

# **Music Across Minnesota Grant Program Final Report**

## **Music Across Minnesota Program Development**

Submitted by Amy Schendel

Year 1

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When the Music Across Minnesota program began in 2023, I was asked to serve as the Program Coordinator and given the task of building a program intended to enrich student mental well-being through music. One of the main components of the program was offering individual online music lessons to pre-K through 12th grade students attending Title 1 schools and students living in rural Minnesota communities. I spent the first few months of the grant program researching these demographics throughout the state and organized a spreadsheet that included school names, locations, music teacher contact information and any other helpful details. In addition, I acquired an official list of Title 1 eligible schools from the Minnesota Department of Education.

The most significant aspect of developing the program involved directly connecting with teachers through phone conversations and email to inform them about the program, what it is, who it's for, and how to register their students for the online lessons as well as mailing informational flyers to schools and directors. With the help of St. Paul Conservatory staff members, a Music Across Minnesota webpage was created which helped to validate the program. Making contact with teachers, guidance counselors, or other school and district staff was the most arduous aspect and required a lot of follow up messaging. Ultimately, it was through building relationships with band, choir, and orchestra teachers which led to students registering for lessons in the fall of 2023 and eventually, in the coming years, to additional programming.

By the end of 2023, 26 students were served in online lessons from the following schools Willmar High School, St. James High School, Riverway Learning Community, Kennedy Secondary School in Fergus Falls, Worthington High School, Hayfield Community School, and Pine Island High School. There were 11 conservatory instructors teaching the weekly online lessons. Many of these students continued to take lessons throughout the entire grant period.

## **Music Across Minnesota Evaluation Summaries and Stories**

Submitted by Mary Adamek

Year 2

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Three programs funded by the Music Across MN program in year 2 included the MinnSWest String Festival, online private lessons, Midweek Music for preschool aged children and caregivers, and outreach performances/clinics.

Students in Music Across MN programs developed music skills while also strengthening social-emotional learning and classroom skills. The following skills were addressed throughout the programming:

Music skills: Improving music skills on my instrument; performing with others; expressing myself through making music with others; learning new skills.

Social-emotional learning skills: Persevering with difficult tasks; setting goals and following through; and pride in one's own work.

Classroom skills: Attending to task; listening to others; following directions

Below you will find a brief description of each of these programs along with evaluation information and participants' comments. This information was collected through formal evaluation processes and informal feedback gathered from participants.

### **String Festival**

The 2024 MinnSWest String Festival was held in April on the campus of SW MN State University. Fifty-one middle/high school students participated in this one-day festival that was led by 10 SPCM instructors and 4 guest artists. Students from Fergus Falls, Worthington, St. Cloud, St. Paul, Dawson, Tracy, Wilmar, and Collegeville participated in this annual event.

The festival offered side-by-side instruction and mentoring for all students with SPCM instructors. Students also participated in rehearsals and sectionals as well as performances and workshops by guest artists. For the culminating event, the students were thrilled to perform in an evening concert alongside the SPCM faculty and members of the SW MN Orchestra.

Festival students had opportunities to build music skills as well as confidence and self-determination through the festival experience. They built a sense of community with other young musicians by meeting and making music with string students from various Minnesota school districts.

When asked about their favorite part of the festival, students noted '*listening to guest performers*' as the top response. They also mentioned '*playing with others*' as another

highlight with statements such as *'I loved being able to play in an orchestra of people who also truly care about music'* and *'getting to play alongside a symphony orchestra'*.

Students also stated that they improved their music skills and practiced social/emotional skills through their festival participation.

Participating teachers were also very positive about the experience for themselves and their students. These teachers noted that their favorite elements of the festival were 'listening to performances' such as the guest artists' workshops, and 'sectionals' to work on the details of the music. They all rated their impression of the festival as very positive and they look forward to the 2025 MinnSWest String Festival.

### **Online lessons**

Music Across MN online lessons consisted of online private lessons with SJSM-SPCM faculty members throughout the semester. SJSM-SPCM teachers taught students focusing on brass, woodwinds, strings, piano/keyboard, guitar, ukulele, percussion, and voice.

Students worked on strengthening social-emotional skills while building music skills. Skills such as 'perseverance when learning new skills', 'following directions', and 'emotional and artistic self-expression' are important aspects of the lesson program. Students noted that in addition to the social/emotional skills, the online lesson program helped them become better musicians by encouraging more practice time and getting help on instrument-specific problems. Students also like the convenience and accessibility of online lessons.

Parents, school personnel and students have shared many positive comments about their experience with MAM online lessons. Here are a few of the comments:

*We are so appreciative of the online lessons! Andy is wonderful and a great teacher for our son, Hunter. We are very grateful for this opportunity!*

*I just want to say again how much this program has meant to our family—our kids love working with James and have loved singing (we get to listen to a lot of show tunes in our house!). Thank you for all of your work making this happen.*

### **Midweek Music**

Midweek Music is a weekly music class for 3–6-year-old children and their parents/caregivers. Students learn about music through active music making experiences that help them learn developmentally appropriate music and social skills. Each lesson is created using singing, stories, fingerplays and movement to enhance students' musical, social and emotional development.

Parents/caregivers were very positive about their experience with the Midweek Music Program. Here is a sample of some of the comments:

*We are a bilingual home. Midweek class was a PHENOMENAL addition to our week. My girls learn songs and rhymes in English which we don't otherwise. These are wonderful pre-reading activities. They enjoyed learning different language songs, show and tell, and playing to different beats.*

*We really enjoyed the format of the class. Zoom meeting was so convenient for our family of 3 small children. During the winter, our baby was having seizures. We need to stay home because he was immune compromised. The midweek class was a saving grace! Each week our daughters could enjoy their interactive music from the safety of our home. My girls look forward to their music class week. The rest of the week, they continued to sing along the songs they learned.*

*We loved it! Absolutely loved it! As a Spanish/ bilingual family, we enjoyed learning English songs and rhymes. Both of my children have become aware and can distinguish different music terms such as "steady beats." They have also made connections with music and books and movies. For example, they made the connection with the coqui, a Puerto Rican frog song, with picture books on the same topic. They even met a Puerto Rican at Trader Joes and sang for him proudly. When they learn a Hawaiian song, they made the connection with Moana, their world map, and a picture books.*

All 2023/24 participating parents/caregivers rated their experience with Midweek Music at the highest level - 'amazing, loved it!'

### **Outreach Performances and Clinics**

Musicians from SJSJ-SPCM presented 14 outreach performances and clinics at the following schools from January 2024 through May 2024: Dawson Boyd High School, Willmar High School, Worthington High School, Kennedy Secondary School, Murray Middle School, Battle Creek Elementary School, Txuj Ci, and Highland Park Middle School. Performances reached approximately 750 students.

## **Music Across Minnesota Evaluation Summaries and Stories**

Submitted by Mary Adamek

Year 3

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Programs funded by the Music Across MN 2024-2025 program include the online private lessons, online music theory classes, Midweek Music for preschool aged children and caregivers, Montevideo Middle School Guitar Program, Second Saturday's Masterclasses, Twin Cities Partnering School Instruction, Dawson-Boyd High School clinics, and SJSM-SPCM brass quintet outreach performances.

Students in Music Across MN programs developed music skills while also strengthening social-emotional learning and classroom skills. The following skills were addressed throughout the program.

Music skills: Improving music skills on my instrument; performing with others; expressing myself through making music with others; learning new skills.

Social-emotional learning skills: Persevering with difficult tasks; setting goals and following through; self-acceptances learning new skills; asking for help when needed; and pride in one's own work.

Classroom skills: Attending to task; listening to others; following directions

Below you will find a brief description of each of these programs along with evaluation information and participants' comments. This information was collected through a formal evaluation process at the end of the term.

### **Montevideo Middle School Guitar Program**

Twenty-nine students participated in the Montevideo Middle School Guitar Program this term. The students were very enthusiastic about the program and their chance to learn and improve guitar skills. They stated that some of their favorite parts of the program were learning guitar, playing favorite songs, and improving guitar skills. In addition to improving music skills, the students noted that they improved on their ability to set goals, attend to tasks, listen to others, persevere with difficult tasks, and take pride in their work. Five students who responded (out of 8 responses) rated their experience in the class 'Amazing, I loved it!'

*Feedback from Harry Chalmiers (SJSM-SPCM guitar instructor):*

"The Montevideo program is going amazingly well. There have been very few dropouts; the few we've had were mostly parental decisions due to poor grades and the need to bring grades up before taking on lessons. This program is an entirely unique experience for me, and it is very interesting and rewarding. I

hope it continues because it is clearly serving an important need in this isolated rural community. The kids are great and very excited to have this opportunity and most of them are making real progress. I've got a couple of special needs students as well and the students are surprisingly diverse."

*Feedback from Riley Frank (band director at Montevideo Middle School):*

"Guitar gives students a musical outlet that they can immediately apply to the music they hear on the radio. For some students, it will also allow them to play with their community in church or other bands. It has an immediate impact on the direct community in addition to the students who are also impacted."

## **Online Music Lessons**

Music Across MN lessons consisted of online private lessons with SJSM-SPCM faculty members throughout the semester. Students learned skills on brass, woodwinds, strings, piano/keyboard, guitar, ukulele, percussion, and voice.

Students stated that some of their favorite aspects of the lessons included learning about how to improve skills, learning fun pieces, learning new things, and getting feedback along with goal setting and improving skills. Students also commented that they enjoyed connecting with their teacher. Students commented that they improved many music skills such as rhythm and sound, learning repertoire and scales, learning new notes and ranges, and sightreading, intonation, and note recognition skills. All students who responded (7) felt like the lessons helped them improve their music skills and set goals for themselves. They also noted working on persevering with difficult tasks, learning new skills, expressing myself through the music, and asking for help when needed. All respondents rated their online lesson experience as 'Amazing, I loved it!'

*Feedback from Michelle Suter (string teacher at Willmar High School):*

"I want to express my most sincere gratitude for the valuable gift of online lessons over the last two years for my students. Each private instructor from the St. Paul Conservatory taught with an exceptional skill level and demonstrated great dedication; all the instructors made lasting, caring, and positive impressions on students' lives. Some even made the extra effort to come to Willmar to work with them in person!"

"The lessons have greatly benefited my students; I've noticed a significant improvement in skill level, an increased level of confidence, and a great sense of accomplishment. Three students received the honor of 'Best at Site' at our solo/ensemble contest and two made it into All-State Orchestra!"

"The lessons have been especially appreciated since many local, private teachers have either retired or moved away. Thank you, again, for giving us this amazing opportunity; we are very fortunate!"

### **Second Saturday's Masterclass**

Second Saturday's Masterclass was added to Music Across Minnesota this term. This online program provided students access to information from professional musicians about a range of music performing topics. Six students participated and 2 students responded to the evaluation.

Students noted that their favorite things about this program were learning music concepts and performance techniques. They stated that the presenters were informative, and they got a lot from attending the classes. One student learned techniques to help with performance anxiety that was very helpful. Both respondents noted that the series helped them build confidence and improve music skills. They had opportunities to interact with other musicians in a learning community and have positive interactions with music instructors. They both rated their experience as 'Amazing, I loved it!'

### **Twin Cities Partnering School Instruction**

Four schools participated in the Twin Cities Partnering School program. Directors from all 4 schools responded to the final evaluation. They stated they appreciated that the student could learn basics that they could not teach in class, the high-quality instruction, and that students got attention they deserve and need from experts. One director noted that the students in the program became leaders in their school ensemble, and another noted the positive connections that the students made with the teachers.

The directors noted that the students improved music skills, learned to persevere with difficult tasks, and improved ability to perform with others. They also noted that students worked on self-acceptance when learning new skills, listening to others, taking pride in their work, and expressing themselves through making music with others.

All the directors noted that the MAM teachers are mentors and role models for their students, they admired the teachers' music skills, and they easily communicated with the teachers. They also noted that the MAM teachers inspired their students to be better musicians. They all rated the program as 'Amazing, I loved it!'

*Feedback from Chad Armbruster (band director at Richfield High School):*

"SPCM's Music Across Minnesota has been an integral part of revitalizing and supporting the growth of our band program. Through individual and group lesson support, our students have made connections with their individual instruments and music that would not be possible without the wonderful instructors that SPCM employs. Our students' diverse backgrounds, experiences, musical, social

and emotional needs are expertly approached by this outstanding team of professionals. On behalf of my students and the Richfield Public School music community, I can't thank SPCM enough for their contributions to our success."

### **Dawson-Boyd Clinics**

Two directors responded to the final evaluation for the special clinics offered to their students. They noted that since their program is isolated, it was great to have experienced conductors work with their students. The students benefited from the new insights offered and they gained energy and motivation to keep practicing and improving their music skills. They noted that students worked on many skills such as improving music skills, expressing themselves through music, and listening to others.

Both directors noted that the MAM teachers are mentors and role models for their students, they admired the teachers' music skills, and they easily communicated with the teachers. They also noted that the MAM teachers inspired their students to be better musicians. They rated the program as 'Amazing, I loved it!'

### **Midweek Music**

Midweek Music is a weekly music class for 3–6-year-old children and their parents/caregivers. Students learn about music through active music making experiences that help them learn developmentally appropriate music and social skills. Each lesson is created using singing, stories, fingerplays and movement to enhance students' musical, social and emotional development.

Two parents/caregivers responded to the final evaluation. They noted that their children learned and named instruments by sight and sound, and that they do lots of singing throughout the day now. The respondents said that the students retained concepts taught in the class and they appreciated the structured activity for their children. Students loved the teacher! Both rated the program as 'Amazing, I loved it!'

### **Online Music Theory Classes**

Seven online synchronous classes were taught once a week from late February through early April 2025.

#### *Feedback from a student:*

"My favorite part of this music theory class was hearing the teacher's perspective on understanding different topics, and how they themselves developed as musicians. It was very enlightening to hear their advice having been in the same experiences and level of progression, and it really helped me grow my knowledge and visualize the future of my music education. I also appreciate how interactive and self-paced the experience was, and I continue to use the resources that were shared to me."



## **Outreach Performances**

The SJSM-SPCM brass quintet presented two performances at Como Park High School in October and November 2024 and two performances at Richfield Middle School in December 2024. Performances reached approximately 150 students and included time for students to directly interact with the musicians.

## **Music Across Minnesota Final Statistics**

Years 1-3

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### **Number of students registered for online lessons:**

200

### **Total number of students served across programs:**

165 (online lessons) + 51 (2024 string festival) + 50 (Twin Cities Title 1 schools instruction partnership) + 29 Montevideo Middle School Guitar Program + 8 (Midweek Music) + 20 (Project Success online lessons) + 4 (Online Music Theory Classes 2024 and 2025) + 6 (Second Saturday's Masterclasses) + 600 (SJSM-SPCM faculty clinics/performance visits) + 500 SJSM-SPCM Brass Quintet performances = 1,433 students

### **Minnesota communities served:**

Willmar, Worthington, St. James, Dawson Boyd, Marshall, Hayfield, Winona, Fergus Falls, Pine Island, Marshall, Montevideo, Alexandria, St. Cloud, St. Paul Public School District Title 1 eligible schools (Murray Middle School, Highland Park Middle School, Hazel Park Preparatory Academy, Como Park Senior High School, Central High School, Horace Mann Elementary, Battle Creek Elementary School, Jie Ming Mandarin Immersion Academy, Txuj Ci), Richfield Public School District Title 1 eligible schools (Richfield Middle School and Richfield High School), Inver Grove Heights Title 1 eligible school (Inver Grove Heights Middle School, Simley High School), Minneapolis Public School District Title 1 eligible schools (Green Central Bilingual School), Project Success organization

### **Number of faculty instructors/performers:**

33

### **Music Across Minnesota programming:**

Online Lessons; Montevideo Middle School Guitar Program; Twin Cities Title 1 Partnering Schools (Murray Middle School, Como Park High School, Richfield Middle School, and Richfield High School); Midweek Music; Online Music Theory Class; Second Saturday's Masterclasses; Outreach Performances with the SJSM-SPCM Brass Quintet (Richfield Middle School, Como Park High School, Dawson Boyd High School, Murray Middle School, Battle Creek Elementary School, Highland Park Middle School, Txuj Ci); Project Success online lessons; Guest Clinic/Performance Visits (Dawson Boyd High School, Worthington Middle and High School, Kennedy Secondary High School in Fergus Falls, Willmar High School, Pine Island High School); Minn SWest String Fest 2024

