

# The impact of a group drumming intervention on students' concentration, self-confidence and mental wellbeing.



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## Context:

With cuts in funding for instrumental lessons, emphasis on EBacc subjects and schools recovering from the covid-19 pandemic, what value is there in making music as a group? Preliminary research in a mainstream secondary school found students who regularly played music with others to self report a higher level of concentration, self-confidence and mental wellbeing than those who do not. Is it possible to initiate a cost-effective group music intervention and assess whether this has a positive impact on students currently not engaged with music?

## Key Points from the Literature:

There are a number of previous studies showing that group drumming can be beneficial. Only a small number of these focus on school aged children and most have been conducted outside of the UK. There has been focus on specific groups such as 'at risk' youth or mental health patients. However, there do not seem to be many studies looking more generally at the educational benefits of group music making and whether this could be used holistically to the benefit of students who do not currently participate in music. Previous targeted studies found improved concentration, self-confidence and mental wellbeing in participants. This is surely something worth trying to replicate in a mainstream school.

## Research Questions:

- Does group drumming positively impact students' concentration in their music sessions and beyond?
- To what extent does group drumming affect the self-confidence of students?
- To what extent can a positive impact on mental wellbeing be shown following regular weekly drumming sessions?

## Research Design:

This research involved 33 participants. 19 of these took part in a weekly drumming intervention and were selected as they currently do not have instrumental lessons or participate in extracurricular music. The remaining 14 acted as the control group, these all already learnt a musical instrument and participated in at least one extracurricular activity per week. Various data were collected using a mixed methods research design. An initial baseline questionnaire showed any difference between the two groups before the intervention started. During the intervention observers watched three sessions at different stages. The drummers worked in two small groups to learn hand drumming skills involving several pieces, warm-ups and call and response patterns. Following the intervention all participants repeated the questionnaire and the drummers were interviewed in focus groups.

### Week 1

Questionnaire answered by all participants.  
 Observation 1.  
 First drumming session.

### Week 6

Observation 2 conducted during drumming session 6.

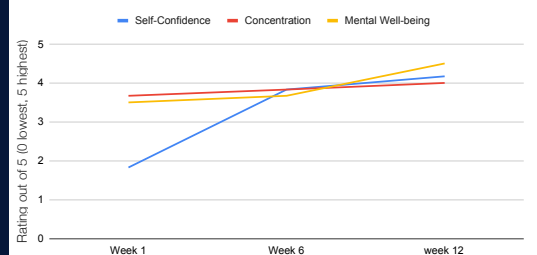
### Week 11

Observation 3 conducted during drumming session 11.

### Week 12

Questionnaire answered by all participants.  
 Focus group interviews with drummers.

A graph showing mean average for teacher observations during the course of the intervention.



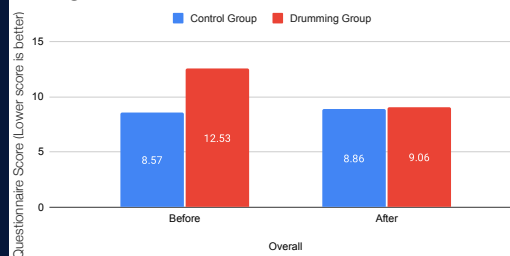
"I would recommend it especially if you get nervous about things because you can... just focus on something that isn't that and just bash it out on the drums"

"You have to concentrate on everyone at once. It does help... outside of school too since you're able to concentrate on more than one thing"

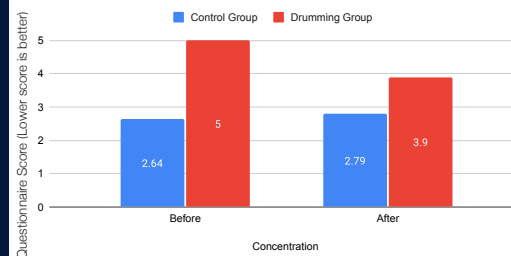
"It's very fun and you learn something new while it's really fun"

**Drums for Schools**

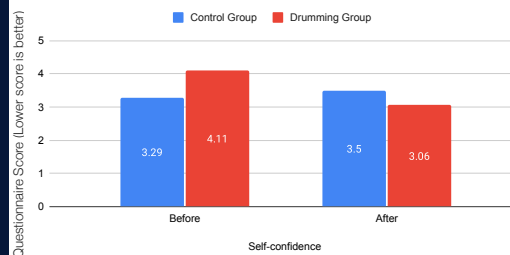
A graph to show results of the student questionnaire - a mean average of all overall scores.



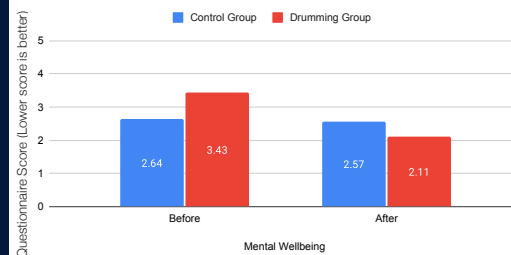
A graph to show the results of the student questionnaire - a mean average of scores for concentration.



A graph to show the results of the student questionnaire - a mean average of scores for self-confidence.



A graph to show the results of the student questionnaire - a mean average of scores for mental wellbeing.



## Discussions and Limitations:

- Music department budget could not afford the drums (these were loaned by Drums for Schools)
- Number of participants was limited as only 15 drums could be sourced.
- Recruitment for the control group was more difficult and was therefore a smaller sample.
- Although positive results can be seen, the study could have been more than 12 weeks long - all drumming participants wanted to continue!
- The drummers were self selecting, would the data be replicable with students who did not necessarily want to participate?

## Initial Results:

- According to the pre and post intervention questionnaires the drumming group has improved in all three areas.
- The drumming group showed an overall improvement bringing their questionnaire result almost in line with the control group following the intervention.
- In terms of self-confidence and mental wellbeing, the drumming group scored better than the control group following the intervention.
- Teachers observing recorded an average improvement in all areas by the end of the intervention.
- Students reported in focus groups that the intervention has had a positive impact on all three areas.
- The control group questionnaire data remained largely consistent, positive change was only observable in the drumming group.

## Literature:

Barrett, J., Webster, P. (2014) *The Musical Experience: Rethinking Music Teaching and Learning*. Oxford Academic. New York.

Faulkner S., Wood L., Ivery P., Donovan R. (2012) It is not just music and rhythm...Evaluation of a drumming-based intervention to improve the social wellbeing of alienated youth. *Children Australia*.

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Slattery, B. (2018) *In The Groove: A Case Study into Drumming and Student Engagement*. Melbourne Graduate School of Education. The University of Melbourne.

Wood L., Ivery P., Donovan R., Lambin E. (2013) 'To the beat of a different drum': improving the social and mental wellbeing of at-risk young people through drumming. *Journal of Public Mental Health*.