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# TRU – KISSM Community Engagement Partnership Report to Kamloops Music Collective

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November 26, 2018

**THOMPSON RIVERS UNIVERSITY – KAMLOOPS INTERIOR  
SUMMER SCHOOL OF MUSIC COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT  
PARTNERSHIP**

**REPORT TO KAMLOOPS MUSIC COLLECTIVE**

November 26, 2018

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### **Abstract**

This action research is a collaborative effort between Thompson Rivers University (TRU) and the Kamloops Music Collective (KMC), a local non-profit organization, who develops and delivers the Kamloops Summer School of Music Program (KISSM). Other noteworthy KMC programs include Whole Note and Band Together. Whole Note is a comprehensive program that offers students of low-income families the opportunity to engage with music by providing music lessons, mentorship and additional performance opportunities. Band Together is a successful initiative that collects gently used musical instruments for students who wish to pursue music by creating an instrument lending library for children within the community.

Our goal is to investigate the benefits of musical arts education for children and youth, to better position music programming in the community and increase opportunities for music making. Children's stories and feedback are important to help us better understand participant experiences and bring to light the many joys of music. In keeping with previous research findings, results show that students have benefited from this program in various ways, including the following qualities: discipline, teamwork, coordination, development of skills, pride, lifetime skills, accomplishment, cooperation, self-confidence, sense of belonging, responsibility, self-expression, creativity, performance, companionship, building character and personality, improving self-esteem, social development and enjoyment. While this research deals with the context of a unique music education program within the interior of British Columbia the findings could easily be extrapolated to fine arts education within other school districts across Canada. It provides a window into the lived experiences of students. Moreover, this study provides marginalized students with a voice by drawing on their personal lived experiences.

## **Background to the Study**

In a neoliberal era fueled by misguided concerns of falling behind in traditional core subjects, combined with rhetoric of the need for 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills, fine arts programs are increasingly under attack and marginalized within public schooling. Thus, this research is both timely and necessary. In our school district, some music programs are on the verge of collapse or have been relegated to before/after school delivery. Furthermore, studying music has traditionally been limited to only those students with the money to afford private lessons and expensive instruments, so programs that can reach all students, regardless of socioeconomic status are necessary. Now entering its 40<sup>th</sup> year of operation, KISSM has filled an important niche in providing music education to many local students while offering scholarships to those who might not otherwise be able to study music. KISSM provides approximately 250 students the opportunity to follow their passion for music and the arts. All levels and abilities are welcomed to the three-week program that boasts over fifty classes.

The TRU Bachelor of Education (BEd) program, with an integration of fine arts in the curriculum, fully supports KISSM's mandate to provide music education to all. Thus, in the spirit of collaboration, this research provides a means to educate members of the community about the importance of fine arts education. It is noteworthy that this action research stems from shared interests in music education between our BEd faculty and KISSM and is a direct response to a request to us from KISSM.

There is strong interest from key stakeholders to provide more support for the performing arts but there is a need for empirical evidence of the benefits to students and to the community. In fact, recently, this issue has divided our community with many in support of building a new performing arts facility but others questioning the need for such a venue. Thus, it is necessary to convince our local authorities and school district officials about the importance of music education. This study shows the benefits of KISSM to students, and the community and thus offers a rationale for the school district and governments to provide more support for fine arts education. In addition, this action research illustrates a unique opportunity to engage a teacher candidate as a research assistant (RA) in a project to benefit our entire community.

## **Purpose**

This action research is a collaborative effort between TRU and KMC, funded by a modest Community Development Research Fund (\$2150 from TRU and \$2150 in kind from KMC). Our shared purpose is to investigate the benefits of musical arts education for children and youth, to better position music programming in the community and increase opportunities for music making. Participant's stories and feedback are important to help us better understand experiences and bring to light the many joys of music. In sum, this study provides a strong rationale for improving access for children and youth to enhanced opportunities for fine arts education within formal and nonformal educational settings.

## **Conceptual Framework**

Narrative inquiry is an integral part of my conceptual framework as a teacher and researcher. Following in the tradition of Canadian pioneers in this way of knowing, I use narrative inquiry in my teaching and research (Clandinin, 2000, 2007; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin et al., 2006; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Thus, narrative research collaborations have become a seminal part of my work (Howe and Arimoto, 2014; Howe and Xu, 2013). Narrative inquiry is in use by a growing number of Canadian scholars (Ciuffetelli Parker, 2011; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). This research draws on cross-cultural survey research (Howe, 2000, 2004) and narrative inquiry (Howe,

2005a, 2005b) with teachers as well as a similar study with international students (Howe, 2009). The conceptual framework is described in greater detail elsewhere (Howe, 2010).

## Method

The methodology used in this research is a blend of quantitative and qualitative approaches, making use of survey data from over 100 KISSM participants as well as rich, descriptive, reflexive ethnographic data from 14 students and an RA (Fetterman, 1989; Hammersley, 2006; Wolcott, 1999). Employing an online survey, journal entries, photos and extended conversations, interpretive data was collected from KISSM students to investigate lived experiences in July 2018.

Mixed methods provide triangulation and reliability. Quantitative data from an online survey of former KISSM students was used to complement rich qualitative data from a small subset of present students. Participants and the RA used photovoice and narrative inquiry to further uncover lived experiences. Interpretive research is necessary to uncover the lives of marginalized students in particular. Photovoice is an exciting way to engage student participants in research (Milligan, 2016). Moreover, photovoice can be effectively used to provide voices to marginalized individuals (Walton, Schleen, Brake, Trovato, & Oakes, 2012). Taking pictures of daily events and making meaning from them, is another way of giving students the opportunity to reflect on their experiences, to better express themselves, and to take ownership. There are many parents who cannot afford to purchase a musical instrument or to enroll their children in expensive music lessons. This sort of extra-curricular activity is usually relegated to middle-to-upper class families. Socio-economic status has been shown to play a critical role in the success of students. Programs like KISSM help level the playing field. Participatory community research, employing photovoice with diary- and photo-linked unstructured interviews has been proven as an effective means to address inequality (Milligan, 2006). Participants keep a diary, take photos and share their interpretations in focus-group discussions. A narrative interview is used to provide a participative activity to generate knowledge in a two-way learning process, where the subjectivities of the research participants influence data collection and the process of making meaning (Milligan, 2016). Student participants bring unique and specific insights. This form of research methodology is a collaborative effort and it is thus a co-construction of knowledge.

## Results

### *Quantitative Data (survey results)*

In May 2018, an online survey was given to former KISSM participants. In total, 116 KISSM participants (including students and teachers) completed the survey which included basic demographic information and 24 5-point Likert-scale questions. Results are summarized in Appendix A. Respondents were from all parts of Kamloops and from a wide-range of ages, reflecting the 40 years KISSM has been in existence. In sum, the survey data provided further evidence of the significant impact KISSM has played on the lives of so many. An overwhelming majority (92 %) indicated KISSM gave them a sense of achievement. Also, respondents showed strong support for KISSM's nurturing of other life skills including communication (mentioned in comments by 14 people); teamwork (9); confidence (9); and leadership/teaching (7). In the words of one individual, "KISSM led me to my career. I wouldn't be teaching music today without this camp."

### *Qualitative Data*

Twelve KISSM students aged 7 to 17 were selected to participate in narrative inquiry and photovoice, including daily journal writing and unstructured interviews. The raw interview data is included in Appendix B. In keeping with research ethics, names of participants have been changed to protect their

identities. In addition, the RA attended KISSM in summer 2018 and recorded her observations in an electronic journal. Some of her reflections are summarized in the following paragraph.

One salient example from the rich qualitative data is from a young primary student who was in their second year of the Music Maker program. This student participated in various classes (vocal, dance, drama and piano lessons). According to the RA, this individual is full of energy, curious about the world, and always smiling. They opened their photo voice journal with a simple post “Today was my 2<sup>nd</sup> year and 1<sup>st</sup> day of KISSM. It was so much fun and we even had together time — it was so amazing”.

The most pervasive topic brought up by KISSM students with the RA did not revolve around mastering a new instrument or excelling with their given instrument, instead it focused on the social and emotional aspects of their experiences. Clearly, participating in KISSM benefits children and youth in a myriad of ways. In particular, participants mentioned making friends, feeling empathy and an increased desire to be helpful. KISSM provided students opportunities to connect with like-minded individuals in a safe environment, where new friendships blossomed and inclusivity was the top priority.

Another noteworthy aspect of KISSM is that many former students return as adults to support teachers and students alike. Significant bonds are fostered at KISSM. This was observed by the RA in Introductory and Beginner band classes. Based on the RA’s observations, students were able to express themselves as unique individuals without the shame of being judged or viewed as “different” by their peers. For example, one student wished that KISSM could be a year-long program because he struggled in school. According to the RA, in the KISSM environment this student appeared highly energetic, full of smiles and laughter and easily got along with other students. This student shared a personal struggle of “being bullied because I’m different” impacting their ability to make friends at school. Being at “KISSM provided me with the chance to be myself”. Most importantly, students benefited from being open and transparent about whom they are. They did not have to hide their feelings or pretend to be someone they are not. The beauty is that students can develop their identity safely at KISSM.

Other students opened up about their experiences and consistently commented on learning new skills and concepts in a fun and engaging manner. All the skills these students were acquiring could easily be transferred into their daily lives. Students mentioned a number of life-skills including: leadership, organization, overcoming fears, succeeding, problem solving, stepping outside their comfort zone, building self-confidence and learning to work with others with differing abilities. These are all skills that are used every day at school. They are embedded within the core competencies of the BC curriculum. It is amazing to see how a music program like KISSM can strengthen these without students even realizing it. Thus, the social and emotional skills acquired throughout the three-weeks at KISSM benefits students in school and in their everyday lives.

## **Conclusions**

As shown in a review of the literature and further evidenced in this study, the benefits for music education are many. In the early years, music has been shown to improve literacy, fine motor skills, and spatial reasoning. There is a strong correlation between music and reading, leading to early success in school (Butzlaff, 2000). Furthermore, participation in music education has been shown to foster discipline, teamwork, co-ordination, development of skills, pride, lifetime skills, accomplishment, cooperation, self-confidence, sense of belonging, responsibility, self-expression, creativity, performance, companionship, building character and personality, improving self-esteem, social development and enjoyment (Coalition for Music Education, 2015; Hallam, 2010; Kokotsaki & Hallam, 2007; Schellenberg, Corrigan, Sebastian Dys, & Malti, 2015; Vitale, 2011). In adolescence, music contributes to development of an individual’s emerging self-identity, which can have a profound effect on mental health and happiness. “Music is shown to be beneficial to students in four major categories: success in society, success in school, success in developing intelligence, and success in life.... It is advocated that music be included to some extent in all school curricula” (Petress, 2005, p. 112).

Fine arts programs, like KISSM, have a valuable place within our communities. Programs like KISSM offer students a space to continue fostering their musical and personal connections. Students are free to express their individuality and identity, develop key social and emotional skills and learn and/or improve their musical abilities. While KISSM is only three-weeks, it develops life-long skills that easily transfer into a person's daily life. It would be excellent to see this program run longer and be able to involve more students to continue building the music culture within Kamloops.

This community-driven action research is only the first step in advocating for the arts. This study makes the following significant contributions: providing a platform and voice to marginalized students; identifying and analyzing the common experiences of students, which will contribute to innovative and student centric approaches to fine arts education; and disseminating research findings to organizations and students to help improve school programs and policies for students in Kamloops and elsewhere.

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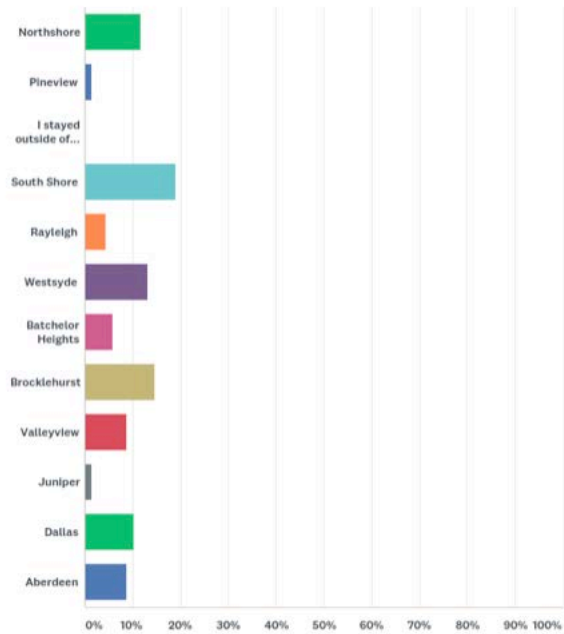


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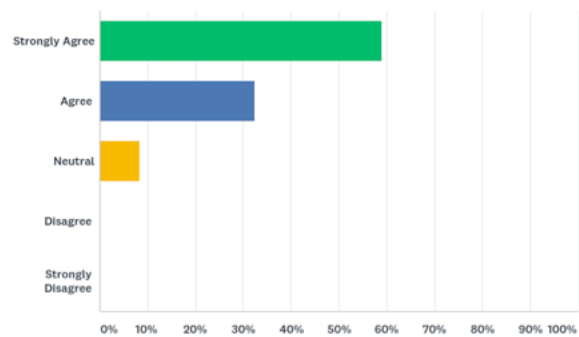


## Appendix B Selected Survey Results

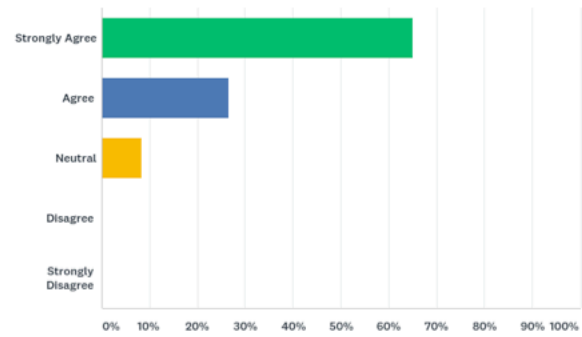
Q7 What part of town did you live in when you attended KISSM?



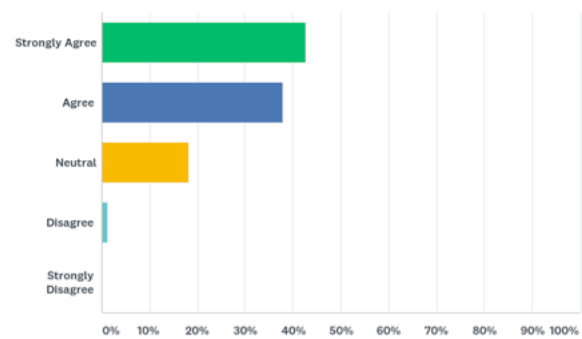
Q8 Did KISSM make you a better musician?



Q10 Did KISSM give you a sense of achievement?



Q24 KISSM helped me learn to work in a group.



## APPENDIX B Interview Data

### A, Grade 3, Lloyd George Elementary

- Sad it's all ending.
- Get to do dance with family on Wednesday, which is exciting.
- Best part was the movement classes with Sam because they got to do different dances. It was really fun overall. Second favourite was the KISSM (learned last year).
- Not very great with the drums because I had never played a drum in her life. It made her hand tingly if she went too long.
- Loved singing with Thomas and the goat song was the best song they sang all camp.
- Made some new friends but not that many.
- Originally was scared to make mistakes but Jordan was really awesome for making people feel good about themselves.
- Looks forward to KISSM next year.
- Excited for the final performance but sad its over so soon.
- Saw personal growth over the three weeks.

### B, Grade 6, St. Ann's Academy

- Marimbas and mallets was the coolest class with Barb. She pushed us to do our best through fun songs like 'Stitches'.
- In Band and plays the Alto Sax. Had no experience coming in but can do the scale now which was great.
- It was challenging to get music and learn it in two days to perform. It was scary because you don't want to make mistakes. The thought of being in the Sagebrush for the final performance is scary.
- Excited for her parents to watch her perform.
- Made new friends while at KISSM and looks forward to coming back next year.
- Jordan was another awesome teacher because they made planes.
- Saw personal growth and will be in band at school next year.

### C, Grade 6, Kamloops School of the Arts

- Learns something new each year she comes back.
- Junior choir is her favourite class to be in with Rachel. Rachel built her confidence because she was scared to sing but after 3 weeks with Rachel, she couldn't picture not singing.
- She also liked marimba and using the big bass marimba. Also loved Barbs personality.
- She made tons of new friends while at KISSM.
- She's hard on herself often but quickly came out of her shell because everyone is in the same boat and no one judges you on your ability.
- Sad to leave KISSM because she won't be able to connect with her friends each day.

### D, Grade 5, OLPH

- Loved the BBQ and dancing with the marimbas. It was a very happy moment for him.
- Barb introduced them to new languages (as did Rachel) which was really neat and engaging.
- He made new friends at KISSM which made him smile. He can't wait until next year. He hopes that his parents will help him make coming a tradition.
- KISSM is better than school. He is very reserved at school because he is bullied, for being different. KISSM allows me to open up and be who I want to be. Judgment free. It's the best.

- Nervous for the final performance but knows it will be amazing.

E, Sahali, Grade 12 (not as open to talking)

- Not in a regular school music program.
- Is looking forward to sleeping in and not having the school structure – she was being honest, which I can appreciate.
- In her fourth year and feels established with her friends.
- Musical theater challenged her to come out of her comfort zone but it was fun.
- Did a solo which felt like an opportunity to put self forward in piano.
- She didn't feel that KISSM gave her any new skills that she could transfer over into her regular life. But also admits that she likely would think of some later on when she wasn't being asked.
- Enjoyed the BBQ with family and friends. Enjoyed seeing what others were doing.

F (Grade 10) and G (Grade 12), Sahali

- F has been coming for what seems like a long time and is not in a regular music program. He found marching band interesting and looks forward to coming back next year.
- G enjoyed KISSM mainly for the social aspect. Hanging out with friends was a highlight.
- Both found they have the same social circle from last year but likely because they've been coming for so long.
- Both enjoyed the challenge of the music but never felt pressured because the teachers were highly supportive of their learning.
- G found that KISSM did boost his confidence and that he found he could step outside his comfort zone with no issues.
- F did not feel the same and found the digital audio course was cool and wants to continue learning.

H, Grade 9, South Kamloops Secondary School (caught on a break)

- Will definitely be back next year and hopes to one day be a mentor. The people who have helped mentor her have had a positive impact on her life and she would like to give back too.
- Loves performing and was in HSM.
- Was surprised to see how well things worked out – especially when everyone seemed miserable at the start because they were not friends yet.
- KISSM has helped her to connect better with people because she can now find a common place with new people. Christy was great at helping meld people together.
- Loved being able to socialize with friends and do fun electives/
- Having to audition pushed her to be confident because it was like having to sell yourself.

I, Grade 8, Merritt Secondary School (caught on a break)

- In HSM and felt super welcomed – especially since she was from out of town.
- Christy fostered a safe environment to express yourself and helped her become brave to perform.
- The skills she learned at KISSM (social/emotional) will be useful as she enters high school.
- She echoed much of the same ideas as Max.

J, Grade 9, South Kamloops Secondary School (caught on a break)

- Connecting with new friends was really hard at the beginning because everyone was a stranger. But couldn't picture doing HSM with anyone else.
- Christy helped to build confidence and really instilled the idea of being open to new things.

- She played a boy for HSM, which she wasn't sure about at first. But it has taught her how to put herself in new roles.
- Looks forward to seeing what happens at school as she brings new skills with her.