

Impact 100 Metro Detroit Grant Summary
Grant Finalist: Accent Pontiac
Project: Social Change through Music: Pontiac High School

Background:

In 2014, Kirk in the Hills launched a capital campaign, to raise funds to be used, in part, for outreach in the Kirk's neighboring community of Pontiac, Michigan. After extensive research and conversations with Pontiac leaders, the Kirk decided to use these funds to launch a social change through music program in partnership with the Pontiac School District. After originally launching as a program of Kirk in the Hills, Accent Pontiac received independent 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service effective December 2016.

Accent Pontiac launched in September 2016 serving approximately 100 students at Walt Whitman Elementary School with free during and after-school music classes. Accent Pontiac has since expanded to partner with additional schools in the Pontiac School District, launching programming at Alcott Elementary School in September 2018 and Pontiac Middle School in September 2021. Accent Pontiac now serves over 250 students each week offering brass, woodwind, and percussion classes up to four days per week. Through Accent Pontiac's social change through music programming, we have witnessed the powerful impact music has on Pontiac students including greater confidence, improved focus, increased school attendance and stronger leadership skills. Accent Pontiac's vision is to expand to support all schools in the Pontiac School District.

Unmet Need: Too often, a child's zip code determines their opportunity to participate in high quality music education. In Pontiac schools, financial challenges limit music programming. In addition, cost and transportation barriers prevent many Pontiac families from participating in extra-curricular music opportunities such as private lessons and youth orchestras. Research shows that students who participate in music education show many positive academic and social outcomes. Students of low socioeconomic status with a history of in-depth arts involvement show better academic outcomes, including better grades and higher graduation rates and college enrollment, than students with less arts involvement (Catterall, 2012). In addition, students in the arts acquire socio-emotional skills including discipline, collaboration, patience, persistence, motivation, and self-esteem (Adderley, 2003). Without the opportunity to participate in strong music education, Pontiac students miss out on these benefits.

Project Summary: Accent Pontiac's project will expand our social change through music programming to Pontiac High School students. In addition to giving us the ability to serve a new group of 9th-12th grade students, this project will provide a continuum of opportunity for middle school students currently enrolled in Accent Pontiac programming, allowing them to continue to participate in transformational music education after they graduate from 8th grade. Accent Pontiac's high school program will: serve ~25 students with free after-school music programming up to 4 days per week; include ensemble and sectional classes for brass, woodwind, and percussion instruments as well as music theory/history, music production and leadership council opportunities; include a meal and transportation support each day; include opportunities for field trips and summer programming; serve over 500 students with guest artist assemblies and student performances.

Outcome: Accent Pontiac currently evaluates the success of our programming in three categories: musical impact, social-emotional impact, and academic impact. We use the following tools to measure our impact in these areas:
-Musical Impact: playing tests to track musical progress according to our curriculum; Social-emotional Impact: surveys from Accent Pontiac students, parents, staff, and partner school staff to assess socio-emotional growth; Academic Impact: school attendance and grades to track Accent Pontiac student attendance and academic growth compared to their peers.

Sustainability: Accent Pontiac has an annual fundraising strategy to pursue multiple revenue streams including individual and corporate donations, fundraising events, and grant funding. Each year, Accent Pontiac works to expand revenue from each of these sources by building our network of individual donors, growing our annual fundraising events, and securing new grant support. After seed funding from Impact100 Metro Detroit is used to launch this expansion, we are confident that we will be able to build upon our existing infrastructure and attract new support to sustain the program.

