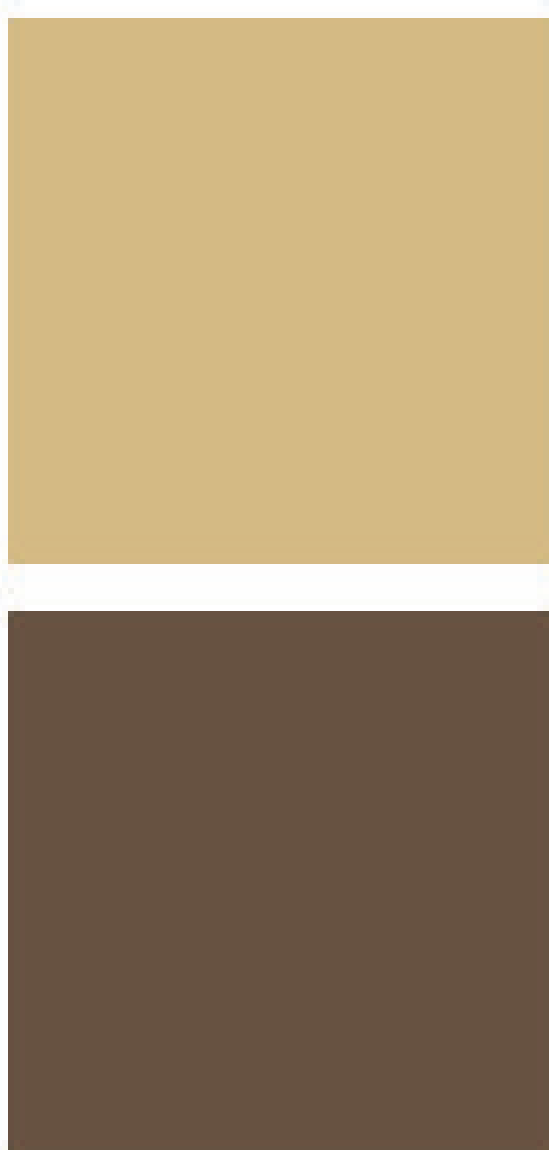




Music Lessons: Studio Music Instruction in Canada in the DIGITAL AGE

The research reported here is part of the MEDA (Music Education in the Digital Age) partnership project hosted at Queen's University. We are exploring the complexities of music-making in studios and schools, and, simultaneously, developing online and mobile tools to support music teaching and learning. This set of tools, known as the Music Tool Suite, can be used individually or in combination to motivate students to become self-regulated learners and to transform contemporary teaching practices.

DREAM

DREAM (Digital Resource Exchange About Music) is used to locate high quality digital resources including recordings and apps. Find it at dreammusictool.ca



Notemaker is an iOS app that allows students and teachers to annotate recordings in real time and share comments. Find it as Notemaker-Cadenza in the Apple Store.

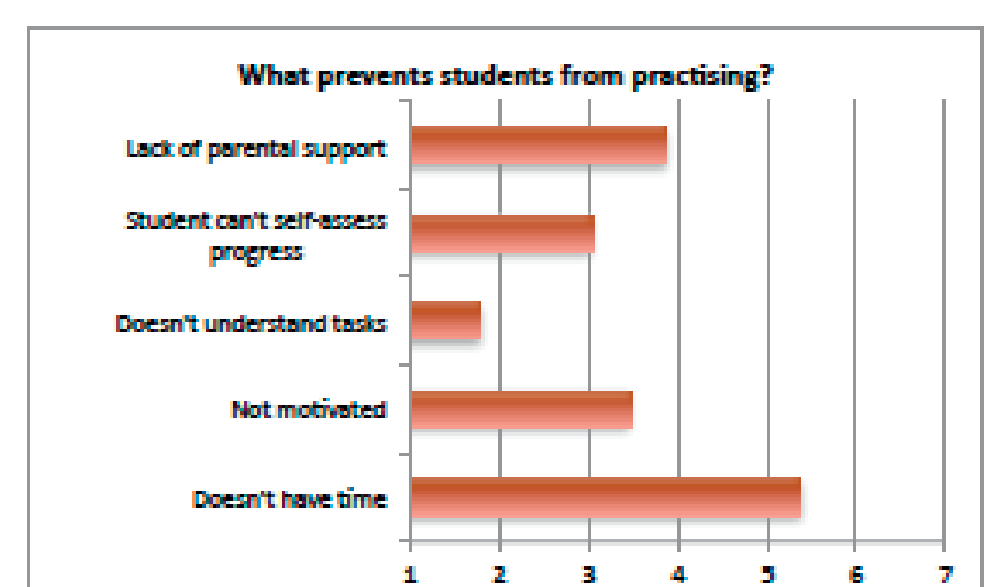
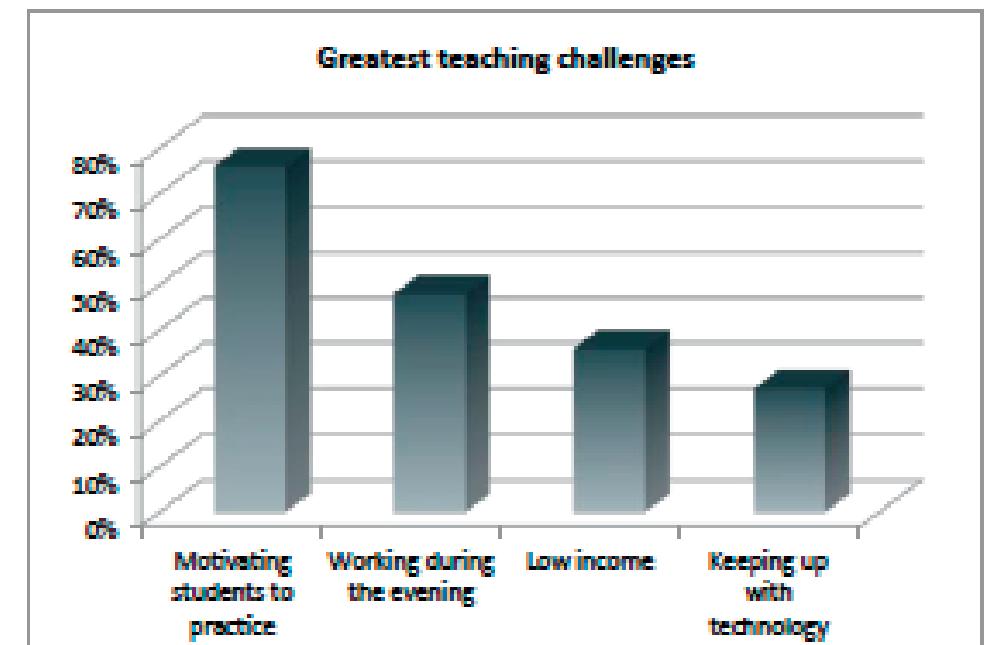
CADENZA

Cadenza is an online notebook that improves on the traditional pen-and-paper format with an annotation tool and features for crafting attainable goals. Cadenza can be found at musictoolsuite.ca



Teaching Challenges

"Our students seem to be overbooked with activities. Classes (dance, drawing, swimming) are all competing to be the most important. Sports-related activities require a minimum of two or three times a week, plus events on weekends. Students/parents try to fit in a music lesson, but often as a last priority."



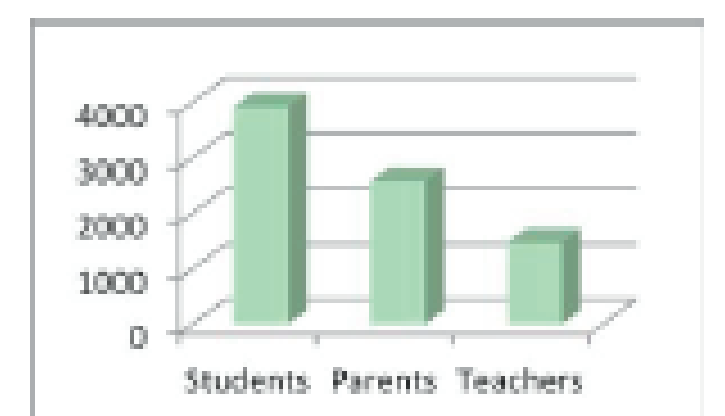
Teachers' mean responses on a scale from 1 (not true) to 7 (very true).

Questions we asked:

What are the key demographics of the students, teachers, and parents, and what are their musical habits?

To what extent are the enjoyment of music and student progress predicted by parenting behaviours, time spent practising, student self-regulation, intrinsic motivation, and quality of lessons?

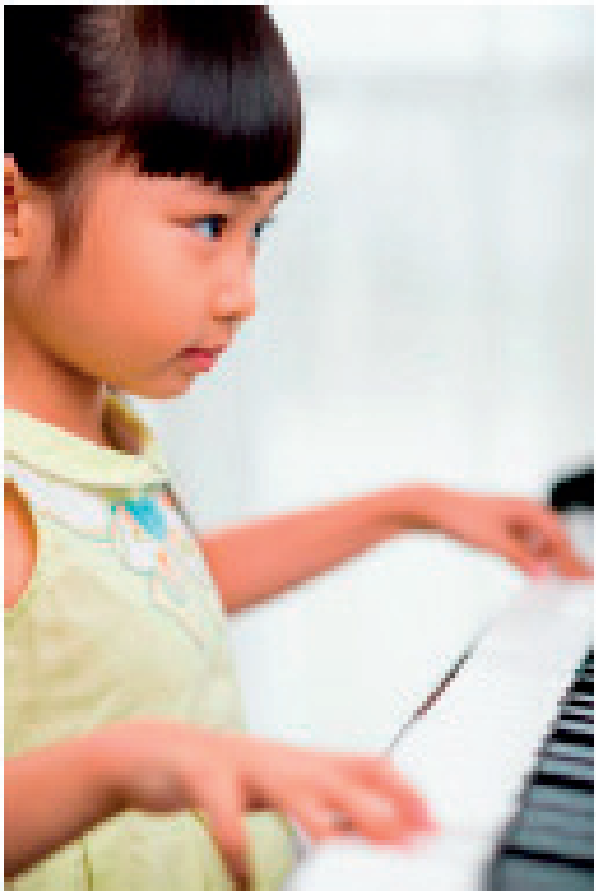
Number of participants



One 9-year-old student, in the very beginning stages, was making slow progress. Since starting to use Cadenza, she has gained confidence, and she is seeing progress, therefore progressing more! The consistency in practice habits has increased. I believe knowing that I am on the other end has made a big difference for this student for accountability as well as support.

~ Jackie, Music Instructor.

Practising



What do students practise?

By far the most common musical component practised by students was new repertoire, followed by pieces they had mastered, technical requirements, and sight-reading. The least practised components were playing music by ear, ear training exercises, and composing music.

How do students practise?

Students are generally able to concentrate on their practising and find practising quite enjoyable. Many students adopt effective practise strategies, such as practising small sections of the pieces they are learning. The majority of students (71%) reported practising in a shared family



space, such as a living room or family room. Most students practise without distractions. Students reported practising at least five days a week, for between a half hour and an hour per practise session. Over half (57%) reported that they practised at the same time each day.

Why do students practise?

The most important reason for practising identified by students was that they wanted to be able to play their instruments well. Nearly as important was their love of playing their instruments. The least important reason for practising was to gain rewards or praise from parents and teachers. On the whole, developing musical skills in general was highly valued by students.



Do students get help with practising?

Students indicated that their parents play an active role in supporting their home practising. Many parents remind their children to practise, offer comments and suggestions, and keep track of the length of practise sessions. Parents also answer questions during practise sessions, and to a lesser extent, help students with technology. Parental responses indicated that their children became more capable over time of assuming responsibility for their own learning, and that parents celebrated this growing independence.

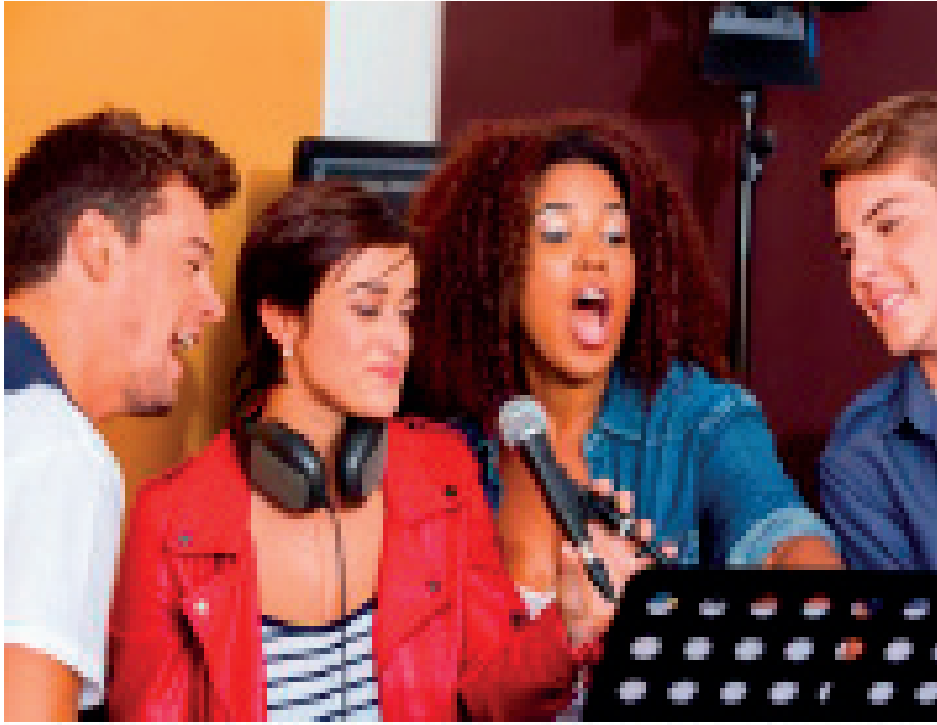
How are lessons changing?

"My son would not be taking music today if it weren't for the dedication, flexibility, and support of the teachers in the music studio. Music teachers who truly understand their students are critical for the advancement of music education."



Improvisation & movement are part of many lessons

Not surprisingly, nearly all teachers (99%) reported that they teach students repertoire from released music. The components of the conservatory systems in Canada were also prominent in the lessons, including technique (99%), ear training (96%), sight-reading (97%), and theory (93%). Interestingly, over half (58%) reported that they taught students to play by ear, and half (49%) reported that they taught their students composition and improvisation. Half (51%) of the teachers in the study taught music history to their students. Approximately two-fifths (41%) used movement in their teaching.



Informal music making enhances traditional lessons

Even students who are successful in traditional instruction are often more attracted to informal performance opportunities than to those formal experiences of recitals, festivals, and examinations. Informal music making also holds promise for students who might be less privileged than the students who took part in the study, as it may not require the resources needed for studio lessons. Informal music making also supports student autonomy and provides students with choice, and teachers downplay their evaluative role and instead provide reasons for why the activities may be useful and enjoyable. Ultimately, these opportunities can help students become more intrinsically motivated to continue their musical studies.



Teachers use digital technologies

Most teachers – of all ages – are comfortable using digital technology and value the use of digital tools to enhance student learning. Teachers used digital tools most often to compare performance by different musicians and to keep records of student progress. There were strong views expressed by teachers both in support of and against the use of digital technologies to enhance their teaching. The lack of support for certain tools is not to be seen as a lack of support for technology in general; rather, embracing technology for some purposes and rejecting it for others is evidence of a careful approach to the use of digital tools for music learning.

I have one student who started on Cadenza last year who was a very poor practiser, and now is fabulous. She no longer uses Cadenza, but organizes her practice time much more efficiently (we now just use a notebook). I find she is able to focus better in the lessons as she understands now that what we do in the lesson needs to be practised at home. Prior to Cadenza, this was not really a concept she grasped well. She started with Grade 4 and is now sailing through the Grade 5 repertoire.

~Teacher Observation

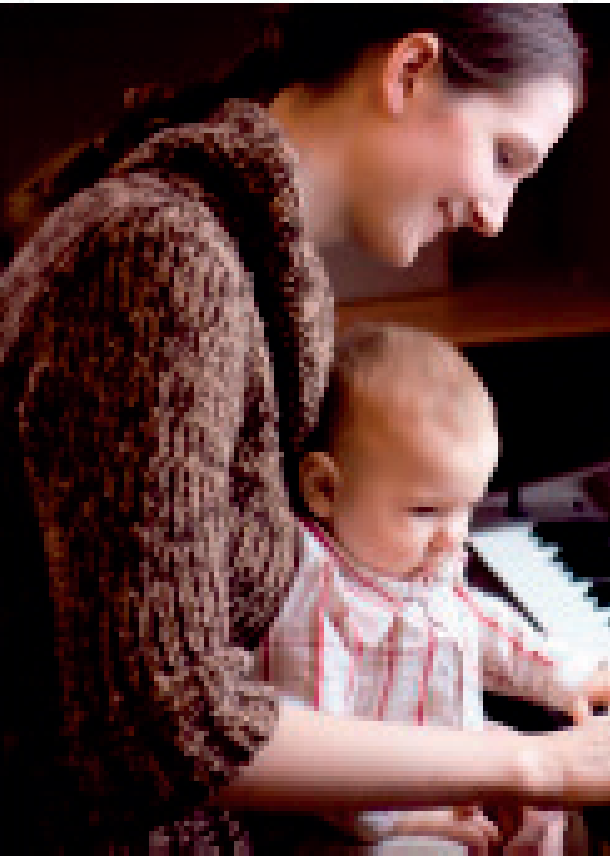
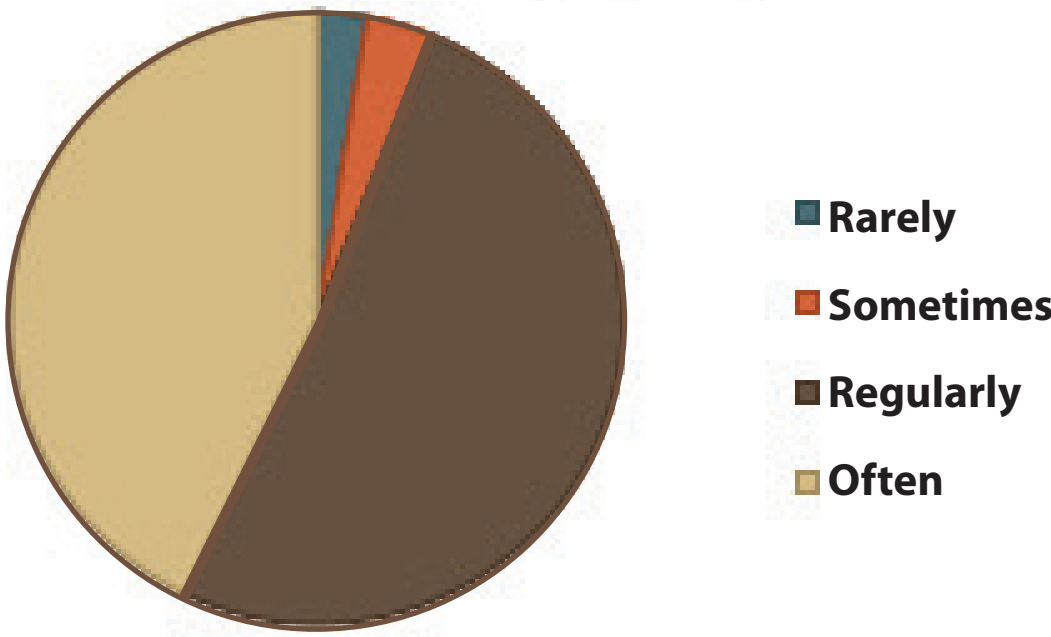
Parents play a crucial role.

The results give every indication that parents and guardians are dedicated to students' music education. This dedication is reflected in the years of commitment they make to supporting music learning, the active and thoughtful roles they take in supporting their childrens' evolution as self-regulating musicians, and the respect they hold for the teachers of their children.

While our research confirmed that parental involvement in the early stages of learning, we also learned that the patterns of parental support are complex. For example, some parental behaviours, such as reminding children to practise, drop off as the children get older. But there are some areas where parents are just as involved in the later years as in the early years: notably, helping to set goals for the year, encouraging their children to improvise or compose, and overall, helping students become self-regulated musicians.

But not all parental behaviours lead to positive outcomes. For example, strict parental monitory of practise sessions does not engender enjoyment, nor does it help with musical progress. Clearly parental interventions can be helpful, but some behaviours are more helpful than others in developing musicianship.

How often does your child play for pleasure?



"Nick is a 7 year old student who lives in an isolated northern community. He was visiting family for the summer in my area and so Mom and Dad thought they would try out 4 lessons to see if he would enjoy it....It was a HUGE success. This is a student who would not have access to the joy of piano lessons if it were not for the Notemaker and Cadenza tools. I, as his teacher, and his parents were willing to think outside the box to give this very keen music lover the opportunity to experience lessons regardless of his proximity to a teacher. We love the tools and his progress is remarkable!!"