

MacPhail Center for Music After School Strings Program

2023-2024 Evaluation Results

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Key findings

The following report reviews the evaluation findings of the MacPhail After School Strings Program at Ascension Catholic School in the 2023-2024 school year. A few key findings are presented below.

- Parent and student data suggest students are more motivated to come to school because of After School Strings. In interviews, students shared they are more excited to come to school on days they have programming, and some shared it gives them something to look forward to at the end of the day.

At the end of the day I look forward to going to MacPhail and practicing.

- Similarly, data suggest After School Strings helps students perform well in school. Parents report that the program helps their children in class, and a few students noted it's helped them learn how to focus.
- A key area of interest for this year's evaluation was how the program impacts SEL skills, primarily student resilience or persisting when faced with challenges. In interviews, students offered a few clear examples of how After School Strings has helped them learn how to navigate frustration and keep going.

I've learned how to stay calm when things are tricky because sometimes before I started playing [my instrument], whenever I would get frustrated at something, I wouldn't try to calm down, I'll just stay frustrated. But when I joined MacPhail, there would be hard, tricky spots of a song, and then I'll take a break and then I'll try to do it again.

- Students and teaching artists report learning a lot from the program musically, demonstrating musical growth and progress.
- Parents and students largely appear engaged and satisfied with the program.

Contents

Program overview.....	1
Evaluation.....	2
Methods.....	2
Findings.....	4
How does participation in After School Strings affect student academic achievement and attitudes toward school?.....	4
How does participation in After School Strings affect overall student personal development and well-being?.....	7
How does participation in After School Strings affect students’ musical skills and knowledge?.....	11
How well is After School Strings being implemented? What aspects can be strengthened or improved?.....	12
Limitations.....	14
Final thoughts.....	15
Appendix.....	16
A. Progress reports.....	16
B. Parent survey.....	20
C. Student interview protocol.....	26
D. MacPhail After School Strings Program Logic Model.....	28

Figures

1. Parent report of child's excitement to come to school because of After School Strings program	4
2. Parent report of After School Strings' impact on children's academic performance...	5
3. Student changes in classroom engagement and preparedness, according to teaching artists	6
4. Student growth in the 2023-24 school year, measured by MAP	7
5. Parent perception of challenging work in After School Strings.....	9
6. Student changes in persistence when faced with difficulty, according to teaching artists.....	9
7. Parent report of After School Strings' impact on social connections and belonging	10
8. Parent report of After School Strings' impact on children's mental health	11
9. Student musical growth and progress, according to teaching artists.....	11
10. Parent engagement	13

Program overview

MacPhail Center for Music's School Partnerships enrich the lives of young people and their families in Minnesota by providing in-person or live online instruction in partnership with Minnesota schools. MacPhail staff work with music educators and administrators at partner schools to develop customized programs that provide relevant and compelling music education to strengthen student learning. These programs are individually designed for each school to ensure custom supports are in place to enable children and youth to succeed. A subset of these programs focuses on delivering intensive instrumental instruction to students with limited access to music education. An ongoing partnership has been the After School Strings Program at Ascension Catholic School in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The After School Strings Program provides students with specialized music education and instruction beyond the school's general music education and, in doing so, supports students' highest level of artistic and school learning. Third through eighth grade students who attend Ascension School may choose to play the violin, viola, or cello as part of the program. Participation is voluntary, but students who join must agree to behavior and attendance standards. Students participate in a levelled ensemble, a sectional, musicianship classes, compositions, and bucket drumming. MacPhail provides students with instruments and materials, and all instruction is delivered by MacPhail teaching artists. A team of teachers works together to make sure that each student pursues individual learning goals and makes a positive contribution to the community. Performance and educational mentorship from Minnesota Orchestra musicians provides motivation and focus for students. In addition to musical skills, students learn the importance of collaboration, teamwork, leadership, self-expression, and community. Students have multiple opportunities to extend and continue learning over the summer, including private lessons and participation in camps, group classes, and retreats. Twenty-five Ascension students completed the program in the 2023-2024 school year.

Program funders include: The Curtis L. Carlson Family Foundation, Minnesota State Arts Board, Patrick and Aimee Butler Family Foundation, Carolyn Foundation, Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation, George Family Foundation, and E.A. Michelson Philanthropy.

Evaluation

Wilder Research worked with MacPhail staff to develop an evaluation design for the program. A logic model reflecting the activities and outcomes of the program is provided in Appendix D. The evaluation includes outcome and implementation components and gathers qualitative and quantitative data to answer the following research questions.

Evaluation questions

1. How does participation in After School Strings affect student academic achievement and attitudes toward school?
2. How does participation in After School Strings affect overall student personal development and well-being?
3. How does participation in After School Strings affect student musical skills and knowledge?
4. How well is After School Strings being implemented? What aspects can be strengthened or improved?

Methods

In the 2023-2024 school year, MacPhail and Wilder Research worked together to collect evaluation information through progress reports, surveys, interviews, and limited academic data.

Progress reports: A progress report was designed to help assess students' musical skills, knowledge, and classroom behaviors (persistence, initiative, and leadership during the program). MacPhail instructors, also called teaching artists, completed progress reports for 24 participants at the end of both the fall and spring semesters. With these data, we were able to complete a matched analysis to show how each individual student's assessment changed from fall to spring. A copy of this progress report and the overall results can be found in Appendix A.

Parent surveys: The survey gathered parents' perspectives on their children's practice skills, parent engagement in the program, the impact of music lessons on a number of areas (focus, academic skills, social skills, etc.), and overall satisfaction with the program. A copy of the survey and the overall results can be found in Appendix B.

Paper surveys were distributed at a program performance and then returned to program staff. Parents also had the option of completing the survey online with a QR code. The survey was

available in both English and Spanish. Parents who completed the survey were given a \$10 gift card as an incentive for participation. In total, 19 parent surveys were collected.

Given this method, it is worth pointing out the results from this survey are from parents who may be more engaged than those who did not complete the survey since they attended a performance, received a paper survey, and then returned the survey. Nonetheless, they represent a majority of parents involved in the program.

Student interviews: Students were interviewed 1:1 by Wilder staff during the final week of regularly scheduled programming. The student interview aimed to gather student outcomes from program participation (academic growth, SEL skills, social connections, musical growth) and overall student satisfaction with the program. The protocol used can be found in Appendix C. For participation, parents signed consent forms and each student had the opportunity to agree or refuse to participate on their own. Fourteen students completed the interview, out of 25 students in the program. Students ranged from 4th-7th grade.

Student test scores: Ascension provided aggregated Measure for Academic Progress (MAP) results for the 25 students in After School Strings.

Ascension participates in the MAP standardized testing assessment, which is different than the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA), Minnesota's standardized testing assessment. These MAP scores correspond to MCA proficiency based on a linking study completed by the Northwest Evaluation Association.¹ Given the many confounding factors that can contribute to student academic growth and the lack of a meaningful comparison group, improvements in students' academic proficiency cannot be directly attributed to participation in the After School Strings program. Nonetheless, we present them in this report to provide a brief snapshot of academic proficiency for participants, alongside additional survey and self-reported data about potential academic impacts.

¹ Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA). (2020). *Linking study report: Predicting performance on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments-Series III (MCA-III) based on NWEA MAP growth scores.* <https://www.nwea.org/uploads/2016/06/MN-MAP-Growth-Linking-Study-Report-2020-07-22.pdf>

Findings

How does participation in After School Strings affect student academic achievement and attitudes toward school?

Academic impacts of programming is a key evaluation interest. To explore academic impacts, the evaluation focuses on two elements of academics: motivation to attend school because of MacPhail programming and changes in general academic performance.

Parents and students report increased student motivation to attend school

Both parents and students report the After School Strings program helps motivate students to come to school. Nearly all parents surveyed said their child seems more excited to come to school because of the After School Strings program (Figure 1).

1. Parent report of child's excitement to come to school because of After School Strings program (N=19)

My child's more excited to come to school because of the After School Strings program	#	%
Strongly agree	8	42%
Agree	10	53%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly disagree	1	5%

Some students also shared feeling more motivated in school because of the program. About half of the students interviewed said they're more excited to come to school on days they have the After School Strings program afterwards (6 out of 14). A few specifically shared Strings gives them something to look forward to at the end of the day (4 out of 14).

Interviewer: Do you feel like being here has helped you in school at all?

Student: Yeah, because at the end of the day I look forward to going to MacPhail and practicing.

Interviewer: Do you feel like MacPhail has helped you in school at all?

Student: Well, no, because I think about MacPhail a lot, but also, yes, because it's like I can't wait for MacPhail, so if I be good and don't get held back after class, I'll be able to get there.

Parents and students report positive impacts on academic performance

The majority of parents surveyed report the After School Strings program helped their children perform better academically, helped improve their children's math and reading/literacy skills, and that their children seem more focused (Figure 2). About a fourth of the parents (4 parents) disagreed their child seems more focused than before participating in the program.

2. Parent report of After School Strings' impact on children's academic performance

	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Participating in After School Strings helps my child perform better academically. (N=15)	8	53%	5	33%	2	13%	0	0%
After School Strings has helped improve my child's math skills. (N=17)	5	29%	12	71%	0	0%	0	0%
After School Strings has helped improve my child's reading and literacy skills. (N=17)	6	35%	9	53%	2	12%	0	0%
My child seems more focused and can stick with tasks longer than before participating in After School Strings. (N=17)	7	41%	6	35%	1	6%	3	18%

In interviews, students were also asked if and how the program helps them in school. As previously mentioned, some did report it helps them in school because they feel more motivated in school or have something to look forward to at the end of the day. Three students also said it helps them focus more in class, such as helping them ignore distractions in the classroom. One student noted it helps with their vocabulary in English since music tends to use descriptive words for musicality, and another student said it helps them better handle their frustration in math class. Not surprisingly, some students also noted it helps them in their regular music class (3 students).

I become more focused. I focus on the music, so I focus better on school.

MacPhail's taught me to stay focused whenever there's something distracting happening.

[MacPhail helps me in] English class because I know more fancier words.

Teaching artist observations suggest growth in classroom engagement and preparedness

The progress reports completed by teaching artists also show some insight into students' growth in these areas. While teaching artists do not observe students in their regular classrooms, the progress reports do capture information about students' behavior and attitudes in After School Strings that may relate to classroom engagement, preparedness, or general skills important for classroom settings.

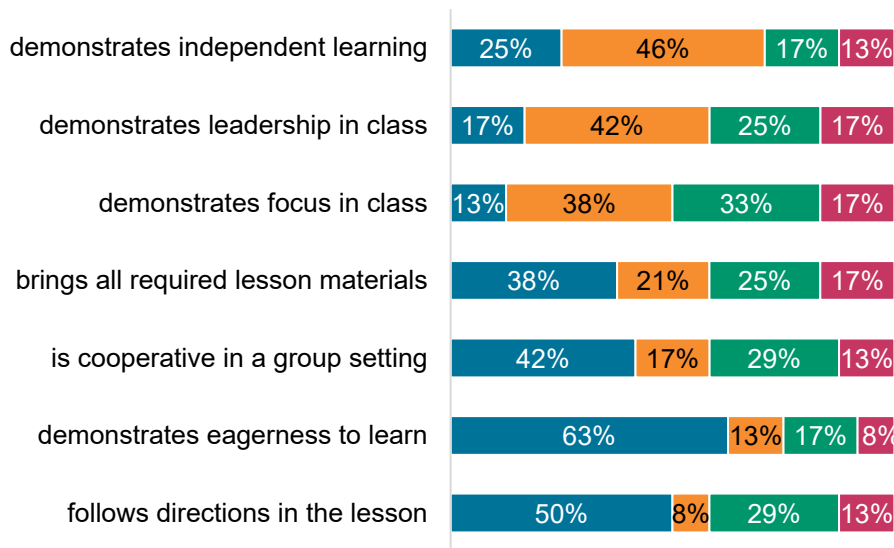
For example, following directions, showing an eagerness to learn, or bringing the required materials for class are behaviors that are important in multiple settings.

For the progress reports, Wilder completed a match analysis. This shows how each student's score changed on each element from the fall to spring assessment (Figure 3). Students' scores could increase, stay the same, or decrease. Students who received the highest score ("Always") in both fall and spring are their own category since they had no room for an increased score. No students received the lowest rating ("Never") in both fall and spring.

Nearly half of students had an increased score on demonstration of independent learning (46%). About 40% of students increased their score on demonstrating leadership and focus in class (42% and 38%, respectively). Half or more of students "Always" demonstrated an eagerness to learn and follow directions at both the fall and spring assessments, meaning there was less room for improvement for this group of students because they were already doing it. About a quarter to a third of student scores stayed the same for most of the items.

3. Student changes in classroom engagement and preparedness, according to teaching artists (N=24)

Student:



Score: ■ Maintained high ("Always") ■ Increased ■ Stayed the same ■ Decreased

Student academic proficiency and growth

In addition to observational and self-reported data, Ascension shared standardized test scores for participants in the After School Strings program compared to Ascension scholars overall. Please see the "Methods" section for more detail.

Figure 4 shows academic growth for After School Strings program participants, as measured by MAP, compared to Ascension students overall for the 2023-24 school year. For reading, a slightly higher percentage of students in the After School Strings program demonstrated growth than Ascension students overall (58% vs 49%).

4. Student growth in the 2023-24 school year, measured by MAP

	Math growth	Reading growth
All Ascension scholars	43%	49%
After School Strings program participants (N=25)	46%	58%

Note. Differences in growth cannot be attributed solely to participation in the After School Strings program.

While the data in Figure 4 suggest program participants may experience more reading growth than the general Ascension population, it should be interpreted carefully as there may be confounding factors that our analysis is not able to control for. However, taken together with the additional data sources, overall data suggest the After School Strings program in general has a positive impact on student academic performance.

How does participation in After School Strings affect overall student personal development and well-being?

In addition to academic performance and motivation, a key evaluation question is how the program impacts students holistically. Within this category, we explored social and emotional learning (SEL), student mental health, and social connections and meaningful relationships.

Students build certain SEL skills, like resiliency and emotional regulation

A particular interest of the evaluation this year was exploring how the program impacts students' social and emotional learning (SEL) skills. A leading organization in exploring, defining, and promoting SEL is the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). The current CASEL framework breaks SEL into five core competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.² Through conversations, MacPhail and the evaluation team decided we were primarily interested in exploring resiliency and "grit," or how students handle challenges and grow from them. This is related to some of the core SEL competencies like self-awareness and self-management, as well as other SEL skills like building a growth mindset and self-efficacy.

To explore this, students were asked about times they were challenged by or struggled in the program and how they handled it. Some students were able to offer clear stories of times they felt challenged in the program, or elsewhere, and examples of building a growth mindset. For example, many

² CASEL. (n.d.). *What is the CASEL framework?* <https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-is-the-casel-framework/>

students mentioned struggling with specific pieces of music or learning certain notes. When asked how they handled this, most simply said by practicing more, talking or listening to other students, asking the teachers questions, or asking for a 1:1 session with a teacher to work on a challenging piece.

I was kind of having a hard time with when I was playing [song title], because when I look on the music, I am like, "Oh, this is going to be hard." But then when actually we go out with the actual teachers and practice it, that is how we get more and more and more good.

Some students shared stories of how these challenges or their time in the program may have contributed to ongoing skills like resiliency and grit. For example, one student shared:

What have I learned? I've learned how to stay calm when things are tricky because sometimes before I started playing [my instrument], whenever I would get frustrated at something, I wouldn't try to calm down, I'll just stay frustrated. But when I joined MacPhail, there would be hard, tricky spots of a song, and then I'll take a break and then I'll try to do it again.

This quote also demonstrates some growth in emotional regulation, e.g. staying calm when frustrated. This student then went on to say they believe this lesson helped them in math class in particular, saying, "Before I started doing MacPhail, it was math. I wouldn't get it because it would be super hard for me and I wouldn't know what questions to ask, so then I would just be stuck and just not know." This helps shine some light on how the After School Strings may impact students in the classroom. Another student shared a similar story that the program has helped them navigate challenging situations, saying "I'm going to start taking in situations that are a big problem and then reduce them to a medium problem. It's helped me really just know if this is a big problem or is it a little problem." Learning how to ask questions to seek understanding, taking a break when frustrated, or how to break big problems into smaller problems could all be "tools in the toolbox" for helping students navigate frustration and build resiliency. Similarly, a few students shared how they felt after overcoming challenges, such as feeling proud, happy, or excited for themselves.

Student: I think it was a sheet of music. I can't remember what specific sheet of music, but it was a sheet of music and I got really sad that I couldn't play it and upset. Then my teacher... told me "It's okay." I have all the time to learn, so I ended up learning that song.

Interviewer: That's good...how did it feel once you learned it or once you got more comfortable with it?

Student: Happy and excited.

I have so many songs in my folder and because of that and I get to see how much I've learned over the years, and it's just happy to know that I was able to do this.

Less related to resiliency, though still related to self-awareness and emotional regulation, two students also shared how MacPhail has helped them learn to identify and communicate their feelings with others.

These stories offer some clear examples of how the program may contribute to building student resiliency and confidence, though the evidence is somewhat limited at this point in time given the nature of the interviews and the number of students we talked to. The overall program impact on student resilience and growing confidence is likely an area to continue exploring in future evaluation years.

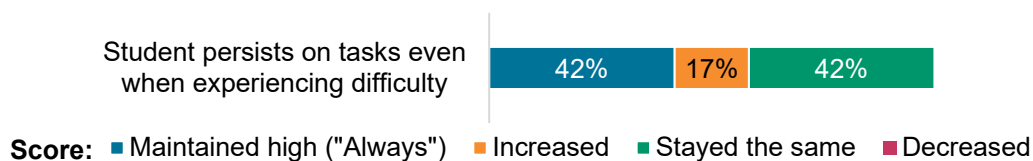
Parents were also asked about the challenges of MacPhail as a way of exploring building resiliency (Figure 5). Parents surveyed agreed that their child is challenged by the work in the program, and that their child works hard in the program even when it's challenging.

5. Parent perception of challenging work in After School Strings

	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
My child works hard in After School Strings, even when it's challenging. (N=15)	15	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
My child is challenged by the work in After School Strings. (N=18)	12	67%	5	28%	1	6%	0	0%

An item on the progress reports that teaching artists complete is also related to resiliency (Figure 6). These data show that 42% of students "Always" persisted when experiencing difficulty in both fall and spring, and 42% of students' scores stayed the same. Seventeen percent of students increased their score. None of the students' scores decreased.

6. Student changes in persistence when faced with difficulty, according to teaching artists (N=24)



Students build social connections and meaningful relationships with peers and adults

Students largely report they're able to spend time with friends in After School Strings (11 out of 14 students), with some saying they've made new friends in the program (4 out of 14 students). A few students talked about how the program lets them spend time with different people in different grades that they might otherwise not be around. A majority of the students also said they like the teachers in the program (9 out of 14 students) and when asked what they like about MacPhail, four students specifically said the teachers. As mentioned previously, students talked about how the teachers help students learn or navigate challenges.

I just like playing together. I just enjoying getting to meet people that wanted to do something like me.

Well, my favorite part is basically getting to know new people. I did not know these people before, and getting to know more teachers and more people that actually get to actually do this activity that other people do, and it is like the kindness and stuff that goes around.

It is worth noting three students shared they felt like teachers in the program could be strict or "mean." Similarly, a few students shared other students in the program could be mean to each other at times. It's reasonable that teachers may at times have to be strict with students to set program expectations or work with students who are engaging in challenging behaviors to make the classroom more enjoyable for others. However, since the evaluation is interested in how the program helps build social connections and a welcoming environment, this may be an area to continue exploring, perhaps clarify the goals of the program, and determine additional ways to continue building a welcoming environment.

Parents also report their children feel like they belong and they have friends and meaningful relationships in After School Strings (Figure 7). When parents were asked about their favorite part of the program for their child, one parent wrote "meeting unlikely friends."

7. Parent report of After School Strings' impact on social connections and belonging

	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
My child feels like they belong at After School Strings. (N=18)	16	89%	2	11%	0	0%	0	0%
My child has friends and meaningful relationships in After School Strings. (N=15)	9	60%	6	40%	0	0%	0	0%

Programming may have a positive impact on mental health

There are some limited evaluation findings that the program may have a positive impact on student mental health. Four students talked about how the program helps them feel calmer or relieves stress. Some of this relates to learning how to stay calm when frustrated or learning how to identify and communicate feelings, which was discussed in the previous section on SEL skills as well. It is worth noting one student shared some negative mental health impacts related to the perfectionism and anxiety that can be present in performing arts.

All my stress just goes away at the end [of the day] because of all the peaceful music.

I think MacPhail is a time where when I have a bad day, I can just come to MacPhail and MacPhail is pretty chill.

The moment I open my case for my instrument, something feels happy inside me.

Parents were also specifically asked about program impacts on mental health. Nearly all parents reported the program has had a positive impact on their child's mental health and overall well-being (Figure 8).

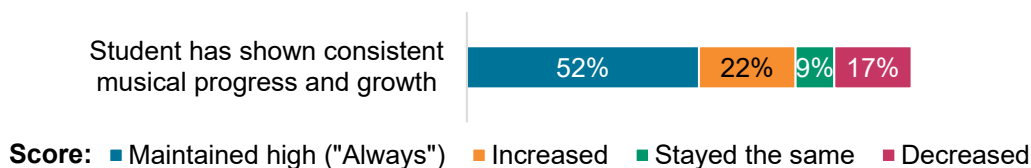
8. Parent report of After School Strings' impact on children's mental health

	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
After School Strings has had a positive impact on my child's mental health. (N=19)	16	84%	2	11%	1	5%	0	0%
After School Strings has had an overall positive impact on my child's wellbeing. (N=16)	12	75%	4	25%	0	0%	0	0%

How does participation in After School Strings affect students' musical skills and knowledge?

Teaching artist observation data show students are consistently making musical progress and growth (Figure 9). About half of students "Always" showed consistent musical growth and progress in both fall and spring assessments, and 22% of students' scores increased on this item. In open-ended comments, teaching artists often write positive comments about student's musical growth and eagerness to learn.

9. Student musical growth and progress, according to teaching artists (N=24)



In interviews, students reported their own musical growth. Most of the students shared ways they have learned how to play their instrument (11 out of 14), such as bow holds, finger numbers, and how to play certain notes. Half of the students also talked about learning how to play new songs, and a few specifically mentioned improvement to their music reading skills (3 out of 14).

I learned bow holds better. I knew how to do them, but I'm doing them better. I know how to play a couple songs better than I used to and stuff like that.

Well, I have learned more about finger numbers...then I have gotten better at playing the songs that I have not been able to...Mostly when I do stuff, I sometimes give up. I am like, "oh, I am not going to do this." I let myself down. The teachers helped me succeed in what I do.

I've learned a few songs, all the basic notes and every single part of the instrument.

How well is After School Strings being implemented? What aspects can be strengthened or improved?

Students have many reasons for joining After School Strings

When asked why students were interested in joining After School Strings, half said they were already interested in music and wanted to learn more. This suggests that the program is attracting students who already have an interest and motivation to do well in music. A few other students noted they come from a musical family or have someone close to them that plays music so it sparked their interest (4 out of 10). Two other students each said because they had a friend in the program, or that they wanted something to do after school.

Because I didn't have anything that I liked and I just didn't do anything. I'd just go home, to school, and I wanted to do something else. And everyone in my family has done something musical before and I wanted to see if I liked it.

Yeah. I wanted to join since I was in second grade when I heard about it but then when I was finally old enough, I just joined because I was excited because I like music and violins and cellos and all that.

Mostly because my friend was going, but I also wanted to learn how to play the violin.

Because I wanted to play every instrument I could get my hands on.

Students and parents are generally satisfied and engaged in the program

When asked about their favorite part of After School Strings, students most commonly shared they enjoyed the music (10 out of 14), such as learning and playing their instruments, learning new songs, the bucket drumming sessions, and their concerts or performances. Additionally, they shared they liked the people, as in their fellow students and teachers (5 out of 14).

My teacher's really funny and nice. The people I met. And I just like playing around with my instrument.

Sometimes my favorite parts are our performances. Sometimes it's buckets [drumming].

Parents largely echoed the students when asked about their favorite part of the program for their children. They said learning music skills and techniques, as well as the performances (10 out of 15 parents, 67%). Other responses included that their child is gaining knowledge or skills generally, the social connections and community, and simply that their child likes the program.

The skills she is learning are innumerable. She loves to show us what she has accomplished and her confidence has grown.

Learning in a different way. She has gained special knowledge.

He loves it, cares about it, and is motivated to do it. It benefits him in so many ways.

Parents that completed the survey also appear to be engaged in the program (Figure 10). All parents said they encourage their child to practice at home and that they attend their child's performances at least sometimes. Nearly all said they read the yearly progress reports about their child's performances, though a few report they don't remember receiving them.

10. Parent engagement

	Yes, always		Yes, sometimes		No	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Do you encourage your child to practice at home? (N=19)	11	58%	8	42%	0	0%
Do you or another important adult in your child's life attend your child's music performances? (N=18)	17	94%	1	6%	0	0%
Do you read the yearly progress reports about your child's performance in music class? (N=16)	12	75%	3	19%	1	6%

Suggestions or areas of improvement

Overall, students and parents offered few suggestions for improvement. The suggestions they did share include:

- There were some differing suggestions on amount of time in program. Some shared wanting less time in the program (e.g., 2 days a week instead of 3), while others noted wanting more program time. It's challenging to find an appropriate balance.
- Offer other instruments, such as piano or wind instruments.
- Host more performances. Similar to this, one parent noted wanting performances solely for the After School Strings ensemble, as opposed to incorporating other groups or performers, to respect parents with limited time.
- Learn new or more current songs, or see what songs students might be interested in playing.
- More opportunities for field trips or attending performances.

Limitations

There are a few limitations to keep in mind when reviewing these results. Most of these have been mentioned throughout the report and are summarized here:

- With school programs like MacPhail After School Strings, it is difficult to differentiate if or how much of an impact comes from the programming provided or from regular school participation or child development in general. For this reason, we rely on multiple data sources in an attempt to paint a holistic picture of program impacts.
- As mentioned previously, the academic data on student proficiency is a limited indicator of student academic growth. We are not able to meaningfully compare students' test scores to a comparison group, just to the rest of the school overall. These results should be interpreted with caution, alongside the additional reported data from students themselves, parents, and teaching artists.
- Teaching artist observation data are based on student behavior in After School Strings, not on their behavior in other settings. For this reason, we can only guess how these behaviors may translate into a classroom.
- Parent surveys were presumably completed by parents who are engaged with the program, which may skew the data. Nonetheless, we surveyed a majority of the parents in the program and feel relatively confident in the results. It's also worth noting there may be a social desirability bias in how parents respond to the survey about their child.

Final thoughts

Overall, the findings from the 2023-24 school year evaluation are in line with the evaluations of previous years. A key difference this year is the inclusion of interviews with students, which allowed us to gather more qualitative data in students' own words about After School Strings. These data shed some new light on ongoing evaluation questions.

An area of ongoing interest is how participation in After School Strings impacts students' academic performance and attitude towards school. Student interviews show something that MacPhail staff have believed anecdotally for a while: some students are more motivated to attend school because of After School Strings. A few students noted that the program gives them something to look forward to at the end of the day, or that it motivates them to do well in class so they can attend. Parent survey data also support this. Beyond motivation to attend school, there are some key examples of how After School Strings may impact students' academic performance, such as building focus, resiliency to navigate academic challenges, and additional areas of learning that tie into the classroom (music class, learning "fancy" descriptor words that relate to English class, etc.). Teaching artist observation data also suggest some growth in additional classroom engagement and preparedness.

Another area of interest, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic, is growth in SEL skills, student mental health, social connections, and general student well-being. We decided to focus on resiliency, specifically as it relates to SEL. Here again, some students were able to offer clear examples of how After School Strings helps build their resiliency, such as learning to ask for help, navigating frustration, or when it's best to take a break. The parent survey data are limited, but suggest After School Strings may have a small but noteworthy impact on student overall well-being (mental health and social connections). While, overall, students report building social connections with peers and adults in the program, there may be a need to continue exploring how After School Strings builds a welcoming environment for all and clarify the theory behind this. How does After School Strings build a welcoming environment for students, and how do we expect this to lead to students feeling welcomed and included in the program? Similarly, related to mental health, one student did specifically mention some anxiety around the need to perform well musically, which suggests there may be some nuance to continue exploring in this area and examination of the theory behind it.

Parents and students continue to appear satisfied and engaged with the program, with limited suggestions for improvement. The suggestions that were offered largely relate to program expansion and more offerings: more instruments, more performances, and more opportunities for student field trips. There were some mixed suggestions on the "right" number of programming days per week, with some people suggesting more and some less. However, at this time, there are no plans to adjust the amount of programming delivered.

MacPhail

CENTER FOR MUSIC

School Partnerships Progress Report | Completed by Music Instructor

Student's name: _____ Grade: _____ Date: _____

MacPhail Instructor(s): _____

School: ¹ Ascension School ² Harvest Best Academy

Student studies:
¹ Violin ² Viola ³ Cello

Student's year in MacPhail program:
¹ One ² Two ³ Three ⁴ Four ⁵ Five ⁶ Six

Attendance:
 Student attended _____ out of _____ classes during the _____ session.

Please rate the student's preparation for and behavior during class.					
	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never	Not applicable
1. Student brings all required materials (method book, instrument, etc.) to the group lesson.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁹
2. Student prepares assigned music in home practice.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁹
3. Student is cooperative in a group setting.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁹
4. Student follows directions in the lesson.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁹
5. Student demonstrates eagerness to learn.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁹
6. Student demonstrates focus in class.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁹
7. Student has shown consistent musical progress and growth.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁹
Comment:					
8. Student persists on tasks even when experiencing difficulty.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁹
9. Student demonstrates leadership in class.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁹
10. Student demonstrates independent learning.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁹

Please comment on the student's ability to participate in the online setting (ex: ability to focus, technical abilities, ability to receive feedback and instruction, etc.)

Additional teacher comments:

A2. Teaching artist reports of student behaviors (N=24)

Behavior	Semester	Always (4)	Most of the time (3)	Sometimes (2)	Never (1)	Mean	Change ^a
Student brings all required materials (method book, instrument, etc.) to the group lesson.	Fall	54%	33%	13%	0%	3.42	0.00
	Spring	54%	33%	13%	0%	3.42	
Student prepares assigned music in home practice.	Fall ^b	39%	15%	39%	8%	2.85	-0.15
	Spring	17%	22%	61%	0%	2.69	
Student is cooperative in a group setting.	Fall	46%	50%	4%	0%	3.42	+0.04
	Spring	58%	29%	13%	0%	3.46	
Student follows directions in the lesson.	Fall	58%	33%	8%	0%	3.50	-0.04
	Spring	54%	38%	8%	0%	3.46	
Student demonstrates eagerness to learn.	Fall	71%	17%	13%	0%	3.58	+0.04
	Spring	63%	38%	0%	0%	3.63	
Student demonstrates focus in class.	Fall	29%	54%	17%	0%	3.13	+0.17
	Spring	33%	63%	4%	0%	3.29	
Student has shown consistent musical progress and growth.	Fall	65%	22%	9%	4%	3.48	+0.09
	Spring	61%	35%	4%	0%	3.57	
Student persists on tasks even when experiencing difficulty.	Fall	42%	42%	17%	0%	3.25	+0.25
	Spring	58%	33%	8%	0%	3.50	
Student demonstrates leadership in class.	Fall	29%	33%	38%	0%	2.92	+0.21
	Spring	33%	46%	21%	0%	3.13	
Student demonstrates independent learning.	Fall	33%	25%	42%	0%	2.92	+0.38
	Spring	42%	50%	4%	4%	3.29	

^a Difference scores may not appear to equal fall average minus spring average due to rounding.

^b N=13. 11 students were marked as "Not applicable"

A3. Teaching artist reports of student behaviors – individual score changes through matched analysis (N=24)

	Score maintained high ("Always")	Score increased	Score stayed the same	Score decreased	Score maintained low ("Never")
Student brings all required materials (method book, instrument, etc.) to the group lesson.	38%	21%	25%	17%	0%
Student prepares assigned music in home practice. ^a	31%	8%	46%	15%	0%
Student is cooperative in a group setting.	42%	17%	29%	13%	0%
Student follows directions in the lesson.	50%	8%	29%	13%	0%
Student demonstrates eagerness to learn.	63%	13%	17%	8%	0%
Student demonstrates focus in class.	13%	38%	33%	17%	0%
Student has shown consistent musical progress and growth.	52%	22%	9%	17%	0%
Student persists on tasks even when experiencing difficulty.	42%	17%	42%	0%	0%
Student demonstrates leadership in class.	17%	42%	25%	17%	0%
Student demonstrates independent learning.	25%	46%	17%	13%	0%

^b N=13. 11 students were marked as "Not applicable" in the fall report and, therefore, can't be matched

MacPhail Center for Music
After School Strings Program - Parent Survey

We hope that your child's involvement in the **MacPhail After School Strings Program** has been rewarding. In order to better serve your child and make improvements to our program, we would appreciate your feedback on your child's experience. Thank you.

You can complete this survey on paper and return it to MacPhail staff OR complete it online by typing in the link or scanning the QR code below.



URL: bit.ly/stringsparent24

If you have more than one child in After School Strings, please answer the survey for the child who most recently had a birthday.

Your relationship to the child: _____ Child's grade: _____ What musical instrument does your child play? <input type="checkbox"/> ¹ Violin <input type="checkbox"/> ² Viola <input type="checkbox"/> ³ Cello <input type="checkbox"/> ⁷ Other, please describe: _____

	Yes, always	Yes, sometimes	No
1. Does your child have a place to practice at home?	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³
2. Do you encourage your child to practice at home?	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³
3. Do you or another important adult in your child's life attend your child's music performances?	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³
4. Do you read the yearly progress reports about your child's performance in music class?	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³

Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with each statement.	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
5. My child's more excited to come to school because of the After School Strings program.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁻⁸
6. After School Strings has helped improve my child's math skills.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁻⁸
7. After School Strings has helped improve my child's reading and literacy skills.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁻⁸
8. My child seems more focused and can stick with tasks longer than before participating in After School Strings.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁻⁸
9. My child is challenged by the work in After School Strings.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁻⁸
10. After School Strings has had a positive impact on my child's mental health.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁻⁸
11. My child feels like they belong at After School Strings.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁻⁸

Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with each statement.	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
12. My child works hard in After School Strings, even when it's challenging.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> -8
13. Participating in After School Strings helps my child perform better academically.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> -8
14. After School Strings has had an overall positive impact on my child's wellbeing.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> -8
15. My child has friends and meaningful relationships in After School Strings.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> -8

16. What is your favorite part about After School Strings for your child?

17. What would make After School Strings better for your child and family?

18. Please add any additional comments or concerns you have about MacPhail music program

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS SURVEY!

We would like to send you a \$10 gift card as a small taken of our appreciation. We can send you a gift card to Amazon, Cub Foods, Speedway, or Target. Which would you prefer?

Amazon ecard sent by email – please add your email address: _____

Cub Foods plastic card sent by mail – please add your mailing address:

Name: _____ Street address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Speedway plastic card sent by mail – please add your mailing address:

Name: _____ Street address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Target ecard sent by email – please add your email address: _____

B2. Parent engagement with the program

	Yes, always		Yes, sometimes		No	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Does your child have a place to practice at home? (N=19)	14	74%	4	21%	1	5%
Do you encourage your child to practice at home? (N=19)	11	58%	8	42%	0	0%
Do you or another important adult in your child's life attend your child's music performances? (N=19)	17	94%	1	6%	0	0%
Do you read the yearly progress reports about your child's performance in music class? (N=19)	12	75%	3	19%	1	6%

Note: totals may not equal 100% due to rounding

B3. Parent report of student growth due to After School Strings

	Strongly agree		Somewhat agree		Somewhat disagree		Strongly disagree		Don't know	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
My child's more excited to come to school because of the After School Strings program. (N=19)	8	42%	10	53%	0	5%	1	0%	0	0%
After School Strings has helped improve my child's math skills. (N=17)	5	26%	12	63%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
After School Strings has helped improve my child's reading and literacy skills. (N=17)	6	35%	9	53%	2	12%	0	0%	0	0%
My child seems more focused and can stick with tasks longer than before participating in After School Strings. (N=17)	7	37%	6	32%	1	5%	3	16%	0	0%
My child is challenged by the work in After School Strings. (N=18)	12	63%	5	26%	1	5%	0	0%	0	0%
After School Strings has had a positive impact on my child's mental health. (N=19)	16	84%	2	11%	1	5%	0	0%	0	0%
My child feels like they belong at After School Strings. (N=18)	16	84%	2	11%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
My child works hard in After School Strings, even when it's challenging. (N=15)	15	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Participating in After School Strings helps my child perform better academically. (N=15)	8	53%	5	33%	2	13%	0	0%	0	0%
After School Strings has had an overall positive impact on my child's wellbeing. (N=16)	12	75%	4	25%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
My child has friends and meaningful relationships in After School Strings. (N=15)	9	60%	6	40%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

Note: totals may not equal 100% due to rounding

B4. Parents' favorite parts about After School Strings – open-end response (N=15)

What is your favorite part about After School Strings for your child?

Being in community & being able to read

He enjoys it very much

He gets to learn different things

He loves it, cares about it, and is motivated to do it. It benefits him in so many ways.

It gives him the ability to learn something new, it also helps him deal with his anxiety by ways of calming his body down and staying focused

Learning how to play a musical instrument

Learning in a different way. She has gained special knowledge.

Learning new techniques

Learning new things meeting unlikely friends

My child is able to take what is taught [elsewhere] and apply it to the music that she learns at school and after school

The Buckets

The concerts, I enjoy them a lot

The orchestra part

The skills she is learning are innumerable. She loves to show us what she has accomplished and her confidence has grown.

When they play with the rest of the orchestra

Note: Responses may have been lightly edited for clarity or confidentiality. Some responses were translated from Spanish to English.

B5. Parents' recommendations for After School Strings – open-end response (N=14)

What would make After School Strings better for your child and family?

Better/longer snacks

Family unity/space, support

Maybe having piano

More communication about progress & what they're working on

More communication. What they're working on, how progress is going.

More EKWE

More practice time

Not sure

Overall very pleased with the program. He enjoys being in the program and looks forward to attending each session. Staff were amazing dealing with some of his struggles.

Playing songs that might be a current interest of the child and/or family

Potentially 2 days a week vs 3 days

That there would be more days of strings program

To continue to challenge her knowledge of what she can accomplish

To keep challenging him

Note: Responses may have been lightly edited for clarity or confidentiality. Some responses were translated from Spanish to English.

B6. Additional parent comments (N=9)

Please add any additional comments or concerns you have about After School Strings.

I do not like it at all when they mix our group with other groups or adults - I want to support my child & the other Ascension kids. I am not interested in watching anyone else play. Like many families, we are very busy - it is not a priority. I don't have time to sit through watch something that has nothing to do with us.

I just want to thank each instructor who patiently works with [my child]. He talks about each one of his instructors and express how they always made him feel - validated!

Love it!

She has expressed interest in singing. Is there a singing program?

This is a great opportunity for children! We appreciate the chance to join this free program.

This is our first year and we're thoroughly impressed with what MacPhail has accomplished

We are very grateful for this program...Music education is so important. It's one of our favorite things at Ascension. Thank you for everything you have contributed to my kids' lives!

When can they begin with violin?

Wonderful program and terrific performances

Your program is wonderful

Note: Responses may have been lightly edited for clarity or confidentiality. Some responses were translated from Spanish to English

C. Student interview protocol

Before we get started, I'll tell you a little bit about why we're chatting. It is up to you if you want to go through the interview or not, so after I tell you about it, I'll see if you have any questions for me and ask if you'd like to continue.

Wilder Research is partnering with MacPhail to talk to students about their experiences with Ascension After School Strings. We are interested in learning about the benefits and challenges of the program and ideas for improvement. This will help MacPhail continue to grow and develop Ascension After School Strings.

- This interview should take about 15-20 minutes, depending on how much you have to share.
- It is voluntary and confidential. Your responses will be aggregated with others we talk to and no identifiable information will be included in our final report; we'll just be sharing some high-level themes and quotations from interviews, but we'll make sure that all quotations are de-identified and can't be tied back to those we interview.
- There are no right or wrong answers. We want to hear your honest opinions and thoughts.
- **As a thank you for your time, we will give you a \$20 gift card to Amazon, Cub Foods, Target, or Walmart.**

Any questions before we get started?

Would you like to do the interview? It's up to you. If you say yes, I'll ask you some questions. If you say no, you can go back to join the others

Are you comfortable with being recorded for this conversation? It is just for taking notes and will be deleted after notes are cleaned.

1. Icebreaker: What instrument do you play, and how many years have you been in Ascension After School Strings?
2. Why did you originally want to join After School Strings?
3. If you were to tell a friend who isn't in After School Strings about it, what would you tell them?
4. In general, what have been your favorite parts of Ascension After School Strings?
 - a. *Probe as needed: the music, the people, the teachers, learning, etc.*
5. What do you think you have learned from being in Ascension After School Strings?
 - a. *Probe as needed: musically, practicing, etc.*

6. How has being a part of After School Strings impacted you at school?
 - a. Are you more excited to come to school on the days you have After School Strings?
7. Do you get along with other students in After School Strings? Do you have friends in After School Strings?
8. Has there ever been a time you were struggling with a piece of music or trying to learn something on your instrument?

If yes:

Tell me about it.

How'd you handle it?

Did anyone else help you?

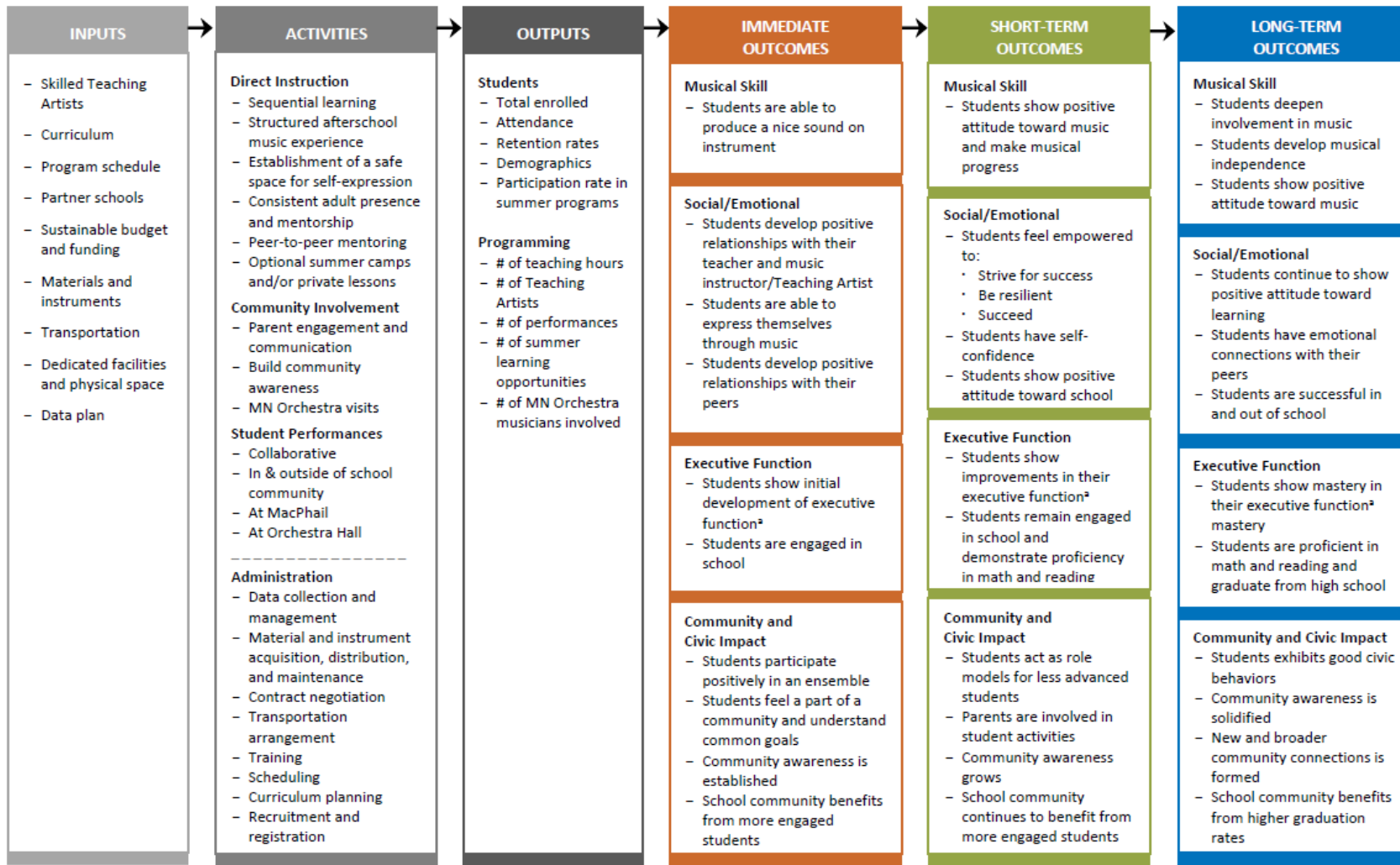
Did you learn anything from that experience?

9. If you could change one thing about Ascension After School Strings, what would it be?
10. Do you have any other thoughts or feedback about Ascension After School Strings?

Thank you for your time today!

D. MacPhail After School Strings Program Logic Model

MacPhail Afterschool Intensive Strings Program Logic Model



* Executive function skills enable people to plan, organize, and complete tasks. Well-developed executive functioning skills are important for success in school and life.

Executive function skills include impulse control, emotional control, flexible thinking, working memory, self-monitoring, task initiation, and organization of information. These interrelated skills help individuals with decision-making, attention/focus, and effective transitioning from one activity to the next.

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Ananya Matewos

Wilder Research, a division of Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, is a nationally respected nonprofit research and evaluation group. For more than 100 years, Wilder Research has gathered and interpreted facts and trends to help families and communities thrive, get at the core of community concerns, and uncover issues that are overlooked or poorly understood.

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