El Sistema USA and Duke: Advancing the Power of Music for Human Development

Adam Beskind¹, Andie Carroll², Jasmine Leahy³, Olivia Neely⁴
¹Trinity College (Music/Public Policy), ²Trinity College (Economics), ³Trinity College (Neuroscience), ⁴Trinity College (Women’s Reproductive Health).

What Is El Sistema?

- Model of music education for social change in underserved communities invented in Venezuela in 1975
- Impacts over 2 million young people worldwide
- El Sistema USA (ESUSA), the alliance of US-based programs, was founded in 2014.
- Duke partnered with ESUSA in 2016 to support the organization’s emergence through evaluation

Expanding ESUSA

Expanded ESUSA’s impact to over 20,000 underserved youth nationwide through:

1. National symposium: students, teachers, administrators shared & identified best practices, focused on collective impact & racial equity
2. Symposium attendee feedback: qualitative + quantitative survey to improve future programming and development
3. ESUSA Census: Help revise, clarify, and update to better reflect mission, vision, and values

Examples of our Impact

Impact 1: Defined the ESUSA Criteria for Membership through program evaluation (sample related census questions below)

Impact 2: Identified symposium takeaways

- Programs feel better supported to implement teaching & evaluative methods, especially, around racial equity and collective impact, so students feel empowered to express themselves musically and verbally.
- Established criteria for membership to maximize impact on students
- ESUSA now more self-aware; able to identify room for growth.

Impact 3: Assessed symposium effectiveness of addressing key themes

Conclusions