

# Measuring the Impact of Year Three StAMP Discovering Brass



University of  
St Andrews



Scholar: Camille Ryder

Supervisors: Ellen Thomson and Bede Williams

## Abstract

St Andrews Music Participation (StAMP Brass) is a music education project started in 2019, run through the University of St Andrews Laidlaw Music Centre in conjunction with the Fife Music Service and the Wallace Collection<sup>1</sup>. At the turn of the 19th century, there were 130 brass bands in Fife Scotland alone. Now, there are seven<sup>1,2,3</sup>. StAMP Brass aims to enliven this community and give Primary 6 pupils the opportunity to play brass instruments in schools<sup>1</sup>. StAMP Brass further supports pupils through proven benefits of music education in schools<sup>4</sup>. I researched the impact of StAMP Brass's primary school programme, Discovering Brass. Through my research, I have found that StAMP was successful in engaging students with music but only to an extent of a missing connection of the programme/school to their caregivers. To continue playing their instruments and reap the education benefits of music, students need an alignment of support in school, the home, and the community. StAMP has improved in school support and community support but has not yet reached the caregivers. I will analyse this impact through the data I have collected and with the theoretical lenses of Robert Putnam and Bourdieu.

## Brass Bands

Brass bands were formed to create a community music scene across generations<sup>3</sup>. I connect Putnam's ideas of social capital to expand the understanding of brass bands as an indicator of the community cohesiveness in Fife. Social capital is the network that can bond and bridge networks people together by involving them in local organisations and engaging with their communities through bring similar and diverse people together; much like music groups bringing people together<sup>5, 6</sup>. Brass bands reinforce social capital through time investment is reciprocated, trust is built within and beyond the organization, and their values are unified indicating a healthy social fabric. While brass bands' numbers have declined, they are still highly active in the Fife community<sup>2</sup>. One way to grow this activity would be through increasing youth engagement to develop these social connections early on.

Bourdieu's Habitus explains how individuals develop from upbringing and rewarded behaviors<sup>7</sup>. Cultural capital, like winning competitions, molds people internally, building social structure<sup>7, 8</sup>. Bourdieu sees an implicit power structure shaping these principles – power which, in artistic or learning contexts, influences actions in Putnam's social capital<sup>7, 8</sup>. Brass bands develop people by creating a form of social reward through music involvement and thus the social capital grows. If young people are socially rewarded, then they will have more of an environmental push to join a brass band<sup>8, 9</sup>.

## **The need for StAMP Brass**

To understand the place of StAMP Brass, one should note there is a wide variety in the level of educational resources in Scotland<sup>10</sup>. As the Music Education Partnership Group states: the provision of music lessons is determined by supply not demand<sup>11</sup>. The Scottish education system has commendable standards for music education, as music education is a requirement for primary schools though brass education is rare<sup>11,12</sup>.

## **Format of StAMP Brass**

With the COVID-19 pandemic, StAMP brass adapted two out of the past three years for online delivery to primary school pupils with high enjoyments levels across all demographics<sup>2,14</sup>. 2022-2023 was the first year that StAMP Brass had fully in-person and in-class delivery--involving eight primary schools with a course, Discovering Brass (DB). DB did not require any additional resources other than time allocation for the class. During the two virtual years, the take-up rate of participants to brass bands averaged at 49%, the past year it was approximately 5%<sup>2, 14</sup>.

DB was structured into three blocks over 16 weeks and concluded with a group performance. Each pupil received their own natural trumpet (a trumpet without valves) and one of two trumpet tutors visited weekly to teach the entire P6 class; P6 instrumental music lessons are generally offered in small groups. Pupils and teachers received three block-corresponding and progressing books. The trumpet tutors developed an engagement-based and historically informed approach, applied through creativity-based improvisational musical exercises and hands-on historical trumpet activities.

## **Methodology**

There were three nested planes that StAMP Brass aims to impact which we set out to understand: the pupil, the overall school, and the community, brass bands and beyond.

The impact of Discovering Brass (DB) on the pupils was explored via two sets of randomly selected conversational focus groups and two sets of surveys. In the winter, researchers conducted surveys polling 262 pupils in DB. June surveys sampled of 44 pupils. Further, 34 pupils were sampled from the final concert. We worked but struggled to interview and poll the teachers on their experience, interviews were selected based on availability (2 interviews, 5 survey responses). We also interviewed the two tutors of DB and three Scottish brass community representatives. Finally, I explored previous secondary data to further contextual understanding including the previous two reports of StAMP Brass.

## Findings

### The Pupils

#### The musical experience of the pupils:

Pupils had varied musical experience: some had prior lessons (funded privately, through school, or the Youth Music Initiative); most had never been involved in ensembles<sup>15</sup>. Several pupils experience music at home by learning from their caregivers or solitarily learning an instrument recreationally<sup>15</sup>. Pupils mainly experience music while listening to the radio in the car and none had experience with brass instruments<sup>15</sup>.

#### General sentiments regarding the programme:

Despite personal preferences on the trumpet, a majority felt excited, some nervous, about starting DB. After the programme started, several pupils grew to love brass more than they expected. Students said that most engaged well with DB and felt at the end of the programme.

#### Initial reactions and learning benefits:

The pupils discussed the benefits of the classroom being a fun environment, and a calming atmosphere that allowed focus and emotional reflection; the calming nature of music is constant from the beginning to the end of year (see mid-year report). The fun environment allowed pupils to feel like they were interacting with their classmates in a different way than usual. Due to the group environment, pupils experienced higher levels of creativity through group activities.

According to both sets of focus groups pupils concluded that the group setting fostered further learning benefits through technique and enjoyment consistently throughout the year. Students described improving as a collective (often saying “we” or “everyone” improved). Pupils felt more support and enjoyment with each other in the group; therefore, pupils’ worries about making mistakes were often reduced. Further, some groups of pupils cited specific events of teaching and learning from one another or practicing playing together. This is a noteworthy impact of music as the pupils not only gained emotional shifts and social bonds from the music programme, but also a feasible group learning system which benefitted the pupils.

A handful of pupils participated in performances or the final performance in St Andrews. 73% of June surveys mention enjoyment from playing in concerts. Approximately 85% of pupils who performed in St Andrews experienced a positive shift from nervousness to confidence after the performance. 90% felt that performance improved their skills and 77% wanted to continue playing a brass instrument further indicating the positive impact of music especially performance.

#### Personal Challenges and mindset shift

Students navigated common musical challenges, such as the note range and muscle fatigue. Interestingly, pupils shared how they overcame challenges and gained

confidence through changing their mindset: increasing practice, learning from their tutors, and developing strong work ethic habits. At least one pupil from each school spoke about defying their personal expectations of improvement for themselves and growing to enjoy the trumpet more than originally thought. . The word “learning” appeared in 56% of June survey responses with 84% saying they experienced enjoyment and learning. Pupils at every level of enjoyment unanimously would recommend the programme to a peer, attributing their recommendation to valuable learning experiences.

### Technical skills development

Most pupils took great pride in discussing their development of musical skills. A large majority reported being proficient at reading music and made concrete improvements on the trumpet (ex. able to produce 3-5 notes, making articulation) and recalled specific musical concepts, terms, or exercises.

Students were consistently motivated by their positive interactions and recognition from their tutors. They consistently noted how the tutor was the biggest factor in their enjoyment, even if they didn’t like the trumpet. Overcoming struggles was simplified with the tutors’ demonstrations.

Pupils are consistently developing musical skills demonstrating a tangible musical impact. Further, they are having positive experiences with their tutors and developing a connection between their tutors.

### Reasons for not continuing:

Though pupils of all enjoyment levels constantly acknowledged the value of DB, being “too busy” emerged as the main reason for not moving on with trumpet. This was true even if the pupil wished to continue as 43% of June surveys expressed interest in continuing; in focus groups the most common reasons were that caregivers wouldn’t let them/weren’t able to accommodate an additional activity, the pupil had too many other activities, or logistical difficulties. These pupils enjoyed DB and many wanted to join a brass band, but simply didn’t have the time. Further, several pupils didn’t fully understand connection between DB and brass bands.

Most pupils said that they did not regularly practice or use the pupil book at home. There were a handful of pupils who discussed practicing but most never used the book. Most pupils mentioned how they struggled to practice at home due to different conditions (caregivers/family, noise, dog, neighbours, etc.). Only a few schools had pupils who felt their caregivers supported them while others had caregivers who didn’t enjoy their child practicing.

Pupils don’t see joining brass bands as a priority and the impact of StAMP struggles to reach the home. If fewer students join these groups, it becomes more difficult for pupils to establish the social connections of trust with brass bands. Further, if pupils aren’t more supported at home to practice, then they also lose another connection to the instrument

all together<sup>16</sup>. Pupils enjoy their instrument and are slowly creating the network to brass bands, but not enough to see themselves in these groups or see these groups fitting into their schedule beyond the classroom.

### Teachers

Teachers felt that DB was successful (pupils were excited, engaged, and demonstrated improvement). The interviewed teachers felt the programme's ease of implementation and the popularity amongst the pupils exceeded their expectations. Both teachers interviewed now work to incorporate music in their classroom more, due to it being calming.

Both teachers reported specific instances of struggling pupils who were deeply impacted by DB; the teachers felt that DB gave pupils an opportunity to showcase their potential in an unparalleled way. The freedom of musical expression and improvement gave these pupils a platform to excel in the classroom where they might not otherwise have had the opportunity.

The teachers further reported a sense of pride that the pupils gained from the learning experience of the programme – one teacher spoke about students coming up to them and demonstrating their skills they had practiced at home. While teachers were unsure of the practicing consistency, they unanimously witnessed musical improvement in their pupils over the course of the 16 weeks. With this improvement, teachers also noticed increased confidence and cooperation as a group within their classroom: [DB gave me] confidence in their ability to come together.”

### Suggestions

When asked why the pupils were not continuing with brass bands, teachers echoed the sentiments of their students: the pupils are extremely busy, and adding something to their schedules requires an extremely low barrier to entry for the pupils, with little strain on the caregivers.

Teachers alluded to the importance of incorporating caregivers into the programme, and pointed out that formal and direct caregiver interaction didn't come until later in DB. Teachers spoke about how easy entry into a brass band would have to be, as poor accessibility would prevent students from being able to join. Teachers suggested giving caregivers an understanding earlier on (for example, an introductory video or performance). Teachers also felt that the pupils would benefit from more performance opportunities.

## Tutors and Brass Band representatives

Both tutors and all the executives in DB witnessed improvement and enjoyment in the pupils. Even if pupils did not demonstrate concrete technical improvement, they noticed significant understanding of other musical skills, such as pulse and creativity.

Tutors further enlightened the decline of brass bands. Many of the players within brass bands note the importance of these groups in developing a sense of community. Making a continual effort to meet weekly – especially in busy schedules – and be creative together, develops strong social ties. Further, with the addition of competitions, performances, and an overall time investment, brass bands develop a sense of trust between the members. In terms of pupils, brass bands provide an avenue for further performance and music-making. The tutors, who are also highly involved in the brass band, highlight this as a meaningful connection based on belonging – created through making music within a social setting rather than in a solo environment – and this is highly valuable in a post-pandemic world. By extension, a sense of pride develops along with all the other benefits of music-making.

Though beyond the scope of this essay and warrants further research, brass bands highlight a class divide that is no longer a part of the music community. One should note the importance that socioeconomic class plays in this decline: once the origin of the brass band, working class people are no longer the main demographic involved.

## Ethics and Caregivers

We struggled to reach the entire community partly because the ethics paperwork that the caregivers and schools had to fill out. Caregivers and schools initially received 6 pages of consent forms per child, which often went unanswered. Furthermore, one school never responded to our requests for evaluation. The subjects who were most likely to respond were those that were more engaged with the programme and not representative of all stakeholders – a self-selection bias.

The least accessed group was the caregivers (ethics paperwork, communication outside of school, and survey responses). If we could not reach the caregivers with ethics forms or communication about StAMP Brass, this indicates necessity for improved communication. Further, pupils consistently cited not being able to practice or their caregivers not allowing them to continue. Thus, caregivers seem to be the consistent point of disengagement with brass bands, despite pupils enjoying the programme and wishing to continue; this barrier results in pupils not being able to envision themselves in these groups.

Caregivers can't encourage pupils if they do not witness the impact of DB and, therefore, may not have a connection with brass bands. When DB was delivered virtually (resulting in a higher take-up rate), caregivers were able to witness improvements within

their own homes and understand the progress of their child. More direct connection allows caregivers to witness the process of DB to a brass band. Consequently, the caregivers were able to further the curiosity of the pupils. However, the programme when delivered in schools does not reach the caregivers as easily.

This is essential to understand because caregivers serve an essential role for children. they act as the “gatekeeper” of their child’s activities<sup>6</sup>. If caregivers are disconnected with the school or the brass band, the child may not engage with the school in the same way. The further the divide becomes with the school, the fewer opportunities for continuing into music that a pupil might have. Thus, there is less potential interaction a pupil has with a brass band which is essential for these groups.

Further, caregivers develop the environment in which their child feels rewarded, Bourdieu’s Habitus. Pupils are being rewarded by their improvement within the classroom – as is understood by their high enjoyment – but this is not furthered in their home environments. When caregivers don’t have the social connection and investment of trust with brass bands, it is not built into their home environments.

## **Conclusion**

### **Impact on the Individual:**

The pupils were all able to learn a great deal from the music programme. They experienced immense benefits from music education which improved the quality of the classroom, and they further recognized the benefits of participating in music. StAMP DB did a good job of creating a positive environment within the school. Pupils were able to experience growth in confidence and began developing valuable habits and skills beneficial beyond musical development. There is a desire to continue into brass bands and high levels of enjoyment.

### **Impact on the School**

Teachers consistently see a great improvement and growth in their pupils because of the programme. Further, the group learning fosters community in the classroom and inspires pupils to get better by working with each other – highlighting the constant power of music and brass bands. Tutor, teachers, and pupils noticed the development of a positive group environment and thus a budding social network.

### **Impact on the Community**

With such a low take-up rate, there are further unexplained barriers between the pupils and furthering their curiosity. I speculate that the missing link within the pupil’s ‘habitus’ that prohibits them from furthering the social connection to a brass band. This may be due to the divide between the caregivers and the programme and primary school.

If pupils enjoy playing and were sad about not continuing, this means that StAMP Brass was successful in creating an environment that rewarded improvement and

practice. However, the divide between StAMP Brass and the caregivers prohibited the pupils from continuing. When caregivers were not encouraging pupils to practice, and pupils were not encouraged to engage with music, they did not continue. Caregivers do not have the social connection with brass bands; therefore, their children do not have the connection with brass bands, and they cannot see themselves in the group. To further support this, the main feedback we received from teachers was about reaching the caregivers more clearly and streamlining our efforts. As a result, the brass band is not considered a high priority as an activity like football even though it is equally, if not more, beneficial.

The project is reviving the local brass band community even if only by building the foundation of interest for it. Pupils are engaged and enjoying the programme through trust, time investment, and further social connection as they are now more aware of the opportunities available to them. Even if they do not carry on to a brass band, this social connection is positive and invaluable.

### **Acknowledgements**

*I'd like to express my sincere gratitude to Lord Laidlaw and the Laidlaw Foundation without which this research would not have been possible. They provided invaluable support and guidance throughout this process. I'd also like to thank the Laidlaw Music Centre for it's continued support over the summer. My advisors, Ellen Thomson and Bede Williams for their unwavering guidance and tireless work on the StAMP Brass Project.*

## Works Cited

1. Williams, B., & Wallace, J. (2023). *Discovering Brass – StAMP | St Andrews Music Participation*. StAMP | St Andrews Music Participation. Retrieved September 1, 2023, from <https://stamp.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/discovering-brass/>
2. Baillie, I. (2021, September). St Andrews Music Participation Year One Report (E. Thomson & B. Williams, Eds.). *University of St Andrews Laidlaw Music Centre*.
3. McLaren, A. (2023). *Scottish Brass Band Association*. Scottish Brass Band Association. Retrieved August 31, 2023, from <https://www.sbba.org.uk/events?event=181>
4. Downes, M., Thomson, E., Williams, B., & Wallace, J. (2019, November 13). Can Music Change Lives? An introduction to StAMP. *Laidlaw Music Centre*.
5. Putnam, R. D. (2001). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Simon & Schuster.
6. Jones, Patrick M. "Developing Social Capital: a Role for Music Education and Community Music in Fostering Civic Engagement and Intercultural Understanding." *International journal of community music* 3, no. 2 (2010): 291–302.
7. Bourdieu, P. (2020). *Habitus and Field: General Sociology, Volume 2 (1982-1983)* (P. Champagne, J. Duval, F. Poupeau, & M.-C. Rivière, Eds.; P. Collier, Trans.). Wiley.
8. Burnard, P., Hofvander Trulsson, Y., & Söderman, J. (Eds.). (2015). *Bourdieu and the Sociology of Music Education*. Ashgate.
9. Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2020, April). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation from a self-determination theory perspective: Definitions, theory, practices, and future directions. *61*, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2020.101860>
10. Education & Children's Services. (2020). Fife Caregiver Engagement Strategy (Update 2020). *Fife Council*. <https://education.gov.scot/media/diklfq5g/fife-caregiver-engagement-strategy.pdf>
11. Broad, S., Hunter, K., Moscardini, L., Rae, A., Smillie, G., & Wilson, A. (2019, January). What's going on now? a study of young people making music across scotland. *Royal Conservatoire of Scotland*. <https://www.rcs.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Whats-Going-On-Now-report.pdf>
12. Daubney, A., Spruce, G., & Annetts, D. (2019, January). Music Education: State of the Nation. *All-Party Parliamentary Group for Music Education, University of Sussex, Incorporated Society of Musicians*. 10.1207/SJRA1001\_2
13. University of Strathclyde, Sosu, E., & Ellis, S. (2014). *Closing the Attainment Gap in Scottish Education*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation. <https://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/default/files/jrf/migrated/files/education-attainment-scotland-full.pdf>

14. Bremmer, Z. (2022, September). St Andrews Music Participation Year Two Report (E. Thomson & B. Williams, Eds.). *University of St Andrews Laidlaw Music Centre*.
15. Kiely, S., & Thomson, E. (2022, December). St Andrews Music Participation Programme Year 3 Prior Report. *University of St Andrews Laidlaw Music Centre, the Wallace Collection*.
16. Fletcher, A. C., Elder, G. H., & Mekos, D. (2000). Caregiver Influences on Adolescent Involvement in Community Activities. *Journal of research on adolescence, 10*(1), 29-48. 10.1207/SJRA1001\_2