



Why Music?

Toxic stress from adverse or traumatic childhood experiences (like having a parent in prison) leads to long-term social, emotional, and mental health problems. Research shows that children who become involved in group music activities do better academically and socially and make better life choices.

This non-threatening medium promotes prosocial behaviors like self-expression, socialization, and communication. The sensory and tactile components of playing an instrument reward these behaviors and motivate the children to continue developing them. It is also significantly less costly to society than incarceration—a common and unfortunate fate for many of these children.

Sparks for Success! was founded to change lives through music of children affected by parental incarceration.



Life for the child of an incarcerated parent is very challenging, and being in a music program can be a lifeline. In Central Texas, **Sparks for Success!** conducts in-school music therapy classes and after-school private music lessons.

These interventions provide a holistic solution with the power to break the cycle of crime and poverty that can be so prevalent for these children. By helping them develop their resilience, our kids are more likely to stay in school, learn how to navigate their hurdles in a positive way, and get the support they need to grow into healthy adults and vibrant community members.



The annual cost of incarceration for a single youth can be as much as **\$146,302**

One year of **Sparks for Success!** music therapy for eight students costs **\$3,120**



Sparks for Success!
Cynthia Smith, Executive Director
cynthia@sparksforsuccess.org | 512.659.6409

PO Box 660204
Austin, TX 78766-7204
SparksforSuccess.org

Ignite a Passion...
CHANGE A FUTURE



Our Approach

PROACTIVE vs REACTIVE

Sparks for Success! is committed to early intervention. The earlier we can set children up for a life of academic, emotional, social, and economic success, the better chance they have of succeeding in all aspects of their lives. Addressing their needs before bad habits and poor coping strategies set in is a critical component of our programs.

MUSIC THERAPY CLASSES

Music therapy is an evidence-based allied health profession particularly suited to working with elementary-aged children. The groups are led by Board-Certified Music Therapists who are educated in trauma and are trained in the specialized use of music intervention to reach non-musical goals.

In their sessions, **Sparks'** music therapists facilitate verbal and non-verbal expression, foster social and communication skills, assist children with self-regulation, and help them develop healthy coping strategies.



PRIVATE MUSIC INSTRUCTION

To a child, a music lesson can be a much-needed opportunity for some one-on-one attention. The experience helps them develop a rapport with their teacher who serves as a positive role model. With these lessons, our students develop the skill and confidence they later need to join middle and high school band or orchestra. Research proves that involvement in group music activities helps children do better in school, improve social skills, and make better life choices.

SUSTAINED ADVOCACY

Sparks for Success! staff maintains communications with school faculty to monitor behavioral changes both in and out of the classroom.

We stay in contact with school administrators to ensure our students receive the nurturing and encouragement they need through the difficult middle and high school years.

Outcomes

Our goal is to help our students improve emotional regulation, social skills, and behavioral health, and to help them focus and succeed in school. **Sparks for Success!** music therapists measure progress with a formative assessment tool that captures quantitative and qualitative data for each student.

HERE IS WHAT EDUCATORS ARE SAYING ABOUT OUR IMPACT

“Love love love you! Your work was amazing and impactful. The first graders’ self-regulation has improved so much. Teacher reports are so positive.”
Counselor, Instructional Coach, May 2019

“The support and dedication to our students from **Sparks for Success!** has been incredible. We are committed to continue working with **Sparks for Success!** and are very fortunate to be able to partner with such an incredible organization that truly puts students’ needs first.”
Principal, April 2019

“Since he began music lessons with Sparks he has completely turned around. Last year he was in trouble all the time, angry, and doing poorly in school. Today he is Student of the Month! The positive, one-on-one attention he is getting through your program is working. Thank you!”
Assistant Principal, October 2018

“My students struggle to interact with other students in school settings. The class helped the students to relax, lower their level of anxiety, and after six classes they were asking to go to the sessions. The students started to share their experiences and wants and needs.”
Life Skills Teacher, May 2017

“It’s a long and difficult journey for the kids and those of us working with them. Please know you are making a real difference.”
Assistant Principal, February 2019

“Thank you for guiding our students with such love and determination.”
Elementary School Executive Director, January 2020

