

# 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 for higher education.
- Cognitive test anxiety affects approximately 20% of all college students, especially females, students with high emotionality, and students with high performance worry (American Test Anxieties Association, 2019); Cassidy & Johnson, 2002; Hembree, 1988).
- Test anxiety can cause an 8% variance in test scores effecting students' academic performances (Cassidy & 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 of college students have created a need for interventions to be explored to promote the success of students in academic programs.

## How it Works

- The instructor played relaxing study music during exams.
- Most classrooms are equipped with a computer and speakers; this was feasible and easy to implement.
- Music found on YouTube.com was entitled "Relaxing Music for Studying and Concentration."
- Music was played for the duration of each exam at a low volume level being audible enough for students to hear the music but not become a distraction during the exams.

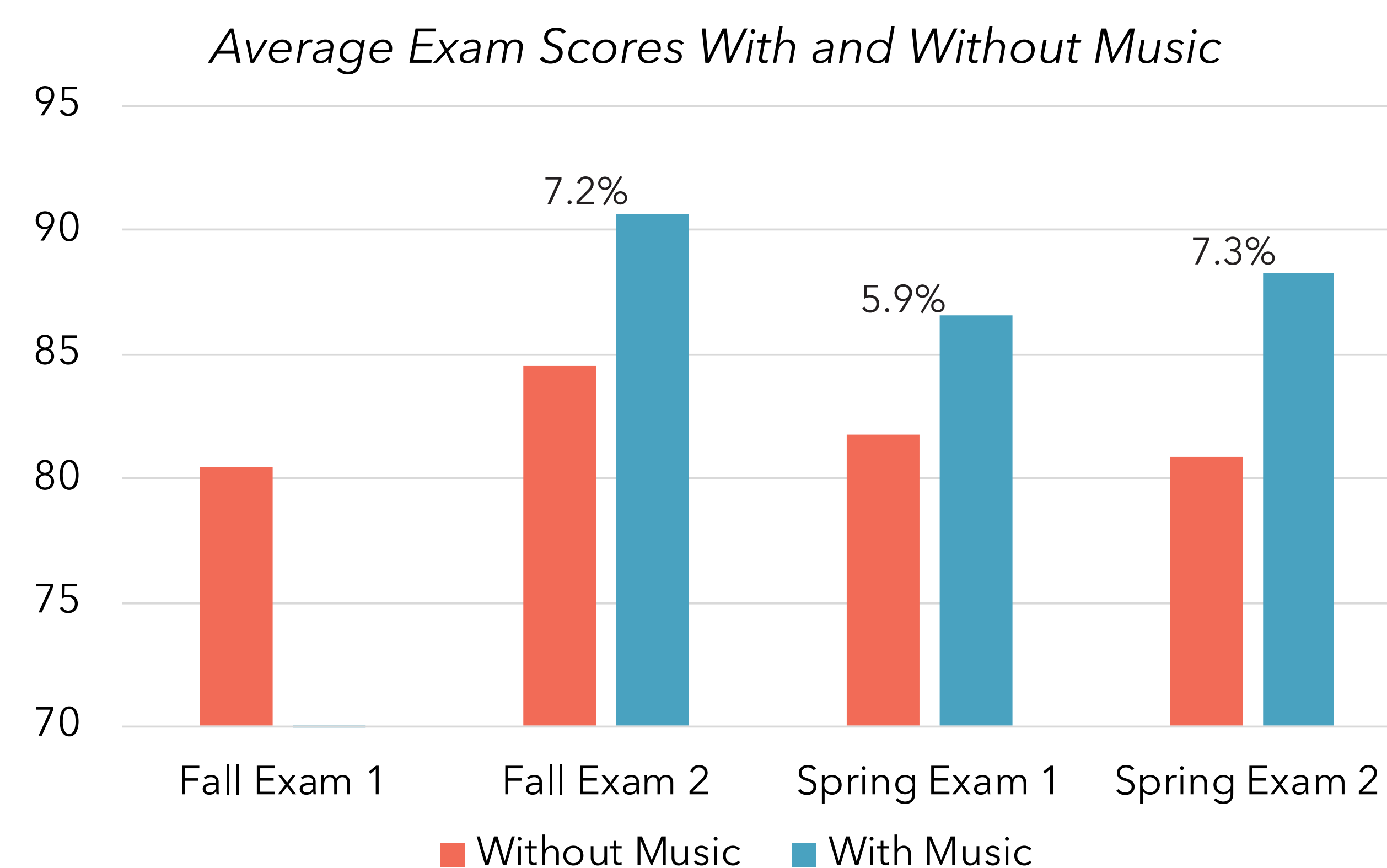
## Results to Date

### Observations

- Observations before music intervention:
  - » Students may leave early prior to exam completion
  - » Not all exams would be turned in with complete responses.
- Observations with music:
  - » Students spent more time on the exams.
  - » Exams were completed before exiting classroom.
  - » Students expressed 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 presented with the addition of music.



## Future Plans/Advice to Others

- Increased exam time and exam scores reinforced the addition of music during exam times.
- 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.

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