



austin soundwaves



2021-2022 Private Music Lessons
Pilot Program



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PILOT LESSON STUDY



During the 2021-22 school year, Austin Soundwaves worked with Austin ISD's Visual and Performing Arts department to provide one-on-one music lessons to 44 middle and high school students across 4 campuses. We used this opportunity to study the impact lessons can have on students. This is what we found.

Eastside Early College HS
Martin MS
Navarro Early College HS
Webb MS

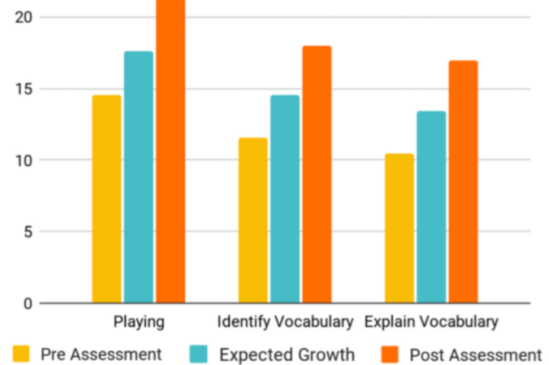
Percentage of Students who MET or EXCEEDED Goals:



How Students Described Lessons



Student Growth in Each Area



89% Would like to continue lessons

91% Felt they improved as a result of lessons

To support or learn more contact info@austinsoundwaves.org

Introduction

Thanks to the support and leadership of Austin ISD's Visual & Performing Arts Department, Austin Soundwaves began teaching one-on-one music lessons this year to students at a number of the district's Title I campuses. One-on-one lessons allow us to develop deep relationships with individual students and help to create student leaders within music programs throughout the district. This work is at the core of the Austin Soundwaves mission to make music learning accessible and equitable.

Being the first year of this partnership, we were keen on evaluating the impact of lessons on students. We were confident that students benefit from having personalized instruction from teaching artists, but we wanted to be able to measure the size of that



impact. As a result, Austin Soundwaves developed a number of program goals for the pilot. The data collected show both the value that lessons have and informs our organization's professional development for the following year.

We focused our attention on three key areas of music learning: playing ability, music-specific vocabulary, and attitudes about music class. Rather than expect a specific skill set from students who were at different levels to begin with, our expectation was to see meaningful and measurable growth from each

individual student after working with their Austin Soundwaves lesson teacher.

For this year's pilot project, we provided one-on-one lessons to 44 curious and creative students attending four Title I campuses in Austin ISD. Our lesson teachers were impressed with their willingness to try new things and overcome challenges. We are excited to continue working with these students for years to come.

Methods

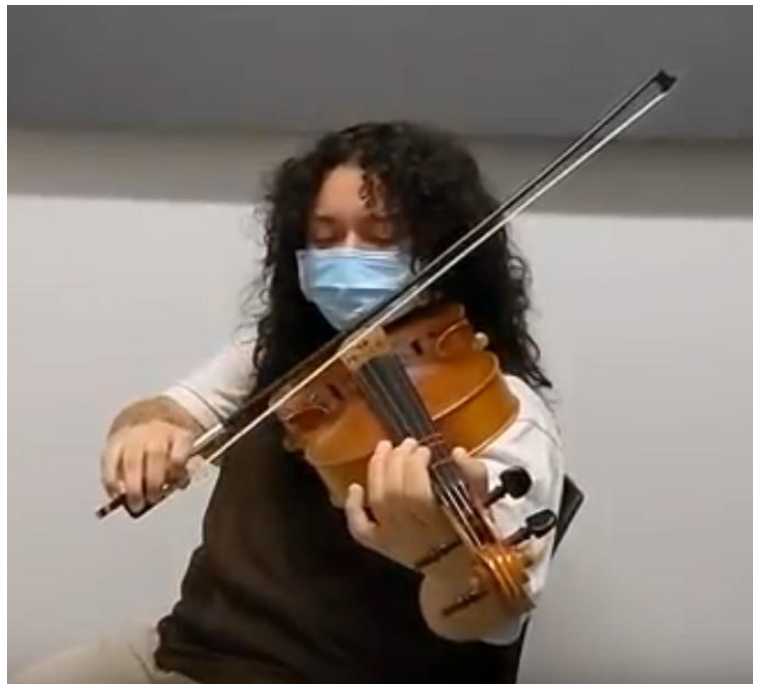
All students received one-on-one lessons for 30 minutes each week. They were pulled out of their music class time. They worked with the same Austin Soundwaves teaching artist over the course of the pilot project. Each teaching artist is a specialist on the instrument they are teaching.

To recruit students for the program, we contacted band and orchestra teachers at Title I middle and high schools. Teachers were asked to provide available teaching times and recommended individual students to work with Austin Soundwaves teaching artists. Austin Soundwaves then matched student availability with teacher availability. As a result, lessons took place at Eastside Early College HS, Navarro HS, Martin MS, and Webb MS.

Lessons began in October and November 2021, and wrapped up at the end of April 2022. In the first and fourteenth, Austin Soundwaves teaching artists conducted an assessment, which included a survey, a vocabulary area, and a playing area. 31 of the 44 enrolled students completed the 14 lessons of the pilot project between the established time frame.

Surveys were the first portion of the pre-assessment. This was done deliberately to give the teaching artist and student an opportunity to have a conversation and build rapport before playing their instrument. The survey questions were:

- How important is music in your life? If you had to rate it 1-5, with five being the most important, what number would you give it?
- How interested are you in studying music in school? If you had to rate it 1-5, with five being the most interested, what number would you give it?
- How much do you enjoy music class? If you had to rate it 1-5, with five being the most enjoyable, what number would you give it?



- How confident are you in your ability to play your musical instrument? If you had to rate it 1-5, with five being the most confident, what number would you give it?

For the vocabulary and playing areas, students were shown an excerpt of music appropriate for their ability level, labeled as Tiers 1-3. First the students were asked to identify musical terms on the page. Then they were asked to explain what the term meant musically. The terms asked were:

<u>Tier 1</u>	<u>Tier 2</u>	<u>Tier 3</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Signature • Time Signature • Tempo • Clef • Staff • Dynamic • Articulation • Pitch • Posture • Tone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accidental • Note • Rest • Measure • Forte • Piano • Beat • Intonation • Mezzo Forte • Mezzo Piano 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legato • Staccato • Marcato • Phrase • Scale • Slur • Tie • Crescendo • Decrescendo • Fermat

Following the vocabulary area, the student was given some time to practice the musical excerpts. The teacher was able to answer any questions they may have. Once they were ready, the teacher recorded the excerpt. The following is the Tier 1 excerpt for viola:

Moderato ♩=90

7

10

Evaluators used the following rubric to rate the students' playing. Evaluators were different from the lesson teachers to limit bias and make it easier to standardize ratings.

	0	1	2	3	4	5
Pitch Accuracy	0% of pitches played correctly	<60% of pitches played correctly	60-79% of pitches played correctly	80-89% of pitches played correctly	90-99% of pitches played correctly	100% of pitches played correctly
Rhythm Accuracy	0% of the rhythms played correctly	<60% of the rhythms played correctly	60-79% of the rhythms played correctly	80-89% of the rhythms played correctly	90-99% of the rhythms played correctly	100% of the rhythms played correctly
Time	Steady beat is followed for 0% of the performance	Steady beat is followed for <60% of the performance	Steady beat is followed for 60-79% of the performance	Steady beat is followed for 80-89% of the performance	Steady beat is followed for 90-99% of the performance	Steady beat is followed for 100% of the performance
Technique Playing Position and Embouchure	Demonstrates instrument specific technique 0% of the performance	Demonstrates instrument specific technique <60% of the performance	Demonstrates instrument specific technique 60-79% of the performance	Demonstrates instrument specific technique 80-89% of the performance	Demonstrates instrument specific technique 90-99% of the performance	Demonstrates instrument specific technique 100% of the performance
Expression Articulations, Dynamics, and Style	0% of the expression markings played	<60% of the expression markings played	60-79% of the expression markings played	80-89% of the expression markings played	90-99% of the expression markings played	100% of the expression markings played
Tone	Uses developmentally appropriate tone 0% of the performance	Uses developmentally appropriate tone <60% of the performance	Uses developmentally appropriate tone 60-79% of the performance	Uses developmentally appropriate tone 80-89% of the performance	Uses developmentally appropriate tone 90-99% of the performance	Uses developmentally appropriate tone 100% of the performance

The organization's goals were:

- 80% of students who completed the post assessment will show 3 raw points of growth in their playing assessment.
- 80% of students who completed the post assessment will correctly identify 1 additional vocabulary term per tier.
- 80% of students who completed the post assessment will correctly explain 1 additional vocabulary term per tier.
- The median score in the extra musical survey will increase on every question among students who completed the post assessment.

Additionally, we collected some additional information from the students in the post assessment to learn a little more about their experience taking lessons and their ability to practice outside of class time.

- How much did you enjoy your private lessons? If you had to rate it 1-5, with five being the most confident, what number would you give it?
- Do you feel like you improved your musical abilities? Yes / No

- Can you describe your experience taking lessons with at least three descriptive words?
- How easy is it for you to practice on your own, using a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very difficult and 5 being very easy.
- How much time do you spend practicing outside of class?
- What things get in the way of practicing?

Results

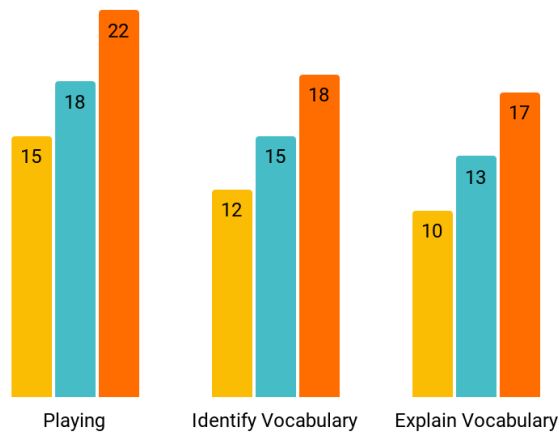
Growth Assessment Data

Metric	Met Goal	Did Not Meet Goal	Percent Met
Playing Area	28	4	87.50%
Vocabulary Identification	24	2	92.31%
Vocabulary Explanation	29	2	93.55%

Five students were able to identify all of the terms we presented them with during the pre-assessment. For the vocabulary area, we did not include these students and focused on the students who had room to grow using these vocabulary terms. There was one student who could also explain all of the terms we presented them with.

Student Growth In Each Area

- Pre Assessment
- Expected Growth Based on Pre Assessment Scores
- Post Assessment

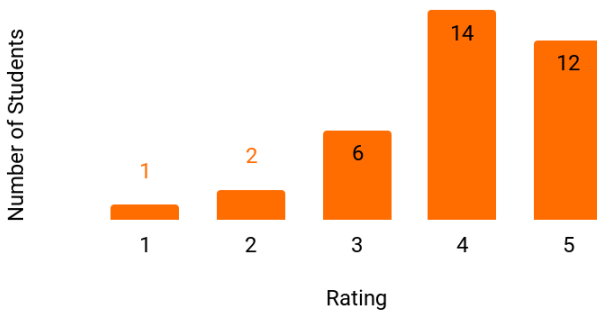


The chart to the left shows the average student performance in each area of the assessment. The left bar in each area is the pre assessment. The middle bar shows the amount of growth we were expecting to see during the post assessment, based on the pre assessment results. The right bar shows the actual average growth. The average student growth was roughly double what we were expecting to see.

Survey Questions

	Yes	No
Would you like to continue your lessons?	31	4
Do you feel like you improved musically?	32	3

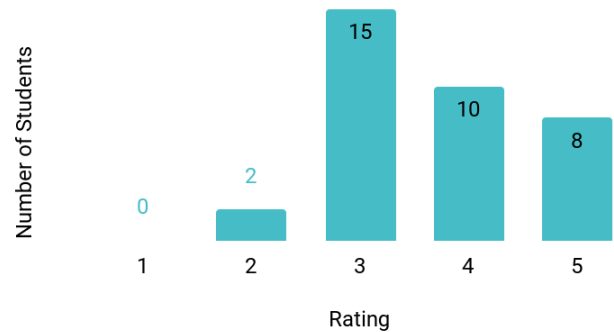
How much did you enjoy your lessons?



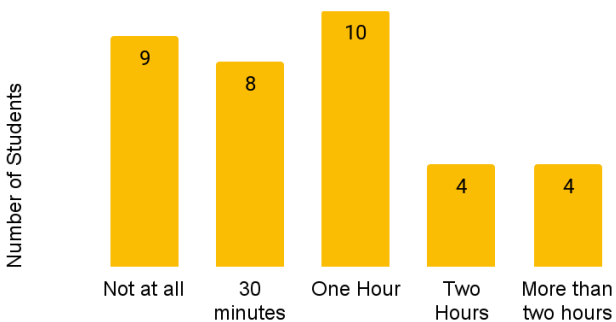
The median response to how much students enjoyed their lessons was a 4 out of 5.

When asked how easy it was for students to practice on their own, the most common response was a 3 out of 5, but the median response was 4.

How easy is it for you to practice on your own?



How much time do you practice on your own per week?



When asked how much time they spend practicing outside of class time, most students responded with approximately one hour, with a median response of 30 minutes.

The four most common words to describe the lessons were fun (17 students), helpful (11), interesting (7), and challenging (6). The two most common barriers to practicing were other school obligations (16 students) and family obligations (10 students).

Discussion

Overall, the students showed a significant amount of growth in this pilot study. Nearly all students showed our expected growth in the playing area and both vocabulary areas of the assessment. We also identified a few challenges while analyzing the data. These growth areas point to clear objectives for next year's program.

Successes

As mentioned above, nearly every student who completed the post assessment showed growth. Our goal was to see 80% of students making progress in the playing and vocabulary areas. 87-94% of students showed growth in each area. Additionally, the average student growth in each assessment area was more than double what we were hoping to see.

In particular, we were excited to see how much students improved in explaining vocabulary terms. One of our theories about the impact of lessons is that they would give students the opportunity to practice music academic vocabulary. In contrast to a large ensemble rehearsal, students have the chance to regularly discuss the music they are working on.

Separate from the data, there were a few other notable achievements during the lesson program this year. A number of the high school students who participated in the lesson program also went to the UIL Solo and Ensemble Festival. All of those participants received the highest possible rating ('superior') at the event. Webb Middle School students also participated in a similar event run by the Music Education Coalition, and all of the lesson students who attended that event also received superior ratings.

Challenges

There were a handful of challenges during the implementation of the pilot program. The first challenge was attendance. Only about 70% of students were able to complete the post-assessment. This was due to a number of factors, such as students and teachers contracting COVID, student absenteeism, and interruptions to learning due to campus testing or ensemble events.

Additionally, there was a lot of difficulty in scheduling teachers on multiple campuses. This meant that we were working with just enough students to complete the number of lessons we planned to teach during the year. Logistical issues included campuses that change what day of the week certain classes meet (block scheduling),

geographic proximity to our teaching artists, and the timing of classes related to other teaching obligations.

Finally, there were a small handful of students who were not ideal fits for the lesson program a few months into it. This is bound to happen in any program serving a large number of students. It became a challenge for the pilot program because of the aforementioned difficulty in scheduling students with teachers. With a large enough student group, if a student and teacher agree that the program is not a good fit, we can simply discontinue lessons.

There were also some challenges related to the design of the assessment. For example, students demonstrated a high level of knowledge of the vocabulary terms we asked them to identify. When using a growth model to track student progress, it is important that the questions have a high ceiling so that the students can demonstrate their progress over time.

Additionally, we asked students a number of questions on both the pre and post assessments where we were hoping to see growth. For one example, we expected students to become more confident and more interested in music through the lesson experience. The student responses to all of these questions were nearly the same when comparing the pre and post assessments. This suggests to us that the questions we asked are fairly consistent attitudes that students have. In other words, their appreciation of music is steady. In the future, it would be worthwhile to explore different questions that might have a more malleable set of responses.

Recommendations for 2022-2023

There are a number of things that we can do next year to improve this program. The following steps will help to streamline aspects of the program, focus on students who are most eager to take lessons, and improve instruction.

- Offer 45 minute lessons to high school students

Many of the students who did not receive 14 lessons were high school students without a strong interest in lessons from the beginning and frequently missed class. Additionally, the high schoolers who were more eager for lessons could have benefited from a longer session with their teaching artist, allowing us to connect more deeply with students and provide them with additional instruction.

- Develop a capstone performance to focus student learning goals

Many students would have benefited from a public showcase for their lessons. The students who participated in solo and ensemble all made huge strides in their playing this year. Added a capstone portfolio for each student, and offering events for all lesson students to demonstrate what they worked on during the year would help both the students and teachers to focus their work.

- Enroll students into the program only after parental consent

Collecting data consent forms from students was an ongoing challenge during the pilot. Particularly if students will be expected to participate in a culminating performance, it is important to get parental consent. It will also allow us to better track student progress outside of the music room.

- Strive to start the program earlier in the school year

Students would benefit from getting started with their lessons sooner. There are numerous windows that can disrupt regularly scheduled lessons, such as holiday concerts, ensemble competitions, and testing. For teachers to develop a rapport with students, it would be best for the lessons to be consistent early on. Ideally, starting by October would allow for consistency leading up to the Thanksgiving break.

- **Structure teaching artist time in blocks, rather than individual lessons**

This will reduce the overhead in managing the program when it comes to student absences or class time conflicts such as testing. Teaching Artists will prioritize their scheduled lessons, but in the case of students absences the teaching artist can communicate with the director on alternate uses for their scheduled time.

- **Set more ambitious learning goals**

Students surpassed the learning goals set for the program this year by a wide margin and we are confident that expected growth for students next year will increase. We should again analyze the pre-assessment data to target the biggest areas of growth for individual students and keep in mind the larger expectations for the students during the course of the lessons.

- **Update the vocabulary terms that were assessed**

The vocabulary terms that were assessed were generally well-known to the students. In particular, many of the dynamic related terms can be removed and replaced with more advanced vocabulary. Additionally, it would be good to include some terms that would help students reflect on their playing with more specificity.

- **Refine student survey questions**

This may require us to be more specific. Rather than ask, "how interested are you in studying music during school?" we could instead ask "to what degree is music often the highlight of my school day?" A potential new question related to confidence might be, "I am not intimidated when a difficult piece of music is handed out."

Conclusion

In general, we were very pleased with the results of this pilot year. The information gained from this study will allow us to focus and improve our teaching and will help us to articulate to stakeholders the ways that a robust lesson program can transform music programs.

By making a handful of small adjustments next year, we can increase our effectiveness and learn even more about how students benefit from one-on-one lessons with highly trained teaching artists.

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