

A young boy with dark hair, smiling broadly, wearing a blue zip-up hoodie with 'Old Navy' written on it. He is holding a violin in his left hand and a bow in his right hand. The background is a plain, light grey wall.

Sistema

Toronto

CASE FOR SUPPORT

SOCIAL CHANGE THROUGH MUSIC EDUCATION

"Music programs like Sistema must continue so that our underprivileged youth be afforded the same opportunities as their peers so they too can learn a craft, and a whole other way of thinking and dreaming."

*- Brendan Canning,
Broken Social Scene*

OUR MISSION. OUR VISION. OUR VALUES.

**“WE BUILD STRONGER
COMMUNITIES BY ENABLING
CHILDREN TO OVERCOME
POVERTY, GROW, AND THRIVE AS
ENGAGED CITIZENS AND FUTURE
LEADERS.”**

OUR MISSION

Sistema Toronto is an intensive social program transforming the lives of children through ensemble-based music.

OUR VISION

Through the global language of music, children grow to realize their full potential as engaged and responsible citizens.

OUR VALUES

At Sistema Toronto...

We are a team.
We always do our best.
We always help each other.

OUR IMPACT.

Operating in priority neighbourhoods across the Greater Toronto Area, Sistema Toronto’s **Social development** programming offers nutritious foods and uses ensemble-based music to provide musical and intellectual opportunities to children, with the goal of transformative social change.

Beginning in Grades 1 or 2 all the way through Grade 8, Sistema Toronto students **learn collectively in an ensemble-based setting**, and students at all levels receive instruction on a string instrument (violin, viola, cello, or bass), percussion and choir, and have frequent performance opportunities for their family, friends and communities.

Championing inclusivity, Sistema Toronto is open to all students enrolled in our partner priority schools, with no auditions or any sort of financial commitment from families. Our educators actively work with schools and families to ensure accessibility and overcome barriers to engagement while establishing **long-lasting relationships built on trust**.

Our consistency in delivering the Sistema Toronto program affords peace of mind and financial flexibility for low-income families and helps **drive positive and permanent social change in Toronto year after year**.



LEARNING THE VIOLIN, LEARNING A NEW LANGUAGE FOR SELF-EXPRESSION AND RESILIENCY.

CONSISTENCY. COMPANIONSHIP. COMPASSION.

While times may be tough at home, participating in Sistema every day provides Sariah with a steady support system of mentors and peers alongside nutritious snacks to feed her growing mind and body.

As she develops valuable social skills like confidence, teamwork and leadership, Sariah also builds a lifelong appreciation for music empowered by daily music education and exposure to a variety of musical genres and instruments.



RESEARCH SHOWS THAT PLAYING OR LISTENING TO MUSIC CAN HELP KIDS OVERCOME TRAUMA, BOOST MOODS, AND REDUCE STRESS. ¹

TORONTO PARENTS SPEND AN AVERAGE OF \$21,096 PER YEAR ON CHILD CARE, MAKING IT THE MOST EXPENSIVE CHILD CARE IN CANADA AND CREATING BARRIERS FOR FAMILIES TO RISE OUT OF POVERTY. ²



IT'S 3:45PM. DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOUR KIDS ARE?

AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR KIDS, EXPANDED OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARENTS.

When kids are accepted into Sistema Toronto, families receive a commitment of eight years of no-cost after-school programming - a savings to each child's family of more than \$160,000.

For Sistema student Kunsung, enrollment into the program afforded his single mom Dolma the time and financial freedom to finish her nursing degree while continuing to work full-time and support her family.

Sistema gives parents in priority neighbourhoods the peace of mind of knowing their children are safe and engaged as part of an educational curriculum, allowing them to generate incremental income to support their families.

NO AUDITIONS. NO COST. NO BARRIERS.

INCREASING ACCESS TO MUSIC EDUCATION, SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND NUTRITIOUS FOOD.

Every child deserves access to education and mentorship, and to be empowered to make healthy lifestyle choices.

Sistema fosters an inclusive environment for all students, regardless of language barriers or learning styles.

By embracing children in priority neighbourhoods and engaging them through their own potential, Sistema empowers a new generation of active citizens with the leadership skills needed to effect positive change in their communities.

Children from families with an annual income of less than \$30,000 were more than six times as likely not to participate in arts or sports, citing such obstacles as user fees, lack of facilities and programming, and supplies/equipment fees. ³

PROVIDING NUTRITION FOR BUDDING MUSICIANS.

HEALTHY SNACKS TO EMPOWER HUNGRY MINDS.

Each child in Sistema Toronto begins their program day with a nutritious snack consisting of at least two recommended food groups from the Canadian Food Guide.

Studies show supporting a healthy diet among children improves physical and mental health, reduces the risk of chronic disease and increases learning and productivity.⁴

Alongside music education and valuable social skills, Sistema leads by example in demonstrating healthy snacking options to students on a daily basis.



Approximately one in five Toronto households - 18.5 per cent of the city's population - is affected by food insecurity, according to the City of Toronto. ⁵



ACTIVE LEARNING THROUGH MOVEMENT, ENSEMBLES AND SINGING.

ENCOURAGING CHILDREN TO STEP UP AND BE HEARD.

MUSIC AND MOVEMENT

Music and Movement classes are geared toward the youngest Sistema Toronto students and encourage music education through movement, rhythm, percussion, singing, and more.

With an introduction to note-reading, pitch-matching, focus, teamwork and problem-solving, young students develop the necessary foundational skills to succeed throughout their eight years with Sistema Toronto.

CORE PROGRAM: STRINGS

Once students complete Music and Movement they move into our core program, learning a string instrument - violin, viola, cello or double bass - in an ensemble-based setting. Students join other strings classes to create a larger orchestra to perform orchestral string music. They learn to sight read, play harmony parts and follow a conductor, while developing self confidence, hand-eye-coordination and active listening skills.

CHOIR

In our choir program, children work together to learn singing techniques, harmonization and group performance, developing teamwork skills and growing their confidence in public speaking.

With its strong focus on learning music composed by women, people of colour and Indigenous artists from around the world and across 10 languages, the choir curriculum exposes students to diverse artistic representation providing the opportunity to see themselves in the music they study.

Researchers have found that culturally responsive classrooms motivate students to learn, engage the motivation of a broad range of students and promote equitable learning. ⁶

Children exposed to a multi-year program of music education involving training in increasingly complex rhythmic, tonal, and practical skills display superior cognitive performance in reading skills compared with their non-musically trained peers. ⁸

Community music programs enhance the neural processing of speech in children. ⁷



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READING, WRITING, AND RHYTHM TRICKS.

BASIC AND COMPLEX MUSICAL CONCEPTS TO HELP DEVELOP YOUNG MINDS.

It's no coincidence Sistema students like Kaylee regularly score an average of more than 25 percentage points higher in standardized testing than their peers, with many among the top academic performers in their schools.⁹

An understanding of music theory improves and reinforces a number of learning outcomes in young children, from boosting math skills and reading comprehension to increased focus and improved time management.

Children who learn basic and complex musical concepts at a young age develop into more focused students with better results in mathematics and critical thinking skills.

Through percussion classes with Sistema Toronto, children learn to read, write, and understand rhythm, including complex concepts around polyrhythms that help strengthen math skills and encourage multi-dimensional playing as part of a group.

Music training has been shown to be positively related to higher performance on executive function (EF) tasks¹⁰

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Children receiving drum lessons showed significant improvement in their IQ tests, gaining an average of 7 IQ points. Meanwhile, children receiving voice lessons increased 6 points¹¹



SISTEMA SETS STUDENTS UP FOR SUCCESS.

AS GRADUATES PROSPER ACADEMICALLY AND SOCIALLY, THEIR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES BENEFIT.

SARAH

Sarah came to Sistema through her partner school, being raised by a single mother and newcomer to Canada dedicated to providing her children with opportunities for advancement. A natural leader, Sarah sets strong examples for other Sistema students through her commitment to practice, thirst for knowledge and effortless teamwork. With Sistema's support, Sarah excelled at violin, percussion, piano and singing; in 2019, she joined the strings program at Etobicoke School of the Arts, and continues to mentor younger Sistema Toronto students.

KISHAUN

A long-time student of Sistema Toronto, Kishaun struggled with motivation and behavioural issues in his first few years, watching friends on the basketball court after school while he practiced cello. As Kishaun's technical skills improved, so did his confidence, and Sistema worked with his mother to ensure his focus remained on his after-school studies where he thrived. In 2019, Kishaun began attending the Etobicoke School of the Arts, and has excelled as a musician and student. He is regarded as a leader among other students, and actively encourages them to grow as musicians and people while his own musical proficiency and innate talent continue to expand.

EDISON

A strong, quiet, positive leader, Edison has benefitted from Sistema Toronto since the program's early years. He has emerged as a confident viola student and an ensemble leader, known for being a serious performer always eager to improve. As he wrapped up his time with Sistema, Edison decided to apply the skills he learned through eight years of development to science and computers; in 2019, he was accepted into Central Technical School with strong academics and a fierce determination to succeed.



INCOME IS A STRONG PREDICTOR OF HIGH-SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES: STUDENTS IN THE BOTTOM 10 OF FAMILY INCOME ARE THREE TIMES MORE LIKELY TO DROP OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL.¹²



APPROXIMATELY 75 % OF SISTEMA TORONTO GRADUATES GO ON TO ATTEND LEADING TORONTO HIGH SCHOOLS WITH SPECIALIZED ARTS, INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE, AND SCIENCE-TECHNOLOGY-ENGINEERING-MATHEMATICS (STEM) PROGRAMS.



SISTEMA TORONTO CREATES OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS AND FAMILIES TO ESCAPE THE POVERTY CYCLE THROUGH NUTRITION, EDUCATION, STRENGTHENED COMMUNITY, STRONG SOCIAL SKILLS AND MENTORSHIP.

SARAH

KISHAUN

EDISON

SISTEMA IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

The Sistema Online Sessions (SOS) initiative aims to provide students with a lifeline to social interaction, access to their community and regular contact with the outside world. Sistema Toronto students participate in daily online classes that allow them to keep up with their music and social learning until classes can be offered in person once again. Sistema Toronto began offering individual and group online lessons to students on March 23rd, working as a team to provide the best possible online outreach to our students during a challenging time.

SISTEMA ONLINE: DETAILS

While online music learning has come with challenges, like internet time lags that make orchestral playing and choral harmonies impossible, our music curriculum goals for our students have remained the same. Sistema Toronto teacher artists quickly adapted their teaching methods to find the best ways to continue supporting students in developing their musical skills. This has meant a focus on solo and duet repertoire and group class work that has fostered improved music theory skills, ear training, sight reading while encouraging creativity and self-expression in students. Activities have included creating one's own percussion instruments with items found around the home, using online software to enhance theory classes, and composition assignments where students have composed lyrics and music for their own pieces to be shared with their online group classes.

In addition to shifting our music curriculum to learning plans that can be delivered online, we have also shifted our social curriculum to online learning. Our team has modified many of our social learning activities to address the immediate needs of our students during this crisis: self-advocacy, coping with negative emotions, problem solving, online safety, practicing self-care, effective communication skills, and more.

TELLING THE STORY: STUDENT CONNECTION IN DIFFICULT TIMES

BRIDGING THE DISTANCE

Dayna is a senior violinist at Sistema Toronto Scarborough who has always been motivated and hard-working. For Dayna, Sistema has also been a place of friendship and connection, and it's been our pleasure to see her making music with her close friends Tefia and Alyssa over the years. This spring Dayna and her family went on a long awaited trip to visit family in India and due to COVID-19 have not been able to return home. Our Sistema Online Sessions (SOS) have brought Dayna, Tefia and Alyssa together three days a week to continue their learning and keep their friendship strong. Across the classroom or across the globe, we are proud of Dayna, Tefia and Alyssa for always working as a team!

CHILD MENTAL HEALTH: A GROWING CONCERN

Yorkwoods student Hannah has always been a model student, always cheerful, working hard to achieve her goals and helpful to her teachers and friends whenever needed. So her teacher was more than concerned when Hannah disclosed that she was struggling with her mental health and having thoughts about self-harm during one of her SOS lessons. Our team immediately connected with Hannah's parents, school resources and social services to get Hannah the help she needed. Providing access to caring trusted adults students can reach out to is a crucial part of our SOS initiative, where students like Hannah are experiencing high levels of stress, anxiety and loneliness.

HOME ALONE: A COVID-19 STORY

Like many of our students, 12-year-old DeeDee's parents are front-line workers who are at work all day while DeeDee stays home by herself. In the early days of our SOS initiative we were surprised to see so many students like DeeDee arriving early to online class, reluctant to leave at the end, and repeatedly asking for longer sessions and more sessions. We quickly realized that Sistema classes are often the only regular interaction students have with the outside world. These students are excited to see their friends every day and more eager than ever to be challenged in their learning. Connection with community is a high priority for our team, and providing regular classes with engaging learning and social activities is the best way we can provide that connection.



MORE THAN MUSIC.

BUILDING COMMUNITY, BREAKING CYCLES OF POVERTY.

Sistema Toronto operates in priority neighbourhoods across the city, providing students and their families with a strong foundation designed to:

- Break the cycle of poverty
- Provide students with early interventions and crucial social-emotional skills
- Offer team-based culturally responsive and inclusive after-school programming
 - Increase access to nutritious food and health education
 - Enhance academic skills through social development
- Connect students with peers and mentors in their community
- Pave the way to excellence in high school, university and beyond

“WE TAKE SISTEMA SERIOUSLY. WE KNOW OUR DAUGHTER IS SAFE, WE KNOW SHE IS LEARNING TO PLAY THE VIOLIN AND THAT SHE WILL BENEFIT FROM THIS SKILL SHE IS LEARNING. IT COULD MEAN THAT SHE WILL GO ON TO ARTS SCHOOL AND A LIFE OF MUSIC AND SCHOLARSHIP AND GIVING BACK TO HER COMMUNITY, BECAUSE THIS IS WHAT SHE IS LEARNING TO DO.”

- TRACY, SISTEMA PARENT

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

There are many ways you can support Sistema Toronto. Whether you would like to make a one-time donation, join our monthly giving program or host a fundraising event, your donation will make an important impact on children and families in need.

By supporting Sistema Toronto, your impact can be:

ONE-TIME DONATION	MONTHLY DONATION	YOUR IMPACT
\$3,500	\$290	The cost for one child for an entire year
\$2,000	\$165	Instruments for a trio: violin, viola and cello
\$1,000	\$85	One cello
\$500	\$40	One violin or viola
\$250	\$20	Sheet music for one class
\$100	\$8	Strings for four violins
\$77	\$6.50	A healthy snack for one child every day during the school year

OTHER WAYS TO SUPPORT SISTEMA INCLUDE:

SISTEMA SPIRIT GALA

The Sistema Spirit Gala is an annual party and fundraiser bringing together Sistema Toronto supporters and lovers of live music to support music education and social development in marginalized communities. We offer different levels of sponsorship tailored to fit your needs and also welcome in-kind donations for our silent auction.

CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS

Sistema Toronto works with local businesses and brands to share their commitment to community building through music education and social development. Partner with Sistema Toronto and share with your network and community how your organization facilitates musical and intellectual opportunities for low-income children across the GTA.

THIRD PARTY EVENTS

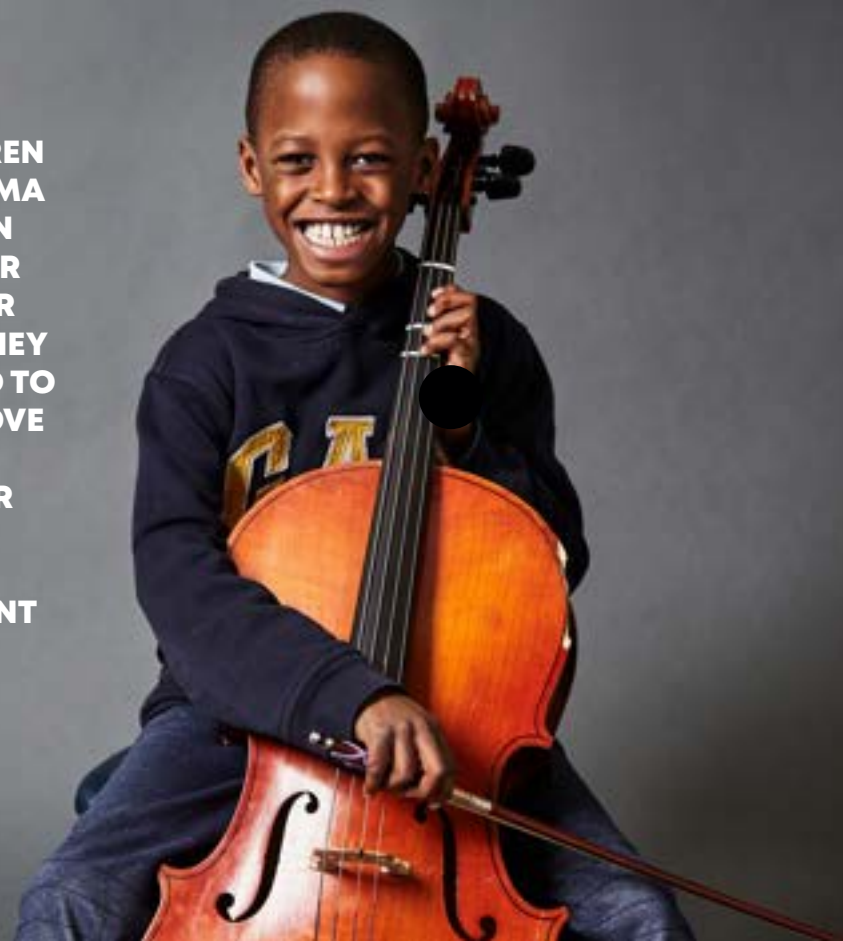
Hosting an event in your community? Use your next block party, garage sale, office party or special event to help fundraise for Sistema Toronto and help raise awareness of our programming. Performance opportunities from Sistema students are also available to help liven up any event.

SPONSOR A WORKSHOP

We work with local musicians across Toronto to bring interactive educational workshops to our centres. Sistema Toronto is dedicated to promoting cultural diversity through repertoire and workshops that reflect our students and Canada’s history. By exposing students to music and culture taught by a variety of artists, these workshops help broaden our students’ awareness and cultural competency of music and culture.

“EVER SINCE MY CHILDREN GOT INVOLVED IN SISTEMA TORONTO, I HAVE SEEN IMPROVEMENT IN THEIR EDUCATION, BEHAVIOR AND SO MUCH MORE. THEY ALWAYS LOOK FORWARD TO THEIR CLASSES. THEY LOVE NOT ONLY THE PROGRAMS, BUT THEIR TEACHERS AS WELL.”

- DORIS, SISTEMA PARENT



TESTIMONIALS

“Thank you for giving S. such a great gift that she will have and use for life! We have noticed such a big change in her artistically with drawing she has developed an ability to focus and draw what she is seeing and I think music has opened her mind and it really surprised us to see this. It’s truly amazing to see her drawings and a big difference in math! She was on an IEP* for this and now she doesn’t need it anymore. This is truly huge for us and thought you needed to hear her improvements. She has come a long way and we really need to say thank you, all of you, from our family to you. The gift of music has made miracles, you guys are amazing!”

Sistema Toronto parent

* an IEP is an Individualized Education Plan, which identifies the student’s specific learning expectations and outlines how the school will address these expectations through appropriate accommodations, program modifications and/or alternative programs as well as specific instructional and assessment strategies.



TESTIMONIALS

“It’s unbelievably rewarding to see this next generation of kids, who were not born into highly privileged situations, receiving this opportunity to feel and learn and to experience the particular affection for each other that is developed through the artistic education. I get such a wonderful sense of comradery from these kids and it’s really beautiful.”

**Peter Oundjian, Conductor Emeritus,
Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Sistema Toronto Musical Ambassador**



DONOR HALL OF FAME.

Sistema Toronto depends wholly on the generosity of our donors. Our supporters are corporations, foundations, government and individuals who share our belief in the importance of transforming the lives of children from marginalized neighbourhoods in Toronto through music education and social development. We'd like to acknowledge our donors who have contributed \$25,000+ since our founding in 2011*:

*Contributions listed are as of December 2019 and are subject to change

\$500,000 +

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Gordon and Ruth Gooder
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\$300,000 +

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A young Black girl with short hair, wearing a light blue polo shirt, is playing a violin. She is looking down at the instrument with a focused expression. The violin is a warm, reddish-brown color. The background is a plain, light grey.

Sistema

Toronto

**WORK WITH US AND BE
INSTRUMENTAL IN
TRANSFORMING
CHILDREN'S LIVES!**

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