

The Benefits of Arts Education

by

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Intro

Music in itself is a human means of communication accomplishment just like language. It's part of our history and partially defines all of us as expressive individuals and as a species. Music education is a field of study that correlates the teaching and learning of music. Learning in itself is broken down into mainly three domains. The psychomotor domain includes physical movement, coordination, a use of motor-skills. The cognitive domain represents our ability to think and process information. The affective domain involves our feelings, emotions and attitude. Music education touches all aspects of learning and stimulates each domain effectively. The correlation between the use of domains through the learning and expression of music allows a student to gain a better understanding and deeper appreciation for music itself. Music is typically used as a form of self expression or as a tool of therapeutic values contributing to stress relief. However, studies have shown that the benefits of music education go far beyond what we typically understand them to be. Music has been known to shape and sharpen the brain over time in ways that improve academic and other competencies while positively impacting our social behaviors and personal well being improbability and performance of those who study it.

It is no secret that music programs are often among those notorious for being cut from school budgets around the country. This unfortunate statement becomes reality for countless schools that are often tied to the low priority status of music, arts and other "non-essential" subjects when the school's budget cycle comes around. Music programs are commonly at the top of the list when a school district is looking to relieve their "financial burden" before anything

else, this is a problem. When a music program is cut it is extremely unlikely to be restored. As a result, we deprive the next generation of youth from creative potential that the combination of music and education would allow them to experience..

Applying music as a core subject in all education systems throughout the country is essential in order to propel current and future generations forward in an academic setting. Recognizing the variables that contribute to the lack of societal appreciation for the diverse benefits of music education is integral to ensuring its support in a wide range of institutional settings. The research that follows aims to shed light on the different types of benefits arts education programs give to students who study the subject. As part of the study, I developed a survey taken by high school students and others from different parts of New York to gather information and reveal some crucial correlations. In conclusion, I strongly recommend all schools across the country develop a solid arts education program to ensure students will have the opportunity to learn and grow through the arts.

THE ABC's of MUSIC EDUCATION

The "ABCs of Arts Learning " is an article written by Sandra R. Ruppert, published by the National Assembly of State Arts back in 2006. The article compiled from a diverse collection of studies that examine how arts learning impacts educational achievement and social development of children and youth. The use of musical education in schools shows significant benefits for students. Exposing kids to music as an educational subject and tool from a young age will help children build crucial skills they will utilize in everyday life. The study summarizes the

findings from five major art form areas of study: dance, drama, visual arts, music and multi-arts. The findings from these studies present critical evidence advocating the importance of arts education in a schools curriculum. In particular, The use of music education in an academic setting provides substantial improvement in the “ABC's” of learning. The proof of these benefits are seen directly from standardized test score improvements.

The “A” stands for academic, this represents the improvement we see in a student's reading, language and math skills as they study some type of arts education opposed to those who don't. The “B” stands for basic, this represents our social skills, our overall ability to think and one’s motivation to learn. Finally the “C” stands for comprehensive, this represents a child’s positive school environment as a direct result of applying art in a school’s curriculum. “Thinking skills (often referred to as cognitive skills) is a broad term that refers to the operation of various thought processes. Reasoning ability, intuition, perception, imagination, intentiveness, creativity, problem-solving skills and expression are among the thought processes associated with the study of the arts.”(Ruppert 7).

Arts learning contributes to the development of these essential cognitive skills. Proof of this can be seen in a study consisting of 162 children aged 9-10 years old. These children were taught to look closely at works of art and reason about what they saw. The results showed the children's ability to draw inferences about artwork applied reasoning towards images in science. This concludes that in both cases, the critical skills of looking closely improves the reasoning ability towards what is seen. “Certain types of music instruction help develop the capacity of spatial temporal reasoning, which is integral to the acquisition of important mathematical skills.

Spatial temporal reasoning refers to the ability to understand the relationship of ideas of objects in space and time.” (Ruppert 12). In addition an analysis was conducted of multiple studies that showed that students who took music classes in high school scored higher on the math section of their SATs. The reasoning behind this is that musical training in rhythm emphasis proportion, patterns and ratios expressed as mathematical relations.

Existing Literature Evidencing The Benefits of Music Education

Various studies have been conducted over the years to bring forth science based evidence regarding the benefits of music education. One study published in American Psychological Association (June 2006, Vol. 37, No. 6, Page 13) as well as Journal of Educational Psychology (Vol. 98, No. 2) suggests that young children who take music lessons show higher IQ levels. The study found that 6 year old children with at least one year of music lessons had a higher IQ compared to those who didn't take any lessons at all. Researcher E. Glenn Schellenberg hypothesized that multiple years of music study could enhance this effect. Schellenberg subsequently surveyed college students about their music education backgrounds, and discovered that those who had at least six years of music training (extending back to their K-12 music education) had IQs greater than those of people who didn't have music backgrounds. I think the result of this study proves the importance of music education programs for all schools.

Another study National Institutes of Health Magnetic Resonance (MRI) Study of Normal Brain Development, January 2015 Study analysis published on News Everyday reveals some positive psychological impact of learning music. The study consisted of 232 brain scans on

children and young adults aged six through eighteen years old who study music. “According to University of Vermont psychiatry professor James Hudziak, the brain scans revealed that the more a child was trained on a specific instrument, the better the child’s emotional outlook, anxiety control, and attention to detail. One key factor noted was “cortical thickening” on certain areas of the brain’s of musicians.”(Roden 4). It was also noted that musicians who study music are training their brains just as a bodybuilder trains with weights to gain muscle. To receive any kind of emotional growth and stability from something as harmless and beneficial as music education just further proves my point on the importance of integrating this into our curriculum for all schools nationwide.

Field Research: Benefits of Music Education on Academic Achievement and Motivation In Students

To further my knowledge in this area, I created and conducted a survey consisting of questions designed to measure and evaluate the benefits of music education on academic achievement and school/career motivation. Over 150 college and high school students participated in my survey from various regions of New York State with various arts education backgrounds. The majority of the survey participants were from my hometown school district from which I graduated, Peekskill High School. The survey consisted of 16 questions and was created on the google forms platform. The survey opened on April 10, 2020 and closed May 11th of 2020.

The survey covered the following topic areas:

1. **Age of survey taker:** The first part of my survey asked participants to reveal their age. About 90 students revealed their age to be within 14-18 years of age, identifying them as high school students. 190 Students participated in this survey in total. The remaining 100 individuals did not identify if they were college or high school level students.
2. **Arts participation in school:** It was found that 104 of the participants were involved in a music education course such as concert band, chorus, or music tech.
3. **Arts participation outside of school (extracurricular):** The vast majority of students did not participate in arts education outside of school. However, (ab) students do study the arts via extracurricular programs.
4. **Family arts background:** It was found that 81 survey participants said their parent/guardian had no musical background whatsoever. 82 participants described their parents/guardians as casual fans of music. 18 of the participants said their parents/guardians studied music in school. 8 participants said their parent/guardian is an active professional musician or composer. The remaining 10 participants preferred not to answer.
5. **School Motivation:** Majority of participants (108) answered the question “How much do you enjoy school” with the answer “A moderate amount”.
6. **Academic Standing:** For this question, participants were asked if they were currently on honor/high honor roll or the dean’s list. 119 students answered

“Yes”. 58 students answered “No”. The remaining 13 selected the “Prefer not to answer” option.

- 7. Peer on peer relationship:** Majority of overall participants (110) claimed they got along with their classmates “Very well”. Only 2 claimed “Not so well” and another 2 claimed “Not at all”.
- 8. Time management assessment:** Participants were asked to assess their time management skills. 82 Students rated their skills as “Average. 72 found that their time management skills “Could use improvement”. 31 claim their time management skills to be “Well managed “.
- 9. Opinion of current curriculum:** For this question, students were asked to rate their agreement with the statement “Most of what I am learning/doing in school will prepare me for a successful future?”. The response data for these questions showed an obvious difference in overall opinion. 38 students “Strongly agreed” to the statement, 65 students “Somewhat agreed”, 50 felt “Neutral”, 28 “Somewhat disagreed”, and 9 “Totally disagreed”. 2 students selected “Prefer not to answer”.
- 10. Advancing Education:** I asked participants if they have planned on, or are currently furthering their education after graduating high school. 162 participants responded “Yes”, 23 were “Unsure”, and 3 individuals selected “Prefer not to answer”. It was interesting to see that nobody selected “No” for this question.
- 11. Class attendance:** Participants were asked to approximate how many classes were missed in person or online since January of 2020. 49 students claimed they had perfect attendance with no days missed, 67 claimed to have missed 1-2 days,

36 claimed to have missed 3-4 days, and 38 claimed to have missed 5 or more days.

12. Academic Year: Participants were asked to reveal what academic year they were currently in. 36 are seniors, 48 juniors, 38 sophomores, 46 freshman and 17 were high school/college graduates. 5 individuals selected “Prefer not to answer”.

13. Gender: According to the responses, 120 participants identified as female, 66 identified as male, 3 identified as nonbinary and 4 individuals selected “Prefer not to answer”.

14. Ethnicity: 35 participants identified their ethnicity as African American, 7 identified as Asian, 102 identified as Hispanic/Latino, 56 identified as Caucasian, 2 identified as Native American, 18 identified as “Other” and 6 selected “Prefer not to answer”. Participants were able to select all that apply for their response.

15. Current zip code: Majority of the survey participants selected 10566 as their zip code. This is the zip code of Peekskill, New York.

Significant Survey Results

After receiving such a high rate of participation from students around New York, I was able to study my data to bring forward significant findings. The questions I chose to use in my survey were put together to observe if correlations (could be demonstrated). These correlations or cause and effect relationships would suggest the benefits of music education beyond the obvious factors commonly known.

#1. Students who participate in arts education are more likely to be academic achievers

It was found in my survey that out of 190 participants, 47 of them have no involvement in arts education whatsoever. Of the 47 students who are not involved in arts education, 27 have claimed they are on the honor roll/dean's list, roughly 59%. I randomly selected 70 students of the 190 who are currently involved in arts education and found that 48 students of the 70 claim they are on the honor roll/dean's list, roughly 69%. These findings suggest that students involved in arts education are more likely to have better academic standings, allowing them to be part of the honor roll/dean's list. The immediate 10% increase seen by those involved in arts education courses shouldn't be overlooked, especially since the studied group involved in arts education consists of an additional 23 students vs. the first group not involved in arts education courses.

#2. Students who participate in arts education are more likely to be socially well adjusted

Another significant finding I discovered from my survey has to do with how well students get along with their classmates. It was found that from the group of 47 students receiving no arts education, 35 of them claim they get along with their fellow classmates “very well” or better (Roughly 74%). Out of a randomly selected group of 58 students involved in some type of arts education, 53 of them claim to get along with their classmates “Very well” or better (Roughly 91%). These findings suggest that students who are involved in some type of arts education are more likely to have better relationships with their peers than those receiving no arts education. This 17% difference in addition to the fact that the group of students involved in some type of arts education consists of more students implies that there is in fact some type of positive psychological impact. This finding is just a small portion of the benefits of arts education in a k-12 setting.

#3. Students who participate in arts education are more likely to be organized and prompt.

The survey also I asked participants to self evaluate their time management skills. Of 30 students who rated their time management skills as “well managed”, 18 of those students who participated in arts education in or out of school while the remaining 12 were not. Initially this observation didn't appear to show substantial importance, but broken down as a percentage, the findings clearly show positive impact of arts involvement in this valuable soft skill. 60% of students involved in arts education claim their time management skills are “Well managed while

40% of students with no arts education background claim their time management skills are “Well managed”. That’s a strong 20% difference which goes on to suggest that students who take part in arts education have a better chance of learning to properly manage their time.

In addition to some significant findings from my survey, I found that the final question of my survey was relevant to the central focus of this research. The question asked participants the following, “How does music or music education make an impact on your life?”.

One respondent states “I plan to go to Berklee college to perfect the art of drums and percussion. I want to play drums for the rest of my life and take stages night after night and play arenas and stadiums. I want to someday make my parents proud of me.” This participant is a high school student who plans on attending college to pursue a career for his/her love of music. This shows true passion, dedication, and goal setting. This in itself is a great example of how influential arts education can be.

Another participant responded saying “Music is a way I cope with certain situations. When I feel stressed and need some time to myself to tune out the outside world and the conflicts that tag along, I tend to listen to music because it keeps me motivated and calm.” This individual uses music as a coping device, something we all need in some way shape or form to decompress from the hardships we endure throughout life. The positive physiological impacts music has on the brain allows it to be utilized as not only a coping device but as a form of motivation.

Conclusion

At the end of the day, it is hard to deny that arts education shows significant benefits to those who study it. It would be a tragedy for any student to be denied arts education because of societal misperceptions and school's misguided budget decisions. I created the survey with the intention of providing additional and current evidence of such benefits and my results greatly exceeded my expectations. The raw data as well as correlated findings strongly affirmed that arts education makes essential differences to the academic and personal lives of students. I saw a higher educational performance from students who were actively involved in arts education according to the data from the survey. I noted the attitudinal differences between students who took arts education courses vs. those who do not. I also was able to discern a trend in the factor of responsibility from those who took the survey and self-evaluated their time management skills. All the information I was able to acquire was from a brief survey taken by less than 200 students, yet the correlations tend to suggest that arts education has great benefits for those who chose to study it. Let this project and its results be among reasons to advocate for the inclusion of arts educational programming in educational settings.

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Addendum A

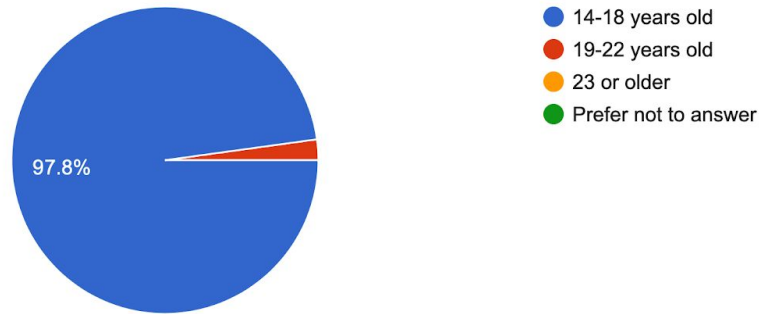
College Research Survey

Hello, Thank you for participating in this short survey (16 questions) which will assist in gathering data to be used for a college research thesis. No personal information will be shared as a result of this project. Thank you for your time!

(These questions are designed to be answered to the best of your knowledge, a "Prefer not to answer" option is listed for each question. As listed above, no personal Information will be disclosed while conducting this research.)

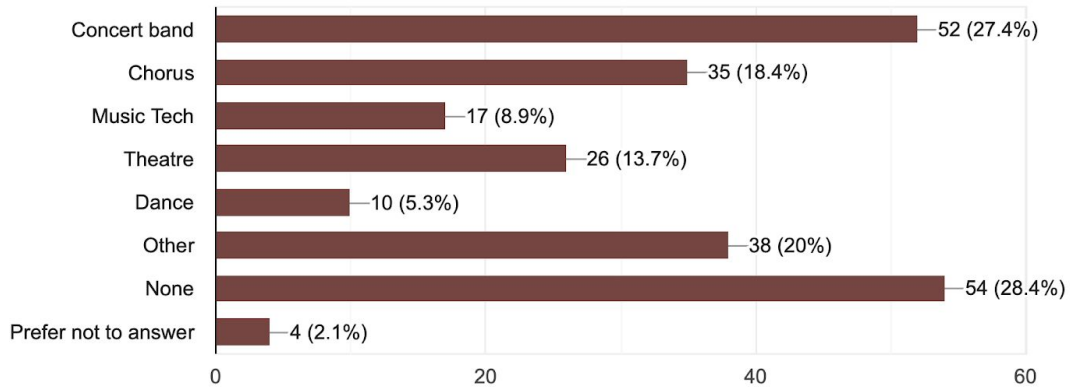
1. Age:

92 responses



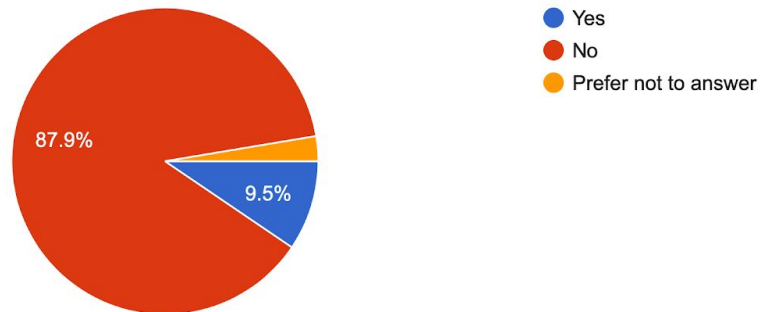
2. In which of these schools arts programs are you enrolled in? (Select all that apply)

190 responses



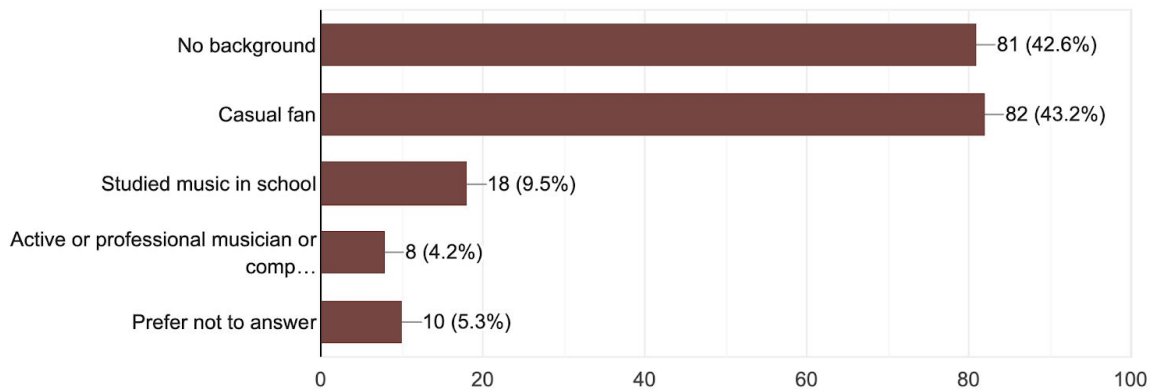
3. Do you take music lessons outside of school?

190 responses



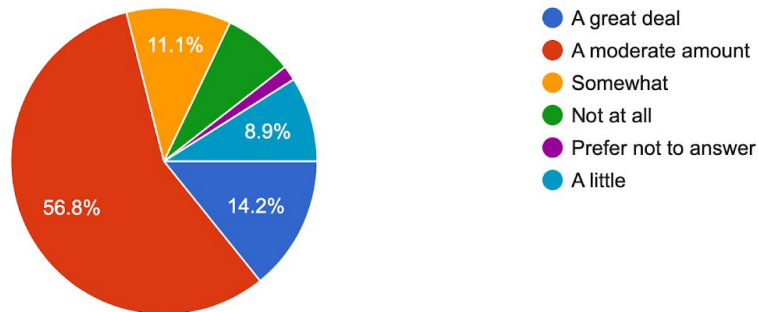
4. Which best describes your parent/guardians musical background?

190 responses



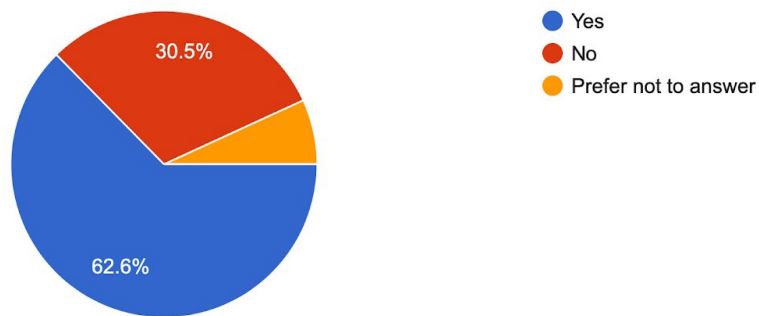
5. How much do you enjoy school?

190 responses



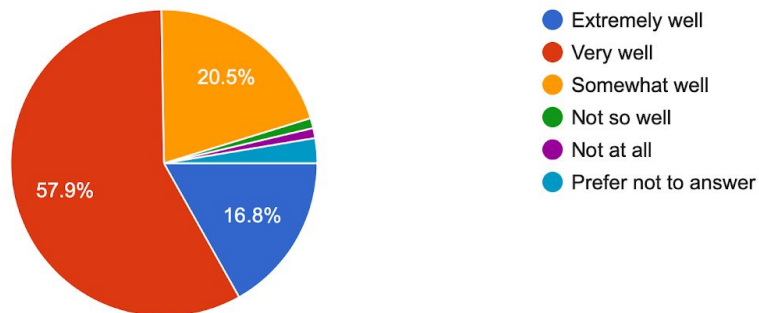
6. Are you currently on the honor or high honor roll/dean's list?

190 responses



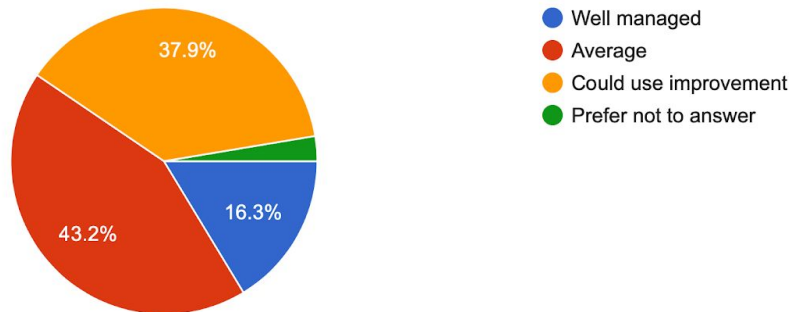
7. How well do you get along with fellow classmates?

190 responses



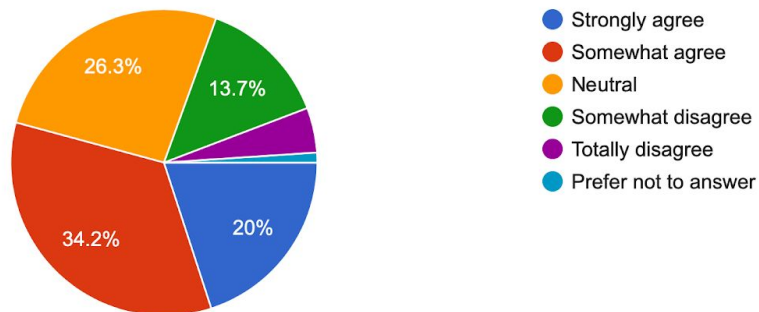
8. How would you describe your time management skills?

190 responses



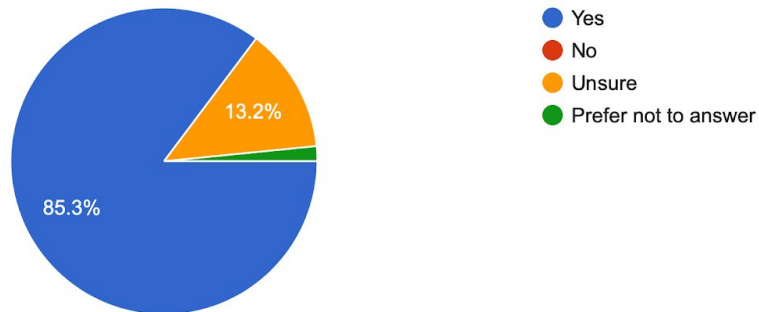
9. Rate your agreement of this statement: Most of what I am learning/doing in school will prepare me for a successful future?

190 responses



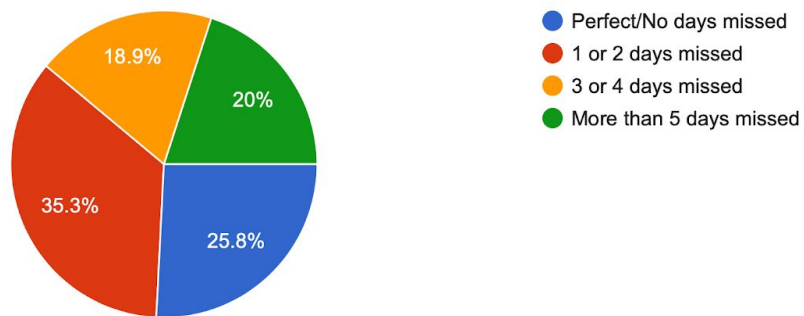
10. Do you plan on furthering your education after graduating high school?

190 responses



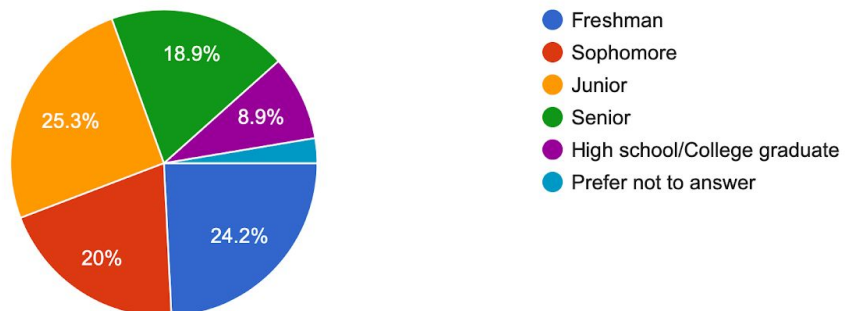
11. How many classes (in person or online) have you missed since January 2020?

190 responses



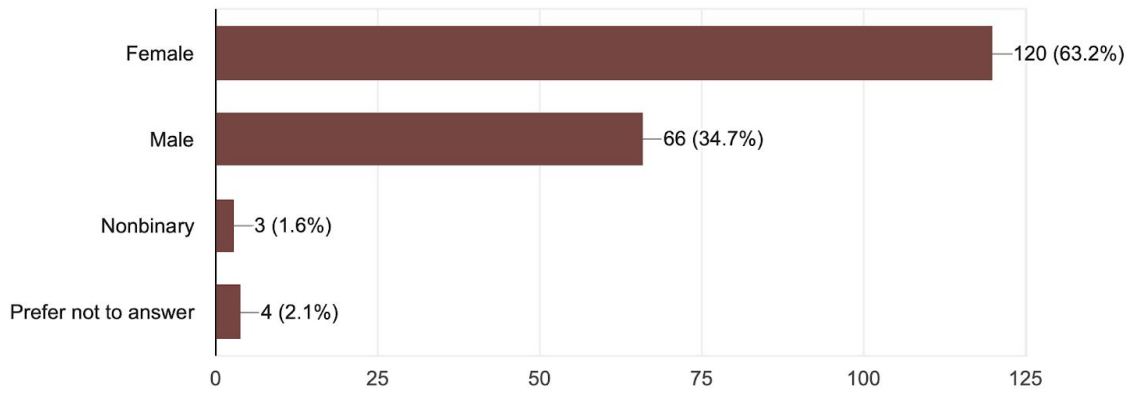
12. What year are you currently in?

190 responses



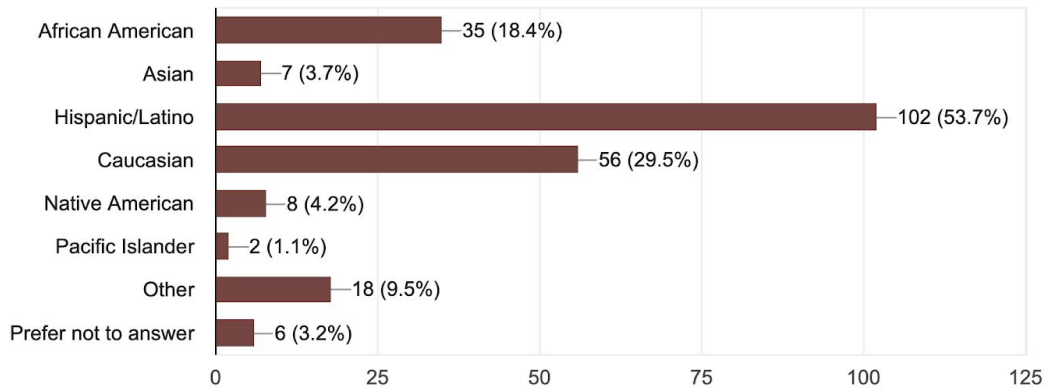
13. Gender:

190 responses



14. I identify my ethnicity as:

190 responses



15. Current zip code? May respond "Prefer not to answer".

190 responses

