

In Their Words: Children's Perspectives on an *El Sistema* Music Program's Effects on their Well-Being

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What Is The Problem?

- Healthy childhood development lays the foundation for well-being throughout one's life.
- Childhood spent in underprivileged neighborhoods has been associated with negative childhood well-being outcomes.
- Playing a musical instrument may be a potential tool to help underprivileged children counter these well-being differences.
- Providing a free, community-based musical training program for underprivileged children, such as Share the Warmth's (STW) El Sistema Music Program, is costly but could have a positive impact on participating children's well-being.
- A proper evaluation of participating children's experiences in the program, and the effects on their well-being, is warranted.

What Are the Findings?

- Children described the STW El Sistema music program as positively affected their emotional, social, personal, and educational well-being.
- Children learned to cope with stress, learn patience, and increase confidence.
- Children fostered a sense of community and improved peer and familial relationships.
- Children described feeling more ambition toward their scholarly and career pursuits.

Who Should Care Most?

- Children, parents, and caretakers in underprivileged and privileged neighborhoods of Montreal.
- Teachers, principals, music teachers, and community coordinators.
- Provincial and local governments and public health coordinators concerned about childhood well-being equity and downstream health costs.
- Academics and health care workers interested in promoting health and working intersectorally to improve childhood well-being for all.

Recommendations for Action

- Continue more long-term evaluations of STW El Sistema music program.
- Continue funding and strengthening research partnerships with other community-based childhood well-being programs in similar contexts.