

Comparing Inclusivity Capability between Piano and Voice Lessons

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Table of Contents

3	8	14	27
CONTEXT	LITERATURE & ANALYSIS	ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	REFLECTIONS
5	11	16	28
KEY QUESTIONS	DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS	FINDINGS	REFERENCES
6	13	25	
METHODS	SURVEY QUESTIONS	FINDINGS ANALYSIS	

Context

Being a piano and voice teacher who is a part of a few minority communities (queer, Latino, ADHD, and plus-size), one area I prioritize is accessibility and inclusivity in my lessons.

When analyzing my own teaching habits, I noticed that I was employing my accessibility tools more often with my voice students than my piano students. However, there are parts of piano instruction that I utilized other accessibility methods. I became curious: can one instrument be more conducive to inclusive and accessible teaching than another?





Project Overview

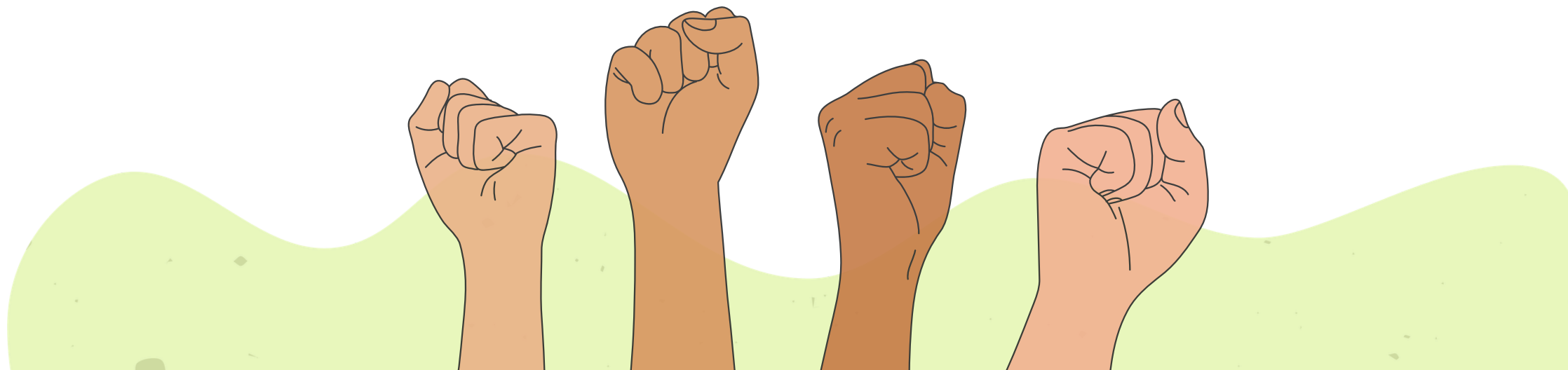
Key Research Questions



- 01 Can one instrument be more conducive to inclusive and accessible teaching than another?
- 02 Are there outside cultural influences that affect inclusivity in instrument instruction?
Genre? Teaching Methods? Generation?
- 03 How does one measure inclusiveness and accessibility in the private music studio?
Is inclusiveness a scale or a spectrum?

Methods

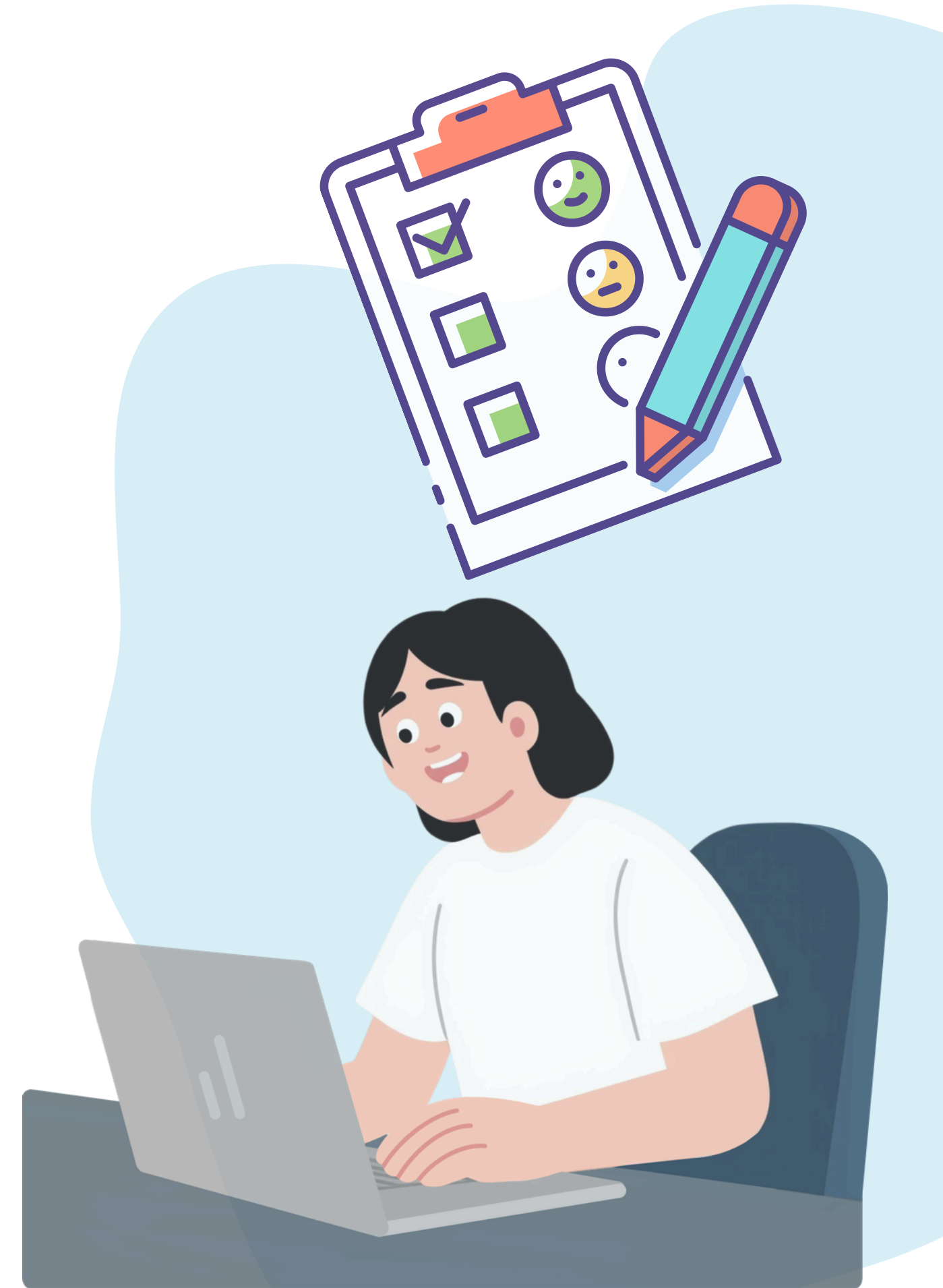
- One of the purposes of this study is to advocate for inclusionary and accessibility practices. Advocacy itself calls for attention to issues that may be neglected by mainstream consciousness (Jackson 2025).
- The **pragmatic** paradigm would be best suited for this study as it collects numerical data through a progressive lens that acknowledges the lived experiences of the participants (Capps 2023).
- For my research design, I followed the model of **action research**, a collaborative process that allows me to collect quantitative data and expanded responses (Person et al., 2008).



Methods

For the data collection process, I created qualifications for a **focus group** consisting of piano and voice students from my own studio who were ages 12+, who I felt were able to provide useful responses based on their maturity (Patten, 2016).

The students would answer a **semi-structured**, anonymous survey with **multiple-choice** questions and **open-ended questions**, with the chance to expand on their responses (Patten, 2016; Siedlecki, 2020).



Literature

- Due to the gap in the literature, I researched what resources were available for the instruments individually (Salvador & Sierzega, 2025; Bond, 2021).
- The only comparison of inclusivity efforts made was the difference in teaching methods and traditions (de Bruin, 2022; Woods, 2023).



Literature Analysis

Comparison of Styles

Traditional Western music training for beginners tends to emphasize the importance of perfect technique without alterations (Carey, G. 2010; Kajikawa, L. 2019).

Beginner piano instruction is closely tied to Western classical music instruction and traditions (Björkén-Nyberg, C., 2019; Holmgren, C. 2022).

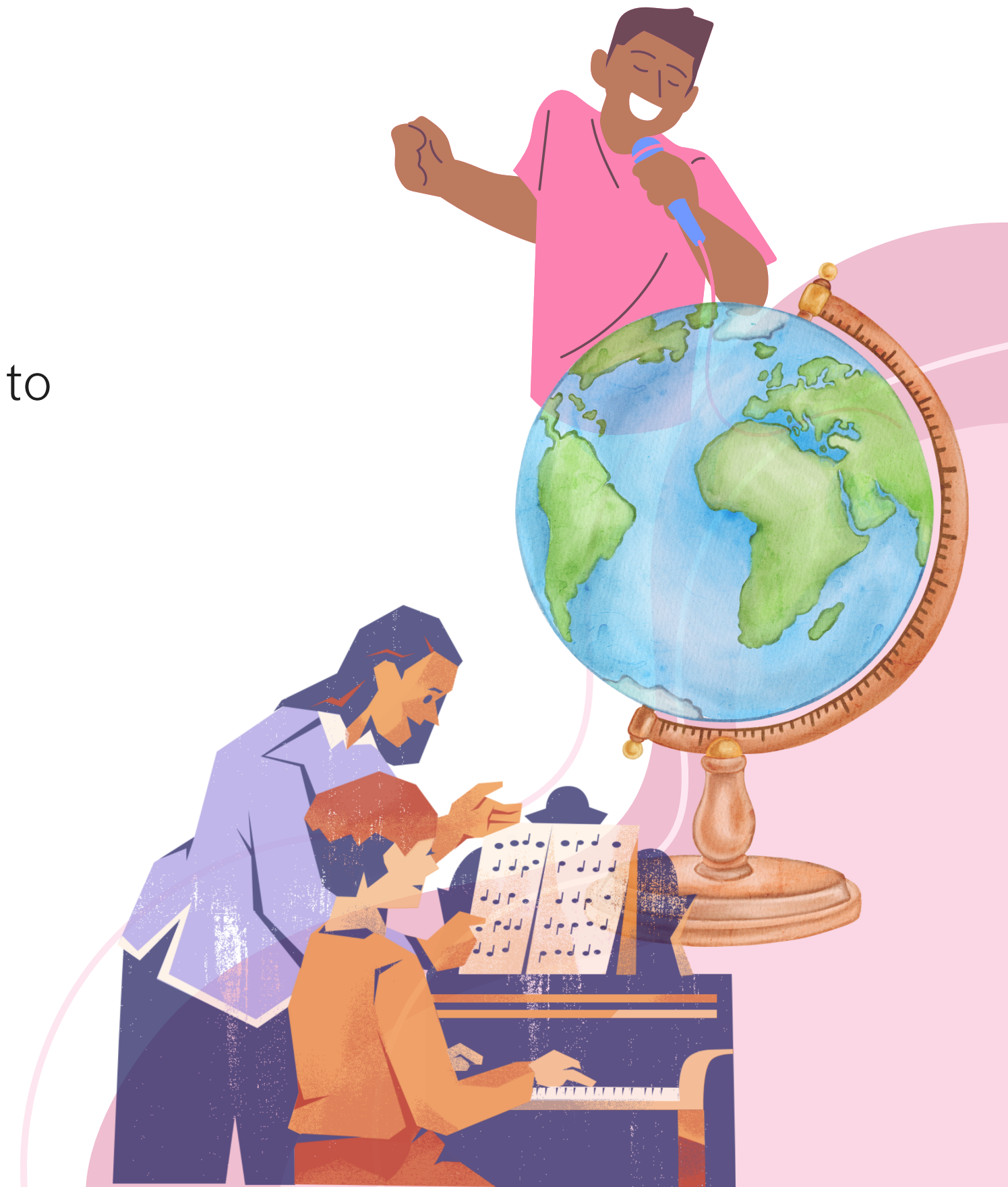
Contemporary styles of music training encourage individuality and pacing based upon the students' needs (Bernard, C., and Talbot, B.C. 2023; de Bruin, L.R. 2022).

Comparison of Instruments

Voice instruction incorporates Western classical techniques, with global influence from contemporary and traditional techniques (Ilari, B., Chen-Hafteck, L., & Crawford, L. 2013; Sandt, 2024).

Literature Analysis

I theorized that piano lessons would be less inclusive. Not due to their capability, but due to cultural influence from Western classical music teaching traditions and standards.



Data Collection & Analysis

Who?

Students 12+ from the studio of Andrew Gaxiola

What?

Students sharing their first-hand experience with inclusionary and accessibility practices within their lessons.

Where?

The lessons were at the Claremont Community School of Music, and the surveys were completed in their own home online

When?

The study took place over the course of two regularly scheduled lessons

Data Collection & Analysis

Why?

To obtain data to discover if one instrument allows for a more inclusive environment than another.

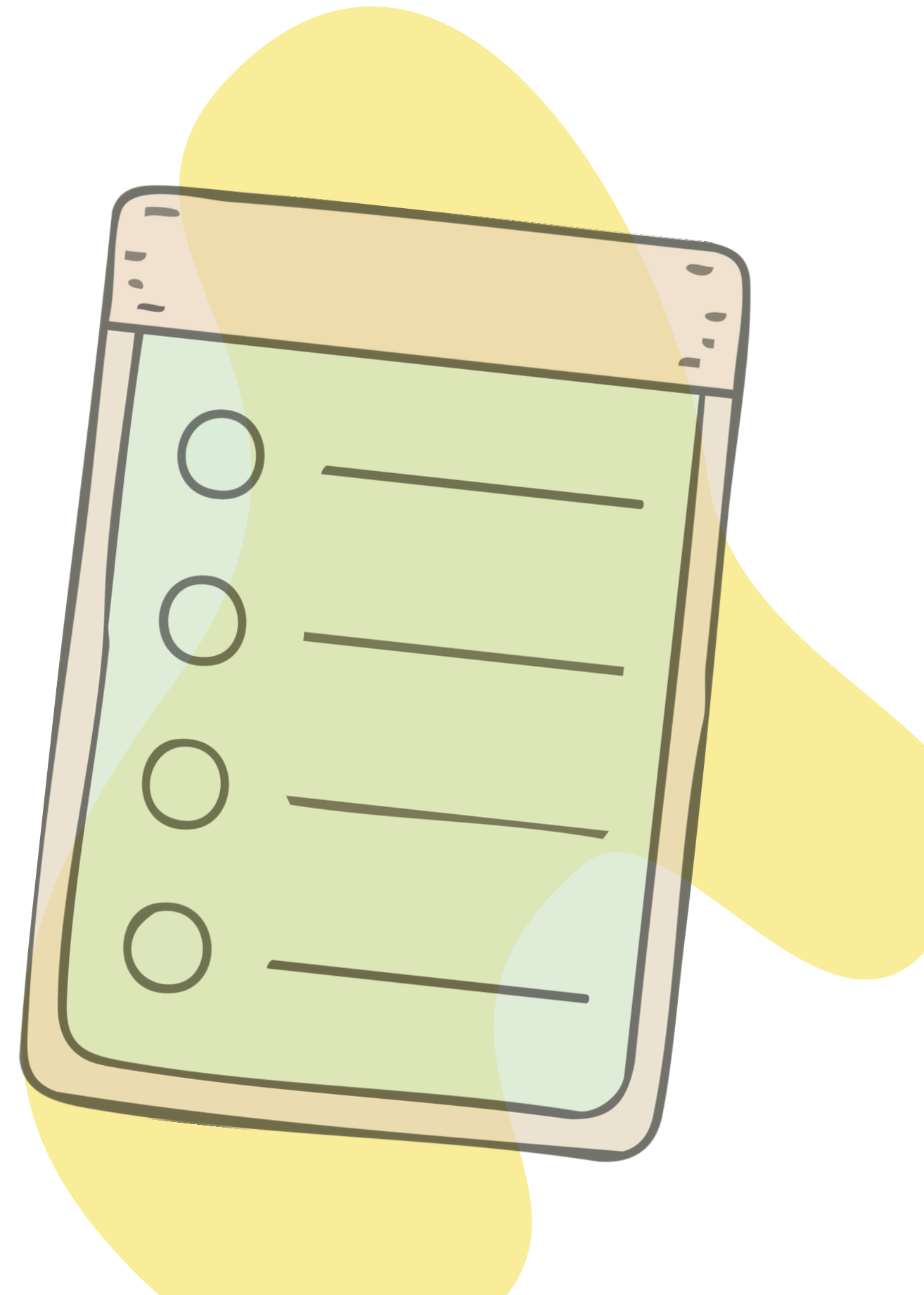
How?

Students had their usual lesson, and that evening, they filled out a survey detailing their experience.

Survey Questions

Multiple Choice and Open-Ended

- Type of lesson and length
- Emotional state before and after the lesson
- "During your most recent lesson, did you feel that you had a reasonable say in the direction of the lesson?"
- "Overall, do you feel that the repertoire (songs) chosen incorporates your needs and interests?"
- "Do you feel that the level of accessibility and inclusivity during your lessons is influenced by the instrument you are being taught?"





Ethical Considerations

Students participating are minors

- Informed consent was obtained from participants and their parents.
- The researcher has been Life Scanned in the United States by CCSM and other institutions.
- Students were assured assistance from guardians if the survey overwhelmed them.

Students' bias may interfere with responses

- Students have been informed that honest results are valuable to the research.



Ethical Considerations

Breach of Data Anonymity

- Physical consent forms were physically destroyed once uploaded to the double-protected drive.
- Students chose random numbers out of a bowl to use as their identification numbers.
- In the survey, students are encouraged to avoid details that would reveal their identity.
- Data was not observed until the entire survey process was completed.



Findings

- The data obtained from students provides insight, but also displays a positive attitude bias towards the instructor.

If you have any additional information that you believe would benefit the study, please share here without providing information that would reveal your identity.

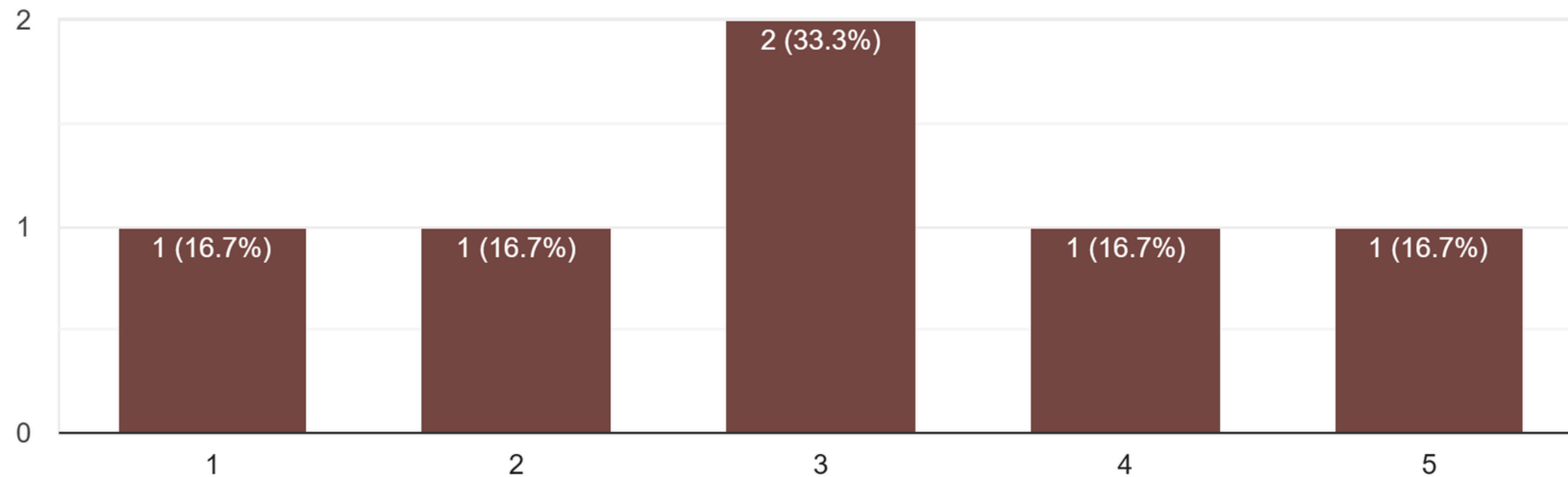
2 responses

Lesson cool, I like, very fun.

- Not all students completed the entire two-week process of data collection properly (two responses necessary).

Please enter your identification number:

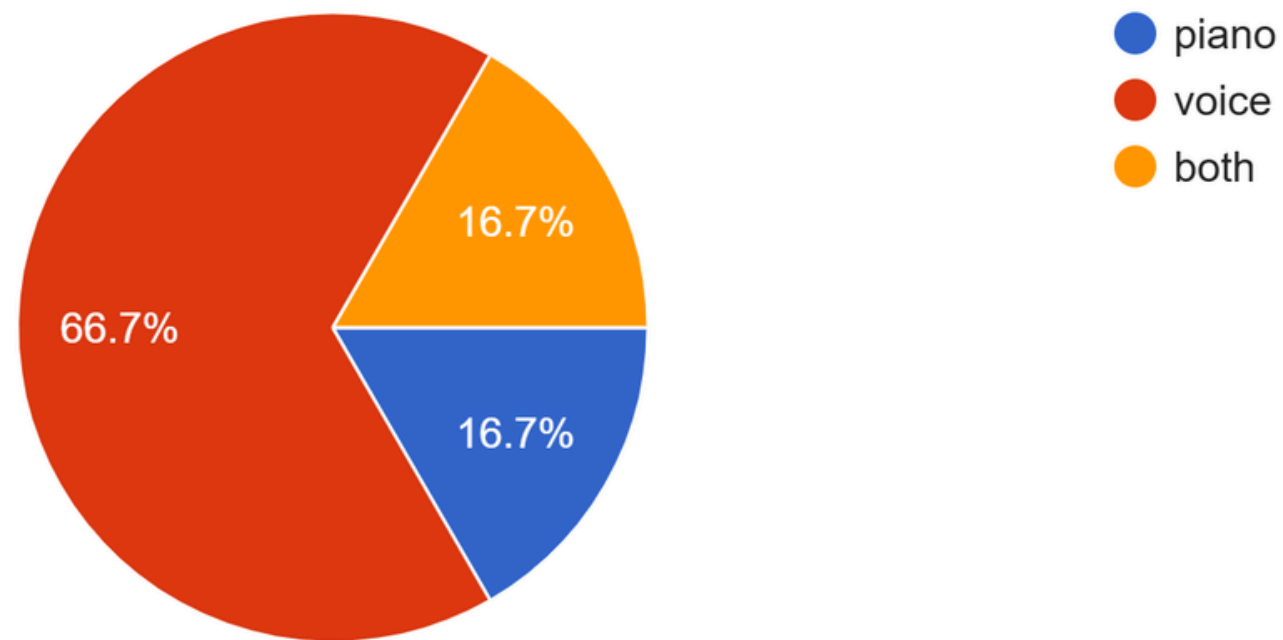
6 responses



- Although data was collected about the length and type of lesson, there was no correlation with the experience they had during our lesson or their opinion on which instrument is more inclusive.

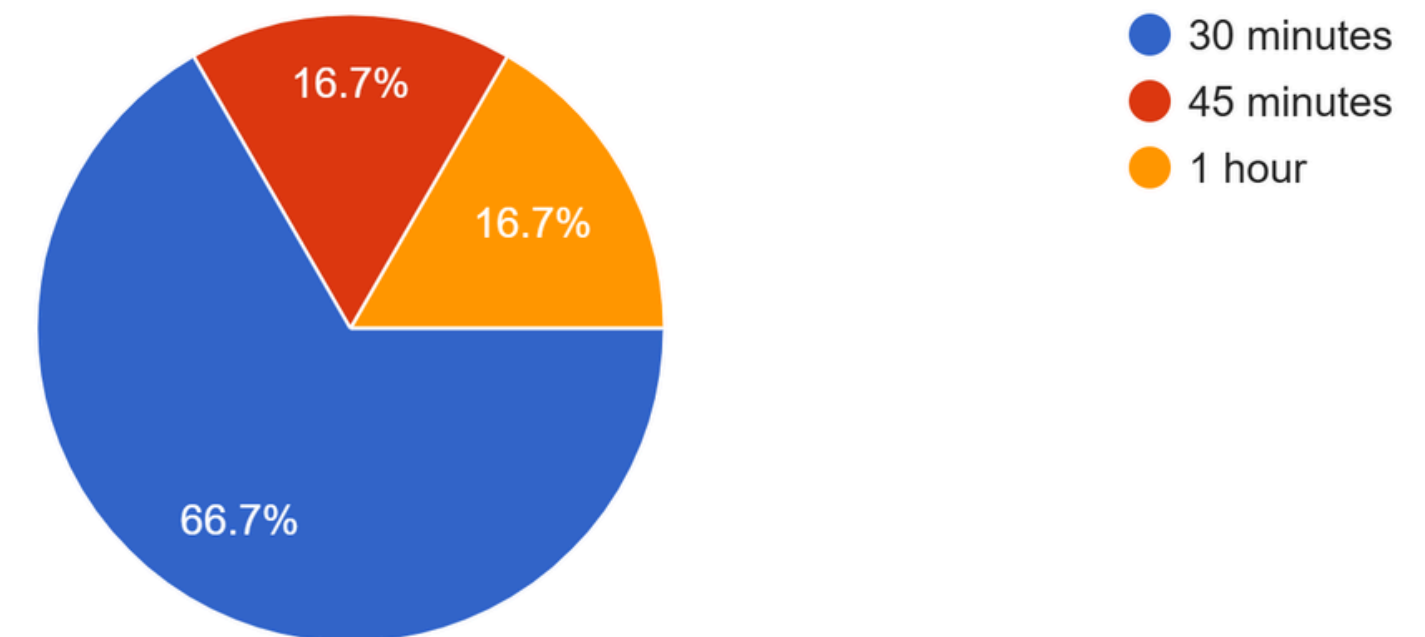
What type of lesson did you have most recently with Andrew Gaxiola?

6 responses



What was the length of your most recent lesson?

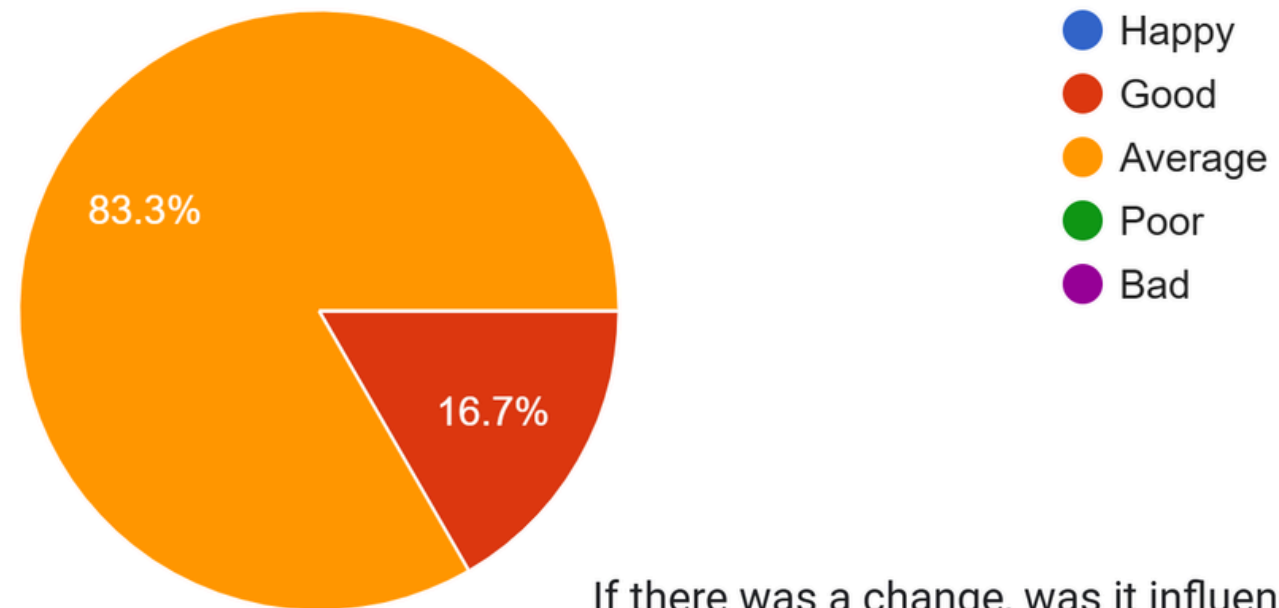
6 responses



- Before the lesson: 83.3% felt average. 16.7% felt good
- After the lesson:
- Was the change due to the lesson? 100% said yes

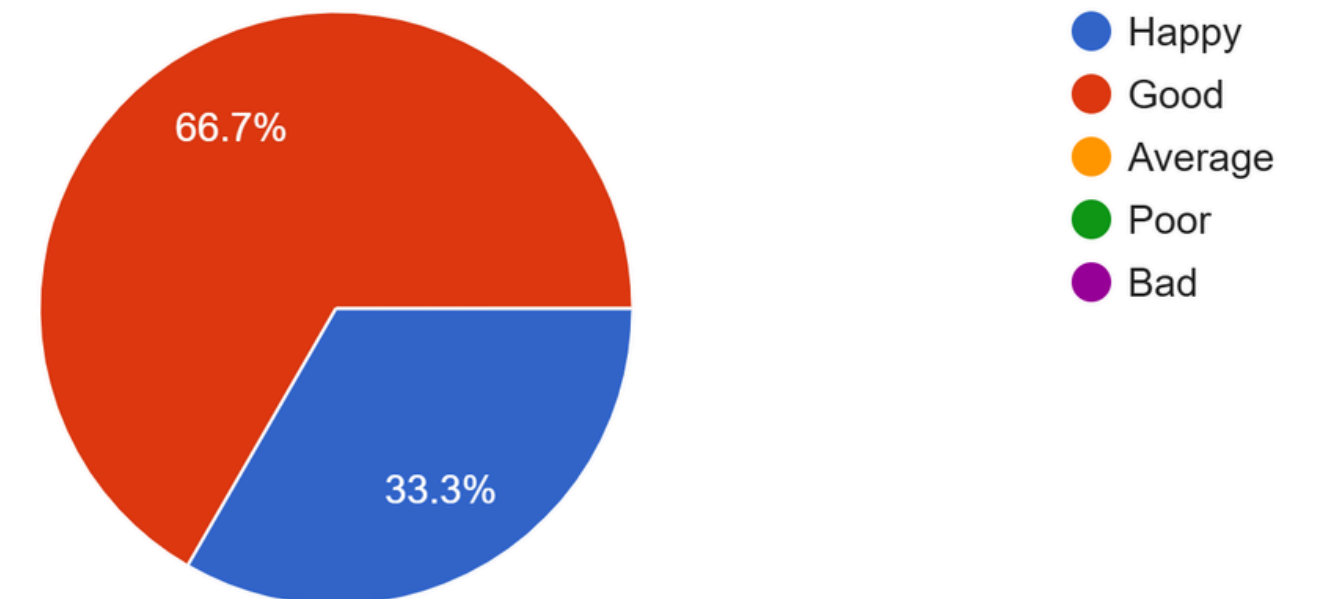
How were you feeling before your most recent lesson?

6 responses



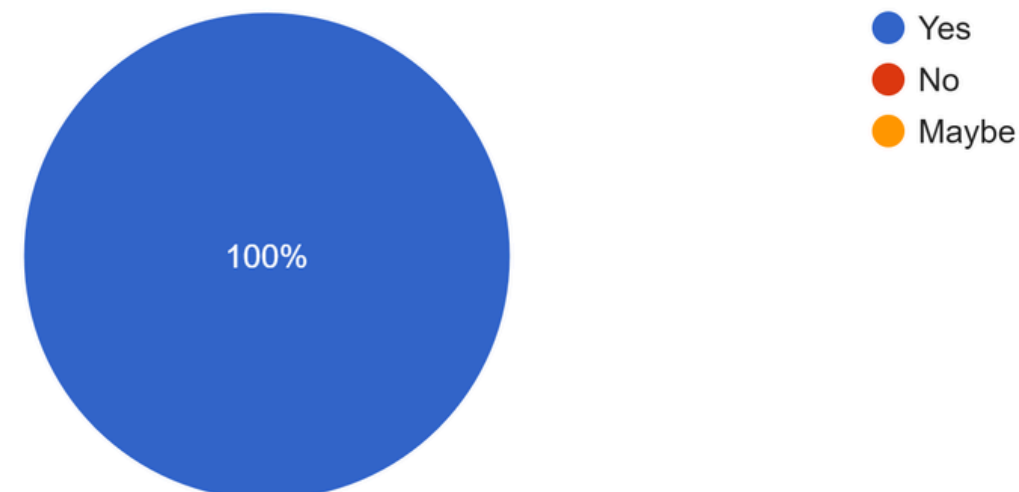
How did you feel after your most recent lesson?

6 responses



If there was a change, was it influenced by your lesson?

6 responses



- When the students provided context, 4 responded with experiences associated with inclusive and accessible initiatives

Without providing information that would reveal your identity, please explain your response to the previous question.

6 responses

● He always has a very positive attitude and is very helpful

● Lesson was good and fun.

Class is a good time and helps boost my mood after school.

I felt good about my progress that I have made with my voice.

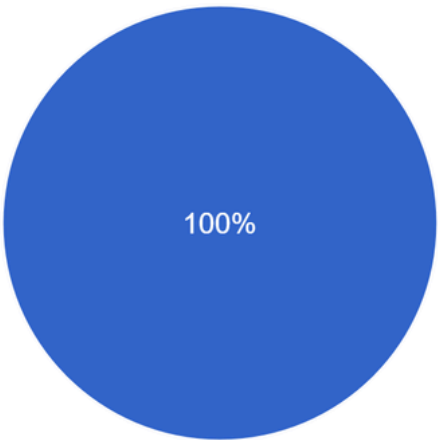
● My mood changed from a good mood to happy because when I was playing piano, Mr. Andrew said, "You have gotten better at playing this piece, good job." That made mr feel better about my abilities to play piano.

● We worked really well and I sounded good and that made me happy.

- The next set of questions was directly related to inclusivity efforts. Almost all of the responses were 100%

During your most recent lesson, did you feel that you had resonable say in the direction of the lesson?

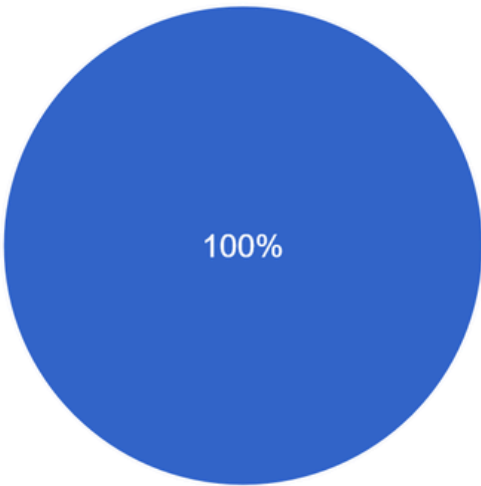
6 responses



- Yes
- Usually, but not today
- Occasionally, but not today
- No
- I am not sure

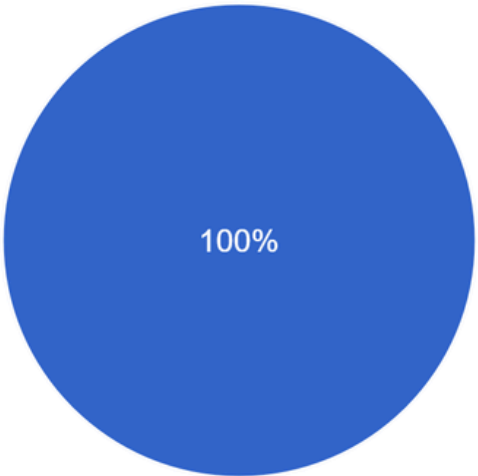
Overall, do you feel that your lessons make you feel included?

6 responses



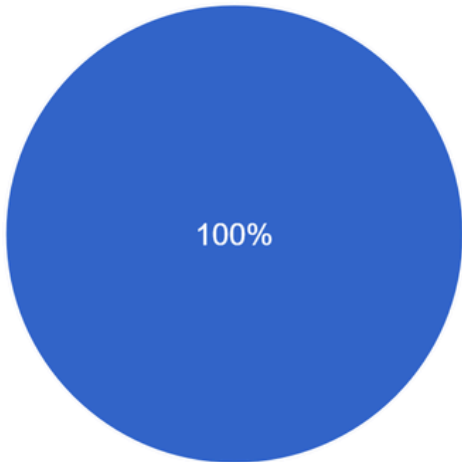
During your most recent lesson, did you feel included?

6 responses



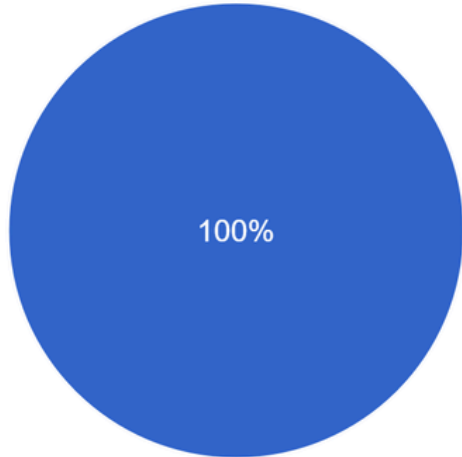
During your most recent lesson, did you feel welcomed?

6 responses



Overall, do you feel that your lessons are made to be accessible?

6 responses

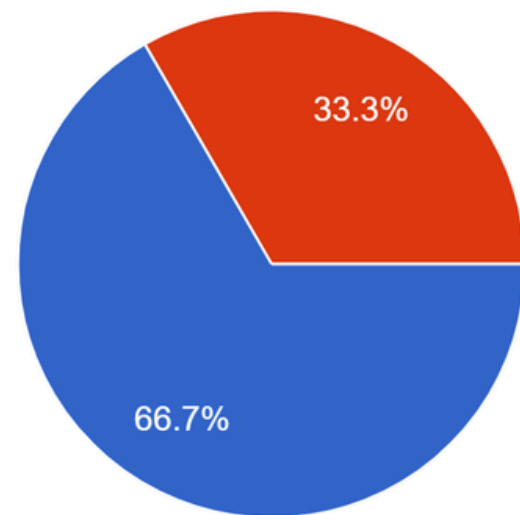


- Yes
- No
- Usually
- Occasionally
- I am not sure

- The only questions that were not 100% were when students felt that they did not need accommodation that day or they had a personal struggle.

During your most recent lesson, did you feel that the material or instruction was adapted to best suit your needs?

6 responses



- Yes
- Usually, but not today
- Occasionally, but not today
- No
- I am not sure

Without providing information that would reveal your identity, please explain your response to the previous question regarding adapting lessons.

6 responses

He make sures the songs will work for me while still being a challenge

Song was already in good version for me.

I feel like it was just how it needed to be as not to easy or hard.

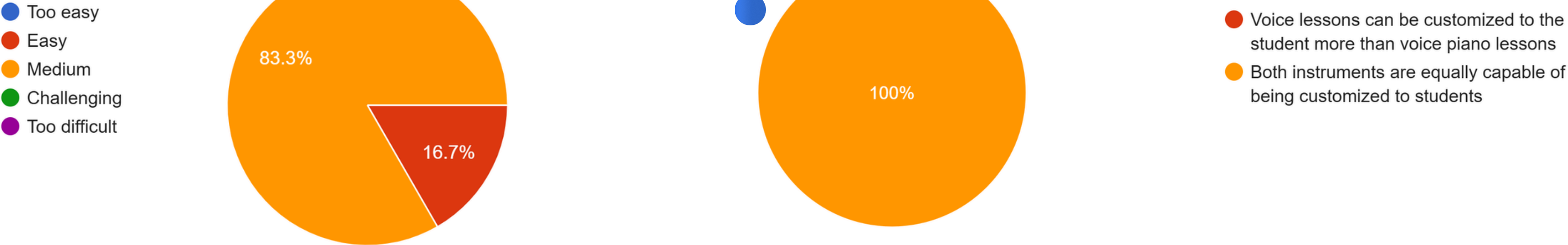
On days where my voice is more tired or less able to, he makes sure to not push or strain it.

I was having trouble doing a vocal warm-up where you vibrate your lips to make a sound. Mr. Andrew helped me learn how to do this movement patiently while making sure we had enough time to finish everything we needed to do.

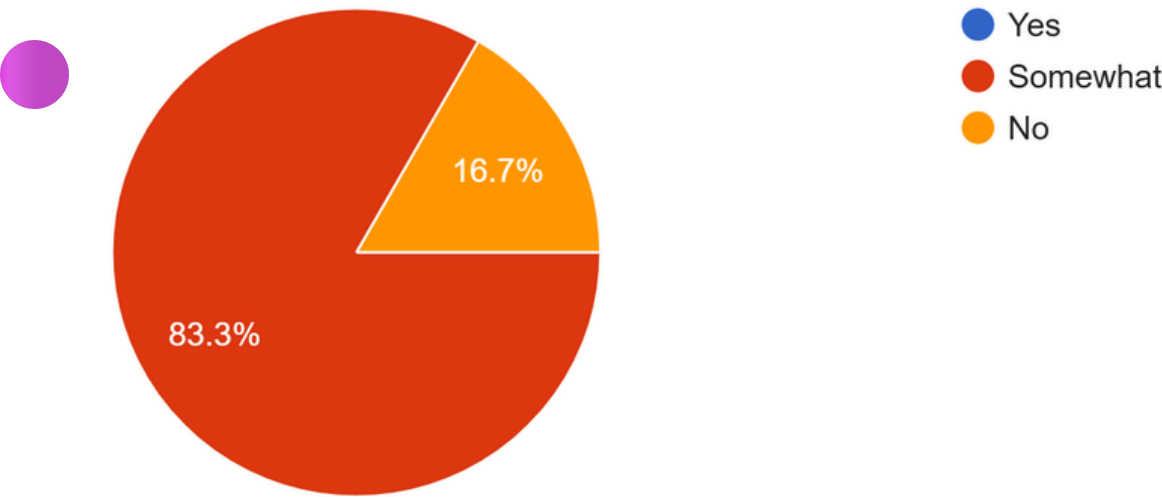
We didn't need to adapt anything today.

How difficult do you find your instrument to be? 6 responses

If you take both piano and voice, do you feel that... 1 response



Do you feel that the level of accessibility and inclusivity during your lessons is influenced by the instrument you are being taught? 6 responses



- Students were asked how difficult they found their instrument to see if they had a bias.
- Students who took piano and voice agreed that both instruments are capable of being inclusive.
- 83.3% believed there is some kind of influence based on the type of instrument. The only person to say “no” was the piano and voice student.

Findings Analysis



- Overall, students from both my piano and voice studios found our lessons to be appropriately accommodating and inclusive.
- Students of one instrument believed that one instrument is more inclusive than the other. The student who took piano and voice said both instruments were equally capable of accessibility.
- There were not enough students or variety to have a fully useful and credible response poll. A longer survey period and completed responses would help create a complete data poll.

Findings Analysis

- Instrument instruction inclusiveness is not solely based on the cultural influence the instrument has.
- Possibly, the teacher's relationship with instructional methods and traditions, the genre the student is being taught, the teacher's educational journey, and the teacher's view on accommodations can all influence how well an inclusive environment is established in the private music studio.
- From here, it would be beneficial to combine the resources I have collected on motivation techniques with what I have found thus far with accommodation in the private music studio. I foresee an overlap regarding the teacher's own relationship with education and the mental health nuances that are attached to that.



Reflection

01

Timing

- Ethics Committee approval
- CCSM approval
- Emails and waiting for responses
- Expressing due dates

02

Communication

- Clearer instructions to avoid incomplete surveys
- More blunt survey question
- Guidance on appropriate responses

03

Participant Poll

- Gather a larger number of participants through the music school
- Provide a brief education on inclusive practices
- Provide resources to educate themselves

04

Misc.

- Avoid having my own students be a part of this study
- change paradigm to encourage a new question rather than an answer. I feel this is one section of a bigger picture.



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Thank you!