

# Group music training improves children's pro-social skills

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This research was conducted by **E. Glenn Schellenberg, Kathleen A. Corrigall, Sebastian P. Dys and Tina Malti** at the **University of Toronto Mississauga, Canada**

## Summary

This study investigated whether group music training in early childhood is associated with improved pro-social skills. The researchers followed 38 Canadian eight- and nine-year olds over the course of a school year who all took part in weekly 40-minute music classes. Findings supported the notion that music facilitates social cohesion, cooperation and pro-social attitudes. Although an unknown variable may have caused some of the changes, the music classes played a significant role in increasing performance through people's synchronised interaction.

## Pro-social skills were measured through vocabulary, emotion comprehension, sympathy and other behaviours

All skills were tested at the beginning and end of the school year. A control group of 46 pupils from neighbouring schools with a similar socio-economic profile was put through the same tests. Scores in vocabulary and emotion comprehension were not affected by participation in the music classes for either low or high performers. Pupils with initial low scores on sympathy and pro-social behaviour performed better at the end of the year in those domains if they had participated in the music classes. These results remained unchanged after removing pupils who might have benefited from the music classes more by choosing to attend them, and after controlling for socio-

demographic differences between the participating and non-participating group.

## Overall, taking part in the music class group improved pro-social skills

However, the researchers suggest there are two things to remember: there might not have been any room for improvement among those students scoring highly for pro-social skills at the start of the year, and it remains unclear if (and how long) these effects may last.

This summary is by **Anna Kolliakou, King's Knowledge Exchange Associate**

### Keywords

**experiment** **Canada** **social** **music**

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