**Music Education Program Linked to Social-Emotional Advantage**

**for Students Facing Economic Hardship**

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Purpose

Economic hardship is associated with risk for child social-emotional difficulties. The present study examines the impact of an afterschool music education program, Music Education Pathways, on social-emotional functioning for elementary school children facing economic hardship.

Design

Music Education Pathways (MEP) involves afterschool orchestral, band, and choral programming. Using a quasi-experimental design, students in MEP were compared at pre- and post-intervention time points to their peers who had expressed interest in participating in MEP but were not enrolled because they were already participating in other afterschool programs.

Method

Ethical standards were followed, and all procedures were approved by the appropriate institutional review boards. The study included 345 students enrolled in MEP and 158 comparison students. All participants faced economic hardship, with family income-to-needs ratios less than 2X the federal poverty threshold.

Parents completed a demographic interview. Students completed the Brief™ Problem Monitor to assess social-emotional problems (Achenbach, McConaughy, Ivanova, et al., 2011). The Brief™ is a shortened form of the well validated and widely used Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) and provides subscale scores for internalizing problems, attention problems, and externalizing problems, as well as a total problem score.

Results

Analyses involved a repeated measure multiple analyses of covariance (MANCOVAs) and included controls for key demographic variables. Children enrolled in MEP showed greater improvement in internalizing, externalizing, and total problem scores. The study highlights opportunities for using music to promote social-emotional wellbeing for children facing economic hardship.