



Listen to the Music:

Introducing Music to Reduce Test Anxiety and Improve Test Performance

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Need for Innovation

- Academic performance anxiety is a long-lasting trend in higher education.
- Test anxiety affects approximately 20% of all college students
 - Highest among females, students with high emotionality, and students with high performance worry (American Test Anxieties Association, 2019); Cassady & Johnson, 2002; Hembree, 1988)
- Test anxiety can cause an 8% variance in test scores effecting students' academic performances (Cassady & Johnson, 2002).
- Multiple studies have found pleasant, calming music can lead to higher academic performance and help control individual anxiety (Lilley, Oberle, & Thompson, 2014; Perlovsky et al., 2013).
- Rising anxiety levels have created a need for interventions to be explored to promote the success of students in academic programs.



How it Works

- An agricultural economics professor played relaxing study music during exams in his course.
- Music was found on YouTube.com and was entitled "Relaxing Music for Studying and Concentration."
- Music was played for the duration of each exam at a low enough volume level that it could be heard by students but did not become a distraction during the exams.



Results to Date

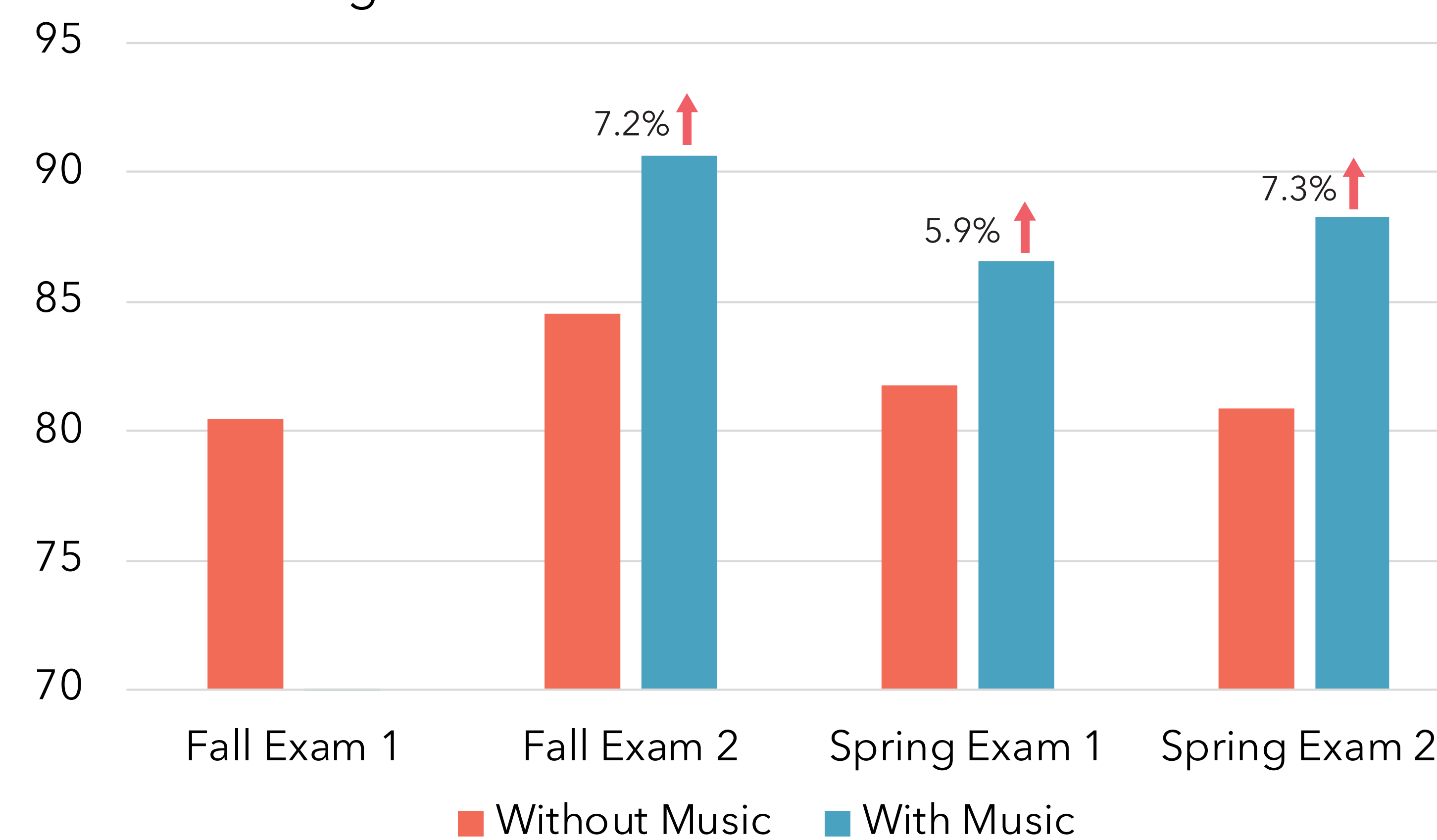
Observations

- Observations before music implementation:
 - » Many students left exam early prior to completion
 - » Not all exams would be turned in with complete responses
- Observations following music implementation:
 - » Students spent more time on the exams
 - » All exams were completed before exiting classroom
 - » Students expressed a preference for music during their exams

Exam Scores

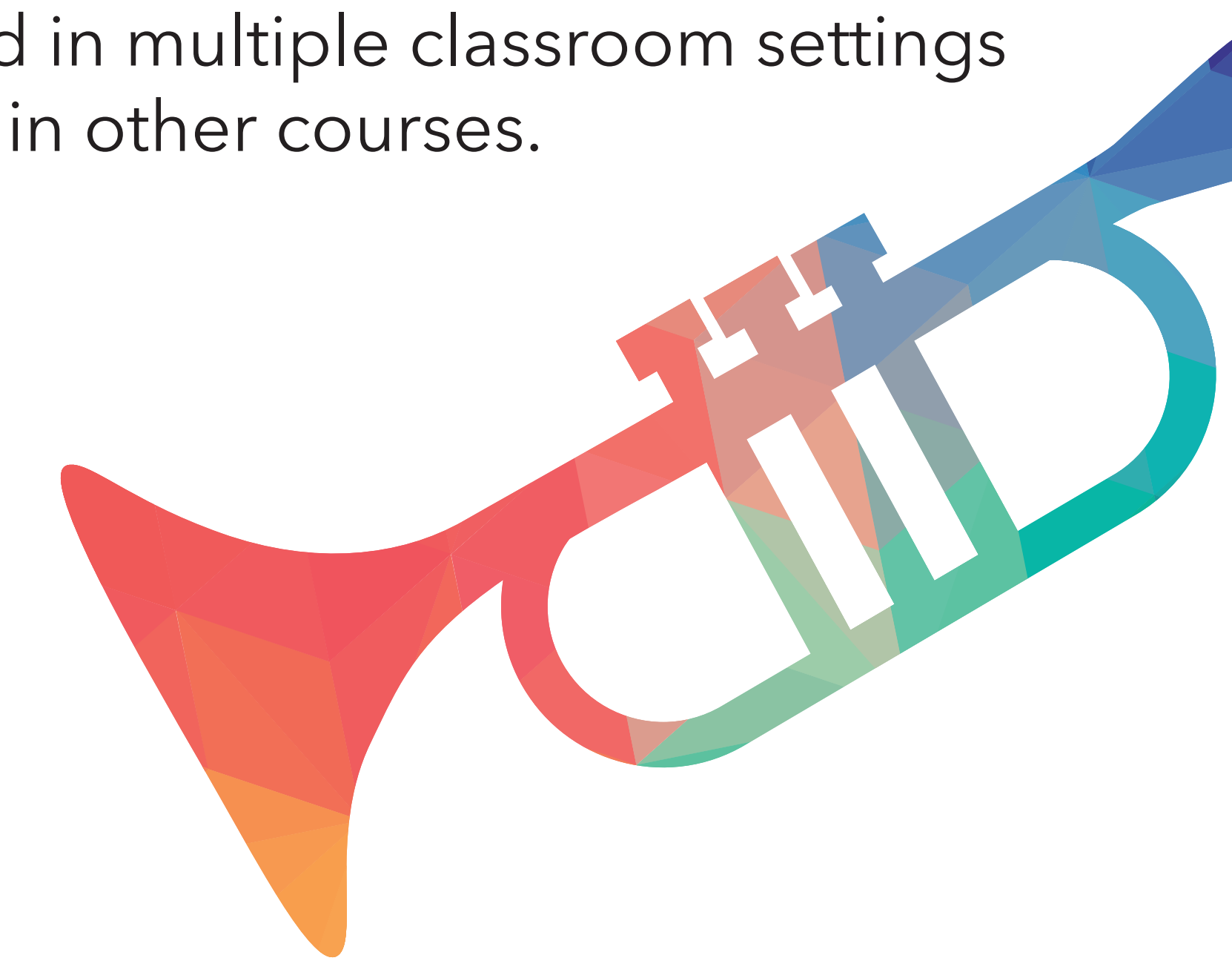
- Overall exam scores increased when the music intervention was implemented.
 - » Average exam scores increased by 7.2%, 5.9%, and 7.3% for each exam when music was played.

Average Exam Scores With and Without Music



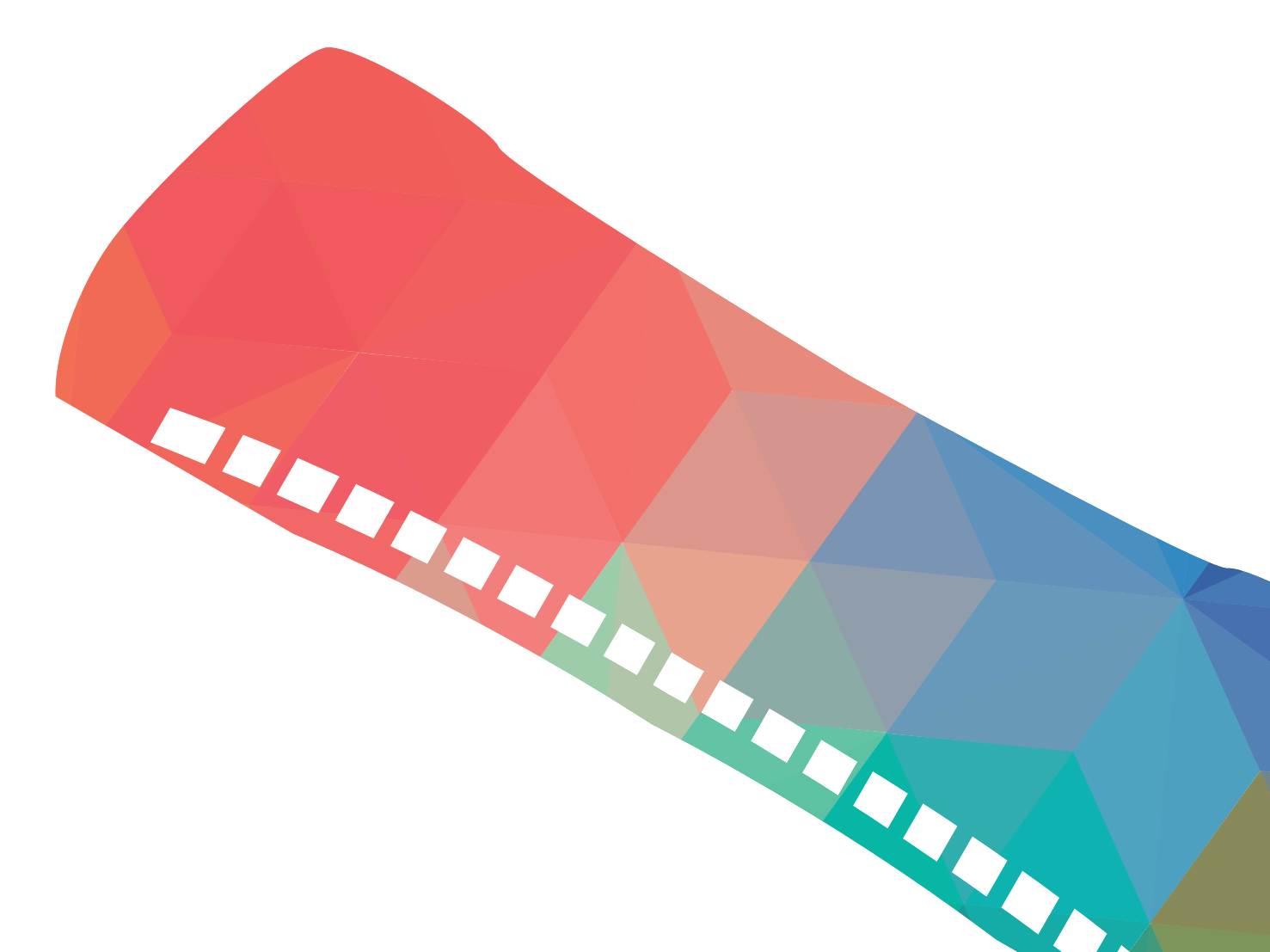
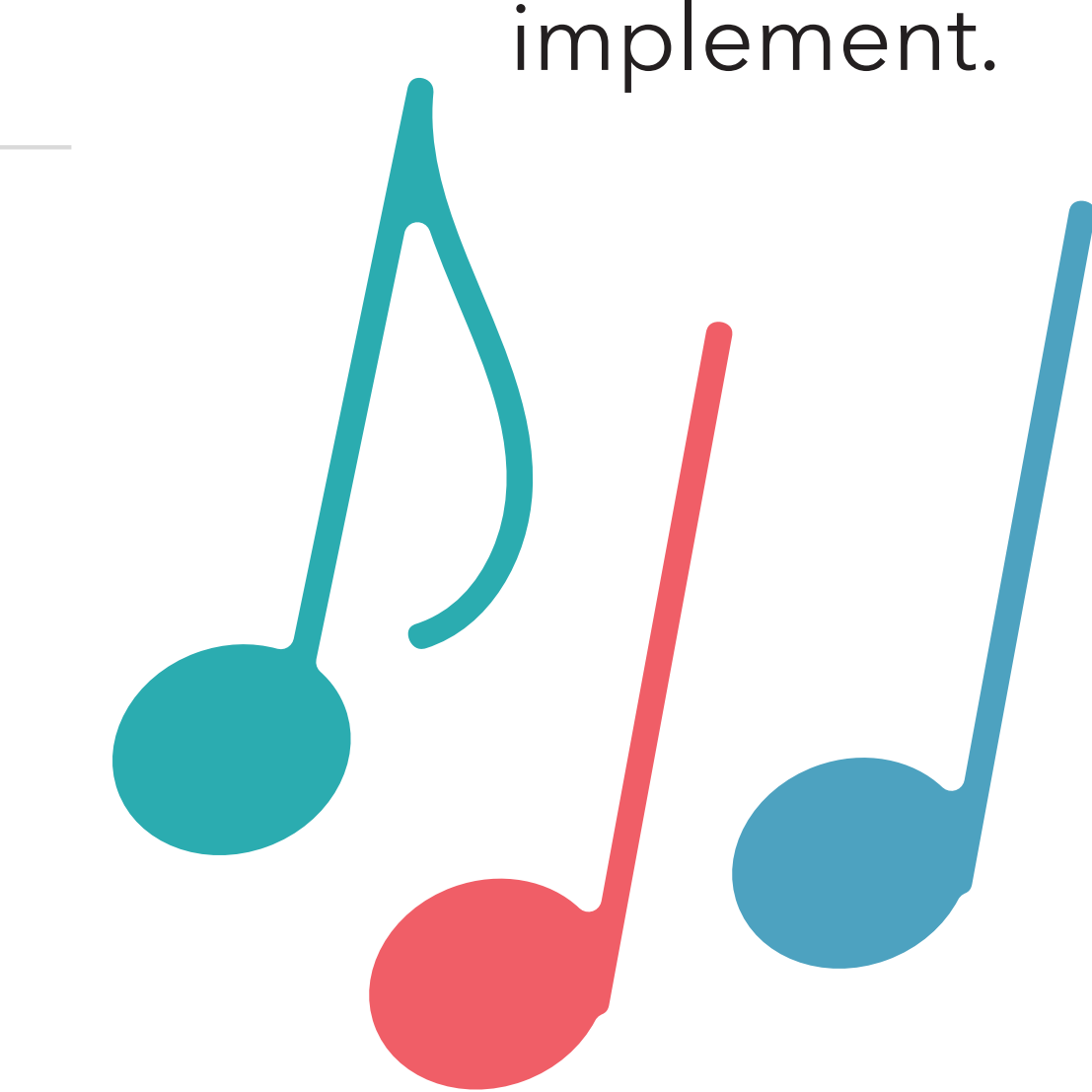
Future Plans/Advice to Others

- Increased time spent on exams and exam scores reinforced the addition of music during exams.
- Outside factors and stresses are reduced and allow the exams to test for students' knowledge of course material.
- Future assessment of the use of music during exams will include examining student opinions to ensure this intervention is well received.
- The addition of music to the exam environment will continue to be evaluated in multiple classroom settings and will be encouraged in other courses.



Costs/Resources Needed

- Many higher education classrooms are already equipped with a computer, speakers, and internet access.
 - » This concept should be simple and free of cost to apply in other classrooms.
- A wide variety of music is available through many free online outlets: YouTube, Pandora, Spotify, and many others.
- The instructor needs a working knowledge of these online music outlets and the classroom technology to implement.



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