



# Options: Wellness Through Music

## *A Citywide Collaboration to Engage Youth*

### Collaborating Partners:

New York City Police Foundation  
International Salsa Museum  
Sir Ron Carter/Finding the Right Note Foundation  
Dr. Richard Izquierdo Health & Science Charter School  
Council for Living Music

**Project Duration:** 02/24/22–04/07/22

**Pracademics\*:** Willy Rodriguez, Det. Jason Anazagasty, and SSA Level III Charles Harper

### Context

Options: Wellness Through Music is a citywide collaboration offering music education and programming for youth and an opportunity for positive youth/officer engagement around a mutual appreciation of music. Officers and youth musicians from the community perform together in an event for the public.

### Key Finding

Options: Wellness Through Music provided opportunities for officers to interact positively with youth. Audience members found the performance entertaining, considered Options: Wellness Through Music a good way for officers to improve relations with the community, and saw the performing students and officers from a new perspective.

\*BetaGov provides ongoing training to agency personnel to become research-savvy “Pracademics” who can lead trials.

### Background

Options: Wellness Through Music began as an initiative of the Police Foundation Options Program and evolved into a citywide collaboration of several organizations to provide music education and programming for youth. Options: Wellness Through Music is designed to give youth skills and an understanding of and appreciation for music and the music industry and as a platform to strengthen police/community/youth relationships toward safer neighborhoods. As Options: Wellness Through Music is centered on community and youth engagement, with officer and youth musicians performing together, the Options Program team conducted an audience survey to learn their perspectives on the music program offered.

### Design

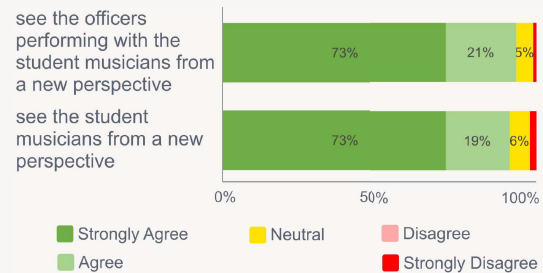
An audience survey was collected during a performance of Options: Wellness Through Music in the Bronx. A QR code, which linked to an anonymous online survey, was included in the printed program. Audience members were encouraged to participate in the survey, during announcements that were made at the event. Surveys were received from 64 audience members (approximately 85% of attendees).

### Lessons Learned

Options: Wellness Through Music achieved its goal of youth engagement. A majority of audience members (84%) were under 18 and 6% were older youth (18–24). Audience members included friends (33%), family (9%), and educators (11%) attending to support performing youth, and 11% were family or friends supporting an officer musician. 35% did not know any of the performing musicians or were there for other reasons. The audience enjoyed the event: 94% found it entertaining and 98% agreed the performance reflected good teamwork between the youth and officer musicians. A majority of the audience (94%) agreed that programs like Options: Wellness Through Music are a good way for officers to improve their relationship with

the community, and 90% that recommended similar events be offered in future. Options: Wellness Through Music is intended to provide opportunities for youth and officers to see each other differently. The graphic below shows that nearly all attendees agreed that the performance made them see the officers and students from a new perspective.

### The performance made me...



### Next Steps

The Options: Wellness Through Music audience survey suggests that community members who attended the performance enjoyed it and would recommend similar events in the future. That a large share of the audience members were willing to provide their opinions through the online survey demonstrates the feasibility of gathering youth perspectives through an audience survey. The QR code embedded in the program was an effective means for delivering a survey intended for a young audience. Subsequent surveys of Options: Wellness Through Music audiences should be expanded to include more-nuanced questions about police perceptions. Given the positive audience feedback, an evaluation of the impact of Options: Wellness Through Music on medium- and longer-term youth outcomes is warranted.

Sometimes a rigorous trial of an innovative idea just isn't possible, but with a Spark project a practitioner can learn important information about the idea, the agency, and the sample. What's more, a positive signal may inform a future randomized controlled trial and more definitive results. Spark projects meet Pracademics where they are comfortable—giving them the opportunity to learn about research and apply that learning to internal research projects.