships Logic Model

Overview: The MacPhail Online School Partnerships was established to partner with schools in greater Minnesota to support their music program's goals by providing MacPhail faculty to teach students remotely. By teaching classes remotely, MacPhail aims to increase students' skills, knowledge, and interest in music, and provide the resources for music educators to grow professionally.

INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTCOMES	
		SHORT TERM	**LONG TERM**
Teaching Artists	**Teaching Artists work with music educators to determine curriculum for students**	**Student outcomes** - Students show improved musical skill and knowledge[1, 2, 3, 4] - Students show increased interest, appreciation, and motivation in music[3] - Students show improved attitudes toward school[3, 4] - Students show growth in non-academic skills[2]	Students continue their music education throughout high school and in college[3]
Videoconferencing technology	**Tailored lessons are offered to students in addition to their regular music classes, which include:** - Group lessons - Sectionals - Individual lessons		Rural students are more likely to have the opportunity to perform and compete at a high level[3]
MacPhail funding		**Music educator outcomes** - Music educators grow as teachers[4] - Music educators have increased resources and capacity to grow their music programs[4]	
Other funding	**Student musical performances**		Partner schools throughout the state are better able to offer high-quality music education to their students[5]
Facilities and physical space	**Music educators observe Teaching Artists and learn of new teaching approaches, methods, and resources**	**MacPhail outcomes** - MacPhail is able to reach out to students who would otherwise have no access to the organization[6] - MacPhail creates partnerships with schools throughout the state[4, 5]	
Students			
Music educators	**Evaluation and documentation**	[1] Measured by music skills assessment [4] Measured by music educator survey [2] Measured by progress reports [5] Measured by Teaching Artist survey [3] Measured by student survey [6] Measured by program records	

B. Previous evaluation reports

Connell, E., & Miller, J. (2020). *MacPhail Online Music Programming 2019-20 evaluation results for the Online School Partnerships and Sing Play Learn programs.* Wilder Research. https://www.wilder.org/wilder-research/research-library/macphail-online-music-programming-2019-20-evaluation-results

Miller, J., & Connell, E. (2021). *MacPhail Online Music Programming 2020-21 evaluation results for the Online School Partnerships and Sing Play Learn programs.* Wilder Research. https://www.wilder.org/wilder-research/research-library/macphail-online-music-programming-2020-21-evaluation-results

Miller, J., & Evans, R. (2022). *MacPhail Online Music Programming 2021-2022 evaluation results for the Online School Partnerships and Sing Play Learn programs.* Wilder Research. https://www.wilder.org/wilder-research/research-library/macphail-online-music-programming-2021-22-evaluation-results

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