



2015 MacPhail Music for Life™ Evaluation

First-year Results of a Music Program for Older Adults

J A N U A R Y 2 0 1 6

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Program overview

Since 2005, the Music for Life™ program at the MacPhail Center for Music has been offering music classes for older adults to provide them the opportunity to learn and practice music skills and socialize with other adults in a group setting. The program works with senior living facilities primarily in the Minneapolis – Saint Paul metro area, with a pilot initiative to provide online Music for Life™ classes in different areas of the state. In 2015, this pilot took place only in Thief River Falls.

MacPhail Music for Life™ offered the following grant subsidized classes in 2015:

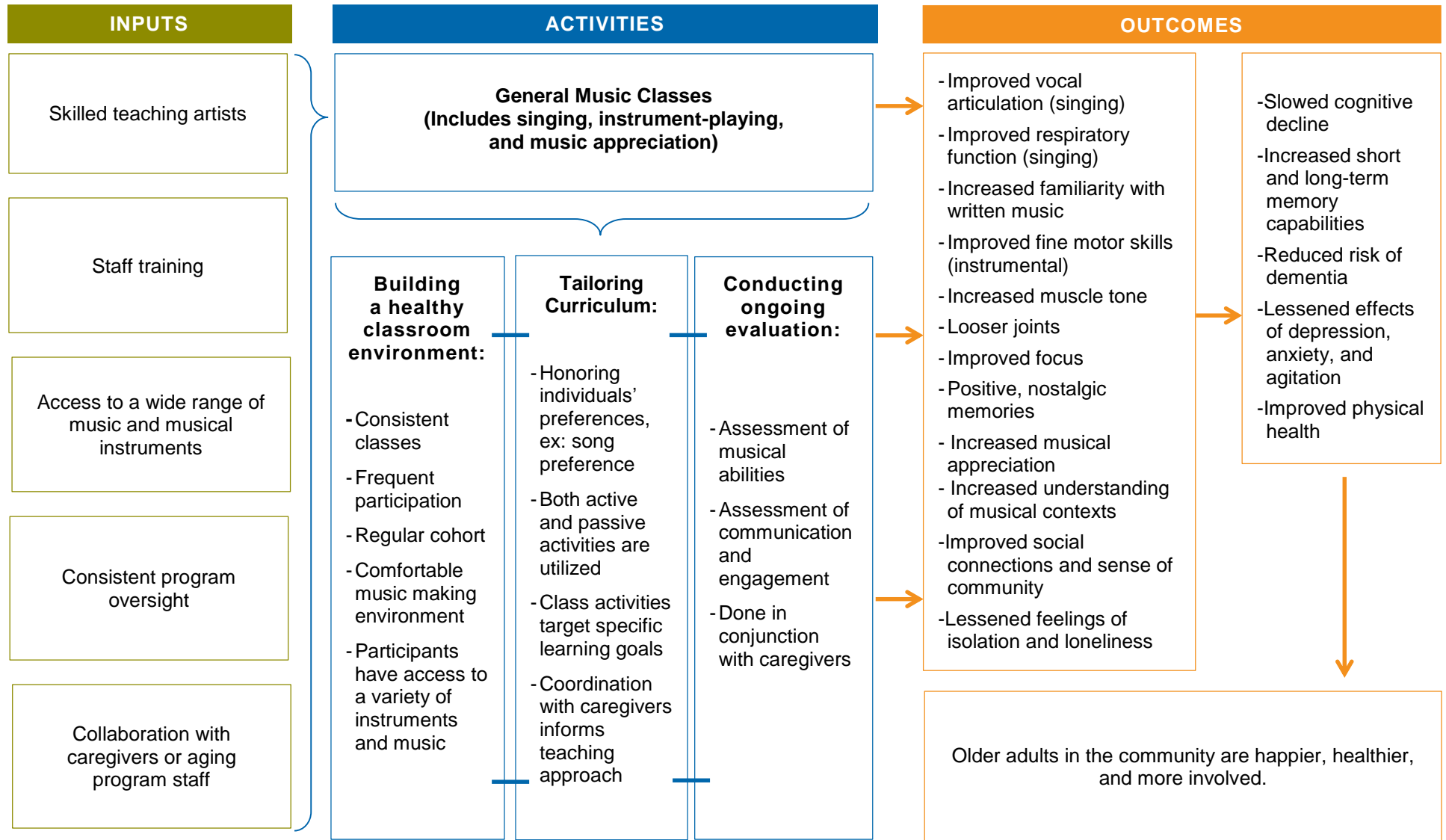
- *Music for Life™ General Music* teaches participants to sing, play instruments, and appreciate music. The classes were offered at 10 Lyngblomsten's *The Gathering* locations; Ebenezer Ridges Memory Care; and Open Circle Adult Day Center and were attended by a total of 180 older adults in 2015.
- *Play for Life* teaches basic skills of playing an instrument. These classes focus on participants learning to play one instrument. In 2015, class participants were taught the ukulele and drums. The Martin Luther Campus and Ebenezer Ridges Adult Day Center partnered with MacPhail Music for Life™ to offer classes at their locations. In 2015, 31 older adults participated in Play for Life classes, with 16 learning to play ukulele and 15 learning to play drums.
- *Sing for Life* teaches participants to sing and perform in a choir. This class was offered online as a pilot in Thief River Falls and 20 older adults participated in 2015.

In total, 231 older adults participated in MacPhail Music for Life™ grant-subsidized classes in 2015. This report reflects the evaluation findings from data collected in 2015.

Program approach

Wilder Research worked collaboratively with MacPhail Music for Life™ staff to develop a program logic model that illustrates the program input and output (program activities) and expected outcomes. The logic model is also informed by a review of recent research studies of similar programs. The literature review, describing best practices of music programs for older adults and their expected outcomes, is reported separately (*MacPhail Music for Life Literature Review*, Connell, 2015). The logic model is shown on the following page.

MacPhail Music for Life Logic Model



Evaluation

The evaluation addresses aspects of program activities. Participants' perceptions of program activities in regards to building a healthy environment and tailoring curriculum/honoring individuals' preferences are reported. Additionally, evaluation addresses three program outcomes: 1) participants will find their Music for Life™ class enjoyable and valuable; 2) participants will develop general music skills; and 3) participants are happier and healthier because of their participation in Music for Life™. Outcomes one and two are expected to occur in the short term, as seen in the above logic model. Outcome three is expected to follow more short term outcomes, as we assume that older adults who have participated will be happier and healthier if they see the physical, emotional, and mental benefits that are expected in the short-term.

To assess the program outcomes, the following surveys were collected and a focus group was conducted:

- End-of-program participant survey. This survey asks participants about the impact of their participation in the music class and their perceptions about changes in their physical and mental health/happiness as a result of their participation in the class; satisfaction with the content of the class and the Teaching Artist who led the class; and their suggestions for class improvement. Twenty-seven *Music for Life™ General Music* (90% of participants), 12 *Play for Life* (80%), and 17 *Sing for Life* (85%) participants who were asked to complete the survey did so.
- End-of-program online participant survey. *Sing for Life* participants who took the pilot online music class at Thief River Falls were asked about the clarity and effectiveness of the online tool for transmitting lessons. Sixteen of the 20 participants (80%) completed the survey. Participants completed this survey in addition to their end-of-program participant survey.
- A focus group with the *Play for Life* ukulele participants. The focus group was conducted at the end of the program in September 2015 and attended by five of the eight ukulele participants. The group discussed what the participants learned from the class, what they liked most about the class, whether they liked the music selection and the Teaching Artist who led the class, whether the class met their expectations, the benefits of attending the class, and their suggestions for class improvement.
- End-of-program partner survey. Four out of five sites (80%) completed an end-of-program partner survey. Their opinion reflected their perception of classes at their site and their quality overall. Partner site staff were asked to describe the program to others

who might ask them about it; on whether they would suggest this class to other adults; to rate the quality and effectiveness of the Teaching Artists who led the class; and their suggestions for improving the program.

- Music skill assessment. Teaching Artists may complete a music assessment form for each of the participants in their class. Growth in the participant’s music skills, increases in the participant’s music appreciation, and the participant’s level of participation and engagement or socialization with other participants were assessed. The Teaching Artist from the two *Play for Life* ukulele classes completed the survey for 11 of the 16 participants, for a 69% response rate.

In addition, *Play for Life* classes collected a music preference form at the beginning of the program covering music preferences and class expectations. A music preference form was completed by 25 participants from *Play for Life* classes, for an 81% response rate from *Play for Life* classes. The music preference form asks participants about their music genre preference, whether they have ever played a musical instrument or have enjoyed singing in the past, list of their favorite albums or musicians, and what they hoped to get out of the class.

Survey tool use was targeted at classes where results were expected to be seen, where participants would be able to complete a survey, and that were funded by Minnesota State Arts Board’s grant. Music skill assessments were given to Teaching Artists who taught *Play for Life* classes, as those classes are specifically targeted at increasing participants’ skills related to playing an instrument. The end-of-program partner survey was utilized for many *Music for Life*[™] classes in lieu of the end-of-program participant survey, as many of the participants from these classes would not be capable of filling out a survey. Similarly, music preference forms were given to participants of *Play for Life* classes, as many participants in *Music for Life*[™] *General Music* classes would be unable to complete the survey themselves. As the end-of-program online participant survey focused many questions on the effectiveness of the online platform, it was only utilized for participants at the pilot online site.

Results are reported across classes and separately, as appropriate.

Program activities

Building a healthy classroom environment

Within the framework of the logic model, “building a healthy classroom environment” involves a Teaching Artist keeping regular classes with the same cohort of participants, being flexible to the needs and wishes of the participants, and providing a variety of

music and instruments for participants to use. Within this evaluation, participants were asked about the most satisfying aspects of their participation and their satisfaction with the Teaching Artist that led their class. Music for Life™ classes were established to serve the same cohort of individuals on a frequent basis.

Participants were asked to identify the most satisfying aspects of their participation in the class they attended. Singing or playing familiar songs was most commonly indicated as a most satisfying aspect of the class, with 62 percent of participants marking this (Figure 5). Participants indicated the following as satisfying aspects of the class: singing or learning with other people (44%), getting to know new people (38%), learning new music (38%), learning musical techniques (23%), performing (23%), physical warm-ups (10%), and expanding their social activities (3%). In open ended responses, participants frequently noted how much they enjoyed their class and learning new skills.

*“The program is excellent. We need this class. It brings us together.”-Music for Life™
General Music participant*

“I believe music betters everyone’s lives.” –Music for Life™ General Music participant

*“I love it. I love music. Especially singing with a group.” –Music for Life™ General Music
participant*

*“We love having our [peers] by us and doing the same things that we’re doing. It’s good.
And you’ve got this same experience.”*

Similar to participants, partner organization staff were very positive about their experience with Music for Life™ classes. All rated the quality and effectiveness of the Teaching Artist who led the class as “excellent”, and wrote additional comments praising their Teaching Artist and the program overall. Partner organization staff were particularly positive about the opportunity the program allows for seniors to come together to socialize, be active, and make friendships with their peers.

Tailoring curriculum

“Tailoring curriculum,” as understood within the context of this evaluation, involves providing a variety of activities and music options, as well as a degree of flexibility by the Teaching Artist to provide activities and music that are appealing to participants.

Focus group participants were asked how they liked their music selection. In response, participants were very positive about their experiences with the Play for Life class’s curriculum. Of particular note was the flexibility of their Teaching Artist, and his flexibility as he allowed the participants to indicate what songs they would like to play. They highlighted the Teaching Artist’s friendliness, flexibility, attentiveness, and

patience within the song selection process. They were glad to be asked for input from their Teaching Artist, and spoke about how much they enjoyed the songs they played for their class.

Participants in the Thief River Falls pilot Sing for Life class were asked to fill out a satisfaction form related to the effectiveness of the Teaching Artist and the class they led. They were asked to rate varying components of the class on a three-point scale, where 1=poor, 2=okay, and 3=great. Overall, participants were very positive about all aspects of the class. They were most positive about their Teaching Artist's clear directions and explanations, the effectiveness of activities involving movement, the effectiveness of activities involving singing, and the level of engagement their fellow participants showed, with all participants marking these as "great."

Program outcomes

Participants will find classes enjoyable and valuable

Overall, participants were very positive about their experience in Music for Life™, with all 39 responding participants indicating they were either very satisfied (79%) or somewhat satisfied (21%; Figure 1). Almost all stated that class content suited their interests and expectations (97%; Figure 2). Participants were also positive about the MacPhail Teaching Artist that led their class, with 72 percent of participants rating their quality and effectiveness as "excellent" and 23 percent rating it as "good" (Figure 3).

Participants were asked to indicate what they accomplished during their Music for Life™ class. Most commonly, participants indicated that they socialized with others and/or made new friends (73%; Figure 4). After this, the most common responses were that participants learned more about music (67%), expressed themselves in a creative way (58%), were physically or mentally active (62%), increased their musical skills (56%), and improved their mood (54%). Additionally, participants within the focus group were particularly vocal about the social benefits of their class, and appreciated their time together as they learned to play the ukulele.

In open ended comments, participants thanked MacPhail for offering the class, wrote about music's role in their lives, and expressed how fun and enjoyable the class was for them.

"I learned so much. It brought me out of my comfort level and made me stronger." –Sing for Life participant

"It was a great experience for me to be a part of this group and to gain confidence back in singing...This is a great opportunity for me to connect with the group and gain more knowledge in how music can make a difference in your life!" –Sing for Life participant

Participants will develop music skills

Wilder Research received eleven music skills assessment forms for participants who had been taking ukulele classes through one of MacPhail's Play for Life courses, which provides a preliminary look music skill acquisition through this program. It is important to note that with the small number of assessments completed so far, results should be interpreted with caution.

According to Teaching Artists who completed the survey, all participants showed growth in technical music skills to varying degrees. Four participants were reported to have seen "strong improvement", five saw "some improvement", and another two saw "small improvement." Of the two participants who showed "small improvement", the Teaching Artist made note that mental or physical impairments hampered their progress. All participants were reported to have shown an increased appreciation for music, with several comments from the Teaching Artist about how these participants appreciated learning new skills, loved learning the ukulele, and frequently mentioned that they enjoyed the class.

Teaching Artists were asked to provide specific areas in which the participant had shown growth. Most common answers were identifying and playing chords (9 participants); understanding rhythm (6 participants); and fretting notes, or properly placing fingers on the guitar neck (3 participants).

As mentioned above, participants generally felt their skills had grown and showed an appreciation for the opportunity to learn new things in their Music for Life™ class. Sixty-seven percent of participants felt they learned more about music, and 56 percent felt that they had increased their musical skills (Figure 4). Additionally, learning new music and learning musical techniques were frequently marked as most satisfying aspects of their participation in the class (38% and 23%, respectively; Figure 5).

In the focus group, participants spoke about how they learned about the ukulele and how to play it, including how to hold the instrument properly and strum the strings. One participant spoke about learning more about the make of the instruments:

"With these different instruments, they're just like a person. They're programmed to have these different sounds...That was something I had never thought about."

Participants are happier and healthier because of their participation

Participants were asked how their Music for Life™ class made an impact on how they feel physically and emotionally. Overall, participants were most likely to say they felt “a lot better” physically, with half of participants answering this way (Figure 11). Another 39 percent indicated that they felt “a little better” physically because of the class. Participants were also positive about how their class had made them feel emotionally, with 44 percent of participants saying they felt “a lot happier” because of their Music for Life™ class and another 44 percent saying they felt “a little happier” (Figure 12).

Participants in the Thief River Falls pilot *Sing for Life* class provided more information about their own perceptions of their physical and emotional health. A majority of these participants indicated that they believed their physical health to be “good”, with 53 percent of participants answering this way (Figure 13). A majority of Thief River Falls participants indicated that their mood was “excellent”, with 56 percent of participants indicating this (Figure 14).

Participants were also asked how many times a week they participate in social activities with friends (including their Music for Life™ class) to get a sense of how involved and connected these participants are. Participants most commonly answered that they met up with friends three to six times a week, with 57 percent of participants indicating this (Figure 15).

Within the focus group, *Play for Life* participants spoke about how their class gave them the time and space to socialize with others, and how that made them happier. Participants did not indicate that there were any physical benefits of the class, but one participant said she learned to hold the ukulele close to her body and felt good playing that way.

Staff at Music for Life™ partner organizations were asked to fill out a satisfaction survey at the end of the class to share how they felt the class went. In 2015, eight of these surveys were completed by staff at three of the five sites: Ebenezer Ridges, Open Circle Adult Day Center, and The Gathering. Common descriptions of the program revolved around how the class engages residents and makes them happier.

“It brings back memories and puts smiles on their faces.” –Partner organization staff

“I feel like it is a great opportunity to learn and connect with music, which many older adults no longer have access to.” –Partner organization staff

Additional information

Music preference

Wilder Research received additional information about characteristics and music preferences of 25 out of 31 participants of Play for Life classes, offering a glance at this population and what their expectations were going in to their class. Forty-eight percent had played an instrument in the past (Figure 6). Participants of these Play for Life classes, as well as the Sing for Life class, were generally confident with music, with 41 percent of participants stating they were “very confident” with music (Figure 7). The most common genre of music enjoyed by these individuals was country western, with 68 percent of participants indicating this was a favorite. Other common favorite genres include big band/swing (40%), spiritual/religious (40%), rock and roll (32%), and easy listening (32%; Figure 8). When asked what they hoped to achieve with their participation in a Play for Life class, participants most commonly reported they would like to learn more about music (67%), followed by expressing themselves in a creative way (40%), socializing with others (33%), keeping physically/mentally active (33%), and improving their mood (33%; Figure 9). When asked what they were hoping to do in their Play for Life class, participants most commonly indicated that they would like to play as a group (87%), followed by learning new drumming techniques (27%) and playing individually (13%; Figure 10).

Satisfaction with online lessons

As mentioned above, participants at the Thief River Falls pilot site for Sing for Life were given an additional survey to complete, which asked about their satisfaction with their Teaching Artist, the content of the class, and their experience with being taught via the Internet. Results regarding their satisfaction with their Teaching Artist and the content of the class are covered earlier. Participants were asked about their ability to hear and understand their Teaching Artist; their ability to see the Teaching Artist clearly; and their satisfaction with the backdrop, lighting, and camera angle used. They were asked to rank these components on a three-point scale where 1=poor, 2=okay, and 3=great.

Overall, participants were very positive with their experience with these online classes. They were most positive about their ability to see their Teaching Artist clearly, with an average rating of 2.94. The average rating for their ability to hear and understand their Teaching Artist was 2.87; and the average rating for the background, lighting, and camera angle used was 2.81.

Issues to consider

Based upon the findings from participant surveys and the focus group, MacPhail should continue to:

- Offer a variety of songs that are familiar to the participants for them to play or sing.
- Continue to allow time for participants to get to know one another and form friendships

When asked in what ways MacPhail's Music for Life™ program could improve, participants and partners offered the following suggestions:

- Offer a wider variety of musical instruments and a larger selection of music within classes.
- Increase the frequency of the lessons
- Focus even more on interactive activities

On the evaluation, we recommend that:

- MacPhail and its partner organizations work together to increase the number of Music for Life™ participants who complete music preference forms and surveys at the end of their class to aid future evaluation.
- MacPhail and its partner organizations make use of the versions of the music preference form and end-of-program survey built for non-participants to complete on a participant's behalf.
- In future evaluations, focus groups with participants be followed by interviews with caregivers and participants' family members to gather their input on the program's impact on participants.

Figures

1. Satisfaction with class content

Overall, how satisfied are you with the music class? ^a	Total (n=39)		Music for Life General Music (n=27)		Play for Life (n=12)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Very satisfied	31	79%	22	81%	9	75%
Somewhat satisfied	8	21%	5	19%	3	25%

^a Table draws on information provided from the Participant Post Survey. Participant answered the question “Very satisfied,” “Somewhat satisfied,” “Somewhat dissatisfied,” and “Very dissatisfied.”

2. Satisfaction with class content – suited expectations (all participants)

Did the content of the class suit your expectations? ^a	Total (n=56)		Music for Life General Music (n=43)		Play for Life (n=13)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	55	97%	43	100%	12	92%
No	1	2%	-	-	1	8%

Notes: Participants in Thief River Falls were asked if their class suited both their interests and expectations, while Twin Cities participants were asked individually about expectations and interests. Music for Life General Music and Play for Life participants were located in the Twin Cities, and Sing for Life participants were involved in the pilot classes offered via Internet.

^a Table draws on information provided from the Participant Post Survey. Participant answered the question “Yes,” and “No.”

3. Satisfaction with Teaching Artist (all)

How do you rate the quality and effectiveness of the Teaching Artist who led your class in presenting material? ^a	Total (n=56)		Music for Life General Music (n=26)		Play for Life (n=13)		Sing for Life (n=17)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Excellent	44	72%	20	77%	8	62%	16	94%
Good	10	23%	4	15%	5	38%	1	6%
Fair	2	5%	2	8%	-	-	-	-

Note: Music for Life General Music and Play for Life participants were located in the Twin Cities, and Sing for Life participants were involved in the pilot classes offered via Internet.

^a Table draws on information provided from the Participant Post Survey. Participant answered the question “Excellent,” “Good,” “Fair,” and “Poor.”

4. MacPhail participants describe what they accomplished in Music for Life (all participants)

What did you accomplish by participating in this class? ^a	Total (n=54)		Music for Life General Music (n=24)		Play for Life (n=13)		Sing for Life (n=17)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I made new friends/socialized with others	38	73%	20	83%	2	15%	17	100%
I learned more about music.	35	67%	17	71%	6	46%	12	71%
I expressed myself in a creative way.	30	58%	13	54%	4	31%	13	77%
I was physically/mentally active.	32	62%	15	63%	4	31%	13	77%
I increased my musical skills.	29	56%	10	42%	4	31%	15	88%
I improved my mood.	28	54%	12	50%	4	31%	13	77%
Other	4	8%	2	8%	1	8%	1	6%
None checked	1	2%	-	-	2	15%	-	-

Notes: Table draws on information from the Participant Post Survey.

Music for Life General Music and Play for Life participants were located in the Twin Cities, and Sing for Life participants were involved in the pilot classes offered via Internet.

^a Participants were allowed to select multiple responses.

5. Most satisfying aspects of participation

What are the most satisfying aspects of participation in Music for Life? ^a	Total (n=39)		Music for Life General Music (n=26)		Play for Life (n=13)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Singing or playing familiar songs	24	62%	19	73%	5	38%
Singing or learning with other people	17	44%	15	58%	2	15%
Getting to know new people	15	38%	14	54%	1	8%
Learning new music	15	38%	12	46%	3	23%
Learning musical techniques	9	23%	5	19%	2	15%
Performing	9	23%	7	27%	2	15%
Physical warm-ups	4	10%	4	15%	-	-
Other	2	5%	2	8%	-	-
Expanding my social activities	1	3%	-	-	1	8%
None checked	1	3%	-	-	1	8%

Note: Table draws on information from the Participant Post Survey.

^aParticipants were allowed to select multiple responses.

6. Participants' experiences with instruments – Play for Life

Have you played an instrument before?	Total (n=25)	
	N	%
Yes	12	48%
No	13	52%

Note: Table draws on information from the Music Preference Form and Play for Life™ Drumming Pre-Program Survey.

7. Confidence with music

How do you rate your confidence level with music?	Total (n=32)		Sing for Life (n=17)		Play for Life (n=15)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Very confident	13	41%	6	35%	7	47%
Slightly confident	10	31%	6	35%	4	27%
Slightly apprehensive	4	13%	4	24%	-	-
Apprehensive	5	16%	1	6%	4	27%

Note: The “slightly apprehensive” option was not available on the form used for Play for Life™ participants.

8. Musical genres most enjoyed by participants – Play for Life

What genres of music do you most enjoy? ^a	Total (n=25)	
	N	%
Country Western	17	68%
Big Band/Swing	10	40%
Spiritual/Religious	10	40%
Rock and Roll	8	32%
Easy Listening	8	32%
Blues	6	24%
Classical	6	24%
Jazz	6	24%
Folk	4	16%
Other	4	16%
Cultural/Ethnic	-	-

Note: Table draws on information from the Music Preference Form and Play for Life™ Drumming Pre-Program Survey.

^a Participants were allowed to select multiple responses.

9. What participants hope to accomplish with participation

What are you hoping to accomplish by participating in the drumming class? ^a	Total (n=15)	
	N	%
To learn more about music	10	67%
To express myself in a creative way	6	40%
To socialize with others	5	33%
To keep physically/mentally active	5	33%
To improve my mood	5	33%
To increase my musical skills	4	27%
Don't know	1	7%

Note: Table draws on information from the Play for Life™ Drumming Pre-Program Survey.

^a Participants were allowed to select multiple responses.

10. What participants hope to do in class

What do you hope to do during the class? ^a	Total (n=15)	
	N	%
Play as a group	13	87%
Learn new drumming techniques	4	27%
Play individually	2	13%
Experience new instruments	2	13%
Learn about different cultures and styles of drumming	1	7%
Perform a piece as a group	1	7%
Don't know	1	7%

Note: Table draws on information from the Play for Life™ Drumming Pre-Program Survey.

^a Participants were allowed to select multiple responses.

11. Impact on physical health

How did Music for Life impact how you feel physically? ^a	Total (n=38)		Music for Life General Music (n=25)		Play for Life (n=13)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
A lot better	19	50%	14	56%	5	38%
A little better	15	39%	8	32%	7	54%
No difference	4	11%	3	12%	1	8%

Note: Table draws on information from the Participant Post Survey.

^a Table draws on information provided from the Participant Post Survey. Participant answered the question “I feel a lot better physically during or right after class,” “I feel a little better physically during or right after class,” “I haven’t noticed any difference,” “I feel a little worse physically during or right after class,” and “I feel a lot worse physically during or right after class.”

12. Impact on emotional health

How did Music for Life impact how happy you feel? ^a	Total (n=36)		Music for Life General Music (n=23)		Play for Life (n=13)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
A lot happier	16	44%	12	52%	4	31%
A little happier	16	44%	10	44%	6	46%
No difference	4	11%	1	4%	3	23%

Note: Table draws on information from the Participant Post Survey.

^a Table draws on information provided from the Participant Post Survey. Participant answered the question “I feel a lot happier during or right after class,” “I feel a little happier during or right after class,” “I haven’t noticed any difference,” “I feel a little less happy during or right after class,” and “I feel a lot less happy during or right after class.”

13. Physical health (Thief River Falls participants)

How do you rate your physical health?	Total (n=17)	
	N	%
Excellent	5	29%
Good	9	53%
Fair	3	18%

Note: Table draws on information from the Participant Post Survey – 2014 version. This question does not appear on the 2015 Participant Post Survey.

14. Emotional health (Thief River Falls participants)

How do you rate your mood?	Total (n=16)	
	N	%
Excellent	9	56%
Good	7	44%
Fair	-	-

Note: Table draws on information from the Participant Post Survey – 2014 version. This question does not appear on the 2015 Participant Post Survey.

15. External socialization of participants

How many times a week do you participate in social activities with friends, including Music for Life classes?	Total (n=53)		Music for Life General Music (n=25)		Play for Life (n=12)		Sing for Life (n=16)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
More than 10 times	1	2%	1	2%	-	-	-	-
7-10 times	11	21%	6	20%	3	25%	2	13%
3-6 times	30	57%	12	54%	8	67%	10	63%
2 times or less	11	21%	6	24%	1	8%	4	25%

Notes: Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding
 Table draws on information from the Participant Post Survey.