

Healing Through Harmony: A Review of Music Engagement Opportunities for Medical Students Across Texas



Brendan Olson, Cortland Baum, Seth Johnston, Paul Oancea, Justin Chen

Introduction

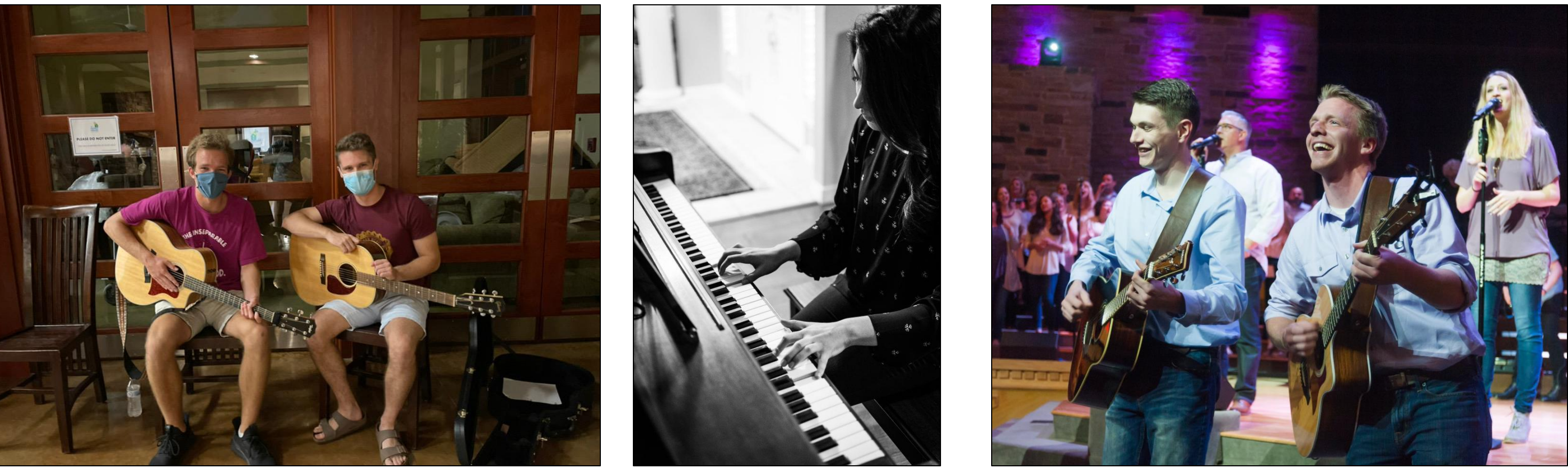
Music has long been valued as a tool for emotional expression, healing, and human connection. In recent years, interest in the role of the arts—particularly music—within medical education has grown, with emerging evidence supporting its value in promoting wellness, empathy, and patient-centered care. However, little is known about the extent to which medical schools actively support musical engagement among students. This project surveys music-related opportunities across Texas medical schools and highlights Aggie Doc Musicians: Rhythm and Remedies (ADM: RnR) as a service-based model that fosters student wellness and community impact. Below highlights the need for music within the medical education setting.

Impact of Music on Patients

- Music Therapy has been shown to:
- Significantly improve chronic pain and depression¹
 - Stabilize vitals and reduce pain post-operatively²
 - Reduce pain and anxiety and improve satisfaction in the ED³
 - Improve functioning in serious mental disorders, including gait in Parkinson's disease and social interactions in schizophrenia⁴

Music and Medical Education

- Music engagement during medical education is associated with:
- Reduced stress and burnout among students⁵
 - Emotional regulation, improved empathy, and peer connection⁶
 - Enhanced fine motor dexterity, particularly in surgical skills⁷

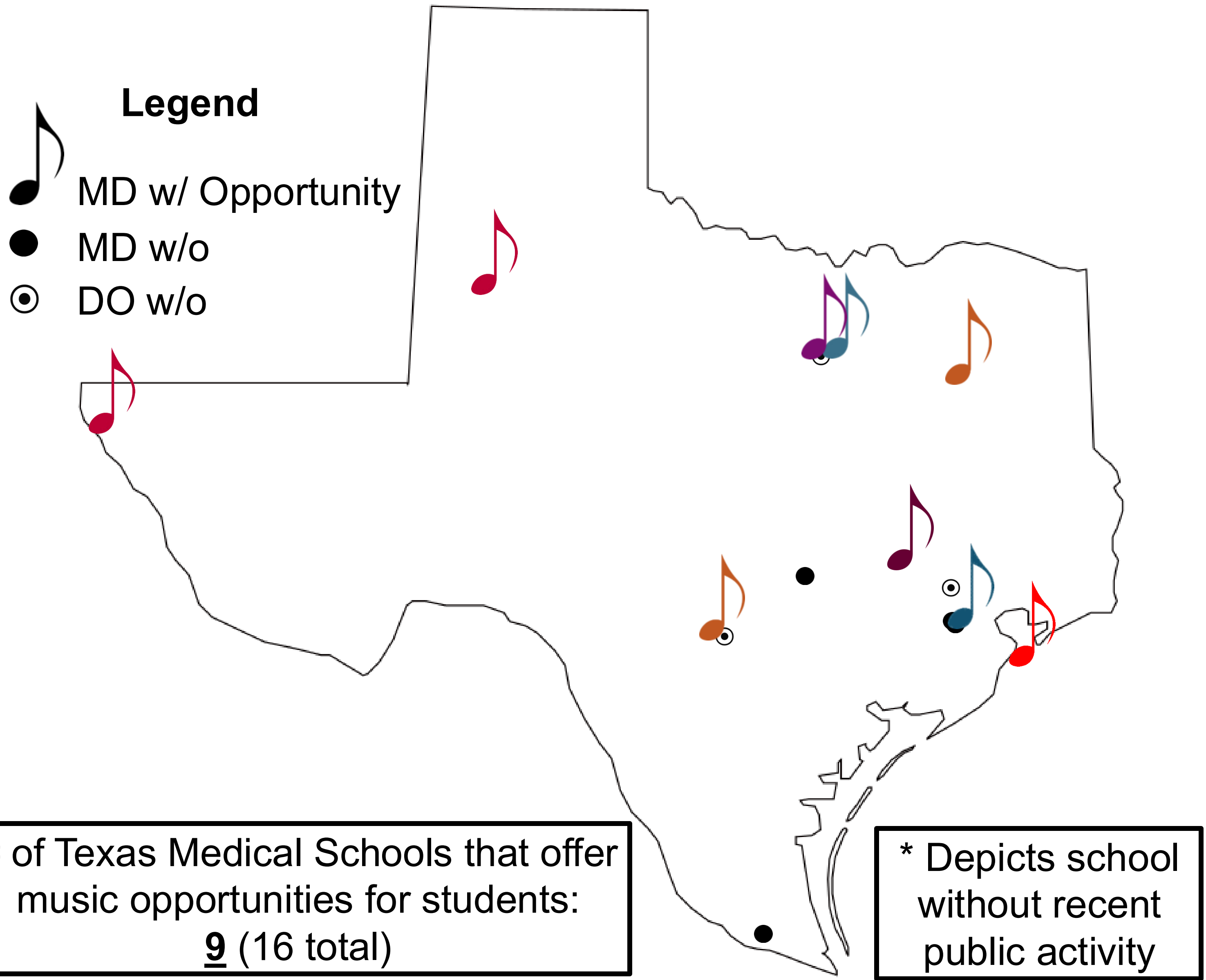


Methods

We conducted a review of all MD and DO medical schools in Texas using publicly available online resources. Each school's official website and associated student organization listings were examined, and supplemental searches were performed using terms such as "music," "performance," and "musician" alongside each school's name. Programs were included if they involved medical students and offered opportunities for musical engagement, regardless of whether they were formally integrated into the curriculum or student-led. These included performance groups, service initiatives, wellness-related ensembles, and campus-affiliated arts organizations. Due to variability in website maintenance, some listings may reflect inactive or outdated programs, and opportunities that lacked a digital presence may not have been captured.

Results

Fig. 1 Texas Medical Schools with known Musical Initiatives (2025)



	Art & Music in Patient Care Group* <i>Performances at nearby Houston Hospitals</i>
	Music Performance Arts Interest Group* <i>TCU School of Music performs often nearby</i>
	Flu Fighters, MusiCare, Play it Forward Charity* <i>Charity and hospital performances</i>
	Musicians Association Student Org <i>Performance for TTUHSC and the community</i>
	Music and Medicine Student Org <i>Welcomes new students, plays for community</i>
	Harmony and Hallway Healers + Student Org <i>Music performance within Sealy Hospital</i>
	Lymph Notes Acapella, M-Cats Jazz Group <i>Community and hospital performances</i>
	Music & Medicine* <i>School of Performing Arts Students at clinics</i>

Discussion ... ADM: RnR

Music is impactful for both medical professionals and patients. The success of the handful of medical schools across the state implementing musical initiatives is encouraging. Texas A&M College of Medicine presents a unique challenge to offer opportunities to its students with its split campus model. It also stands to make a unique impact, potentially offering service opportunities across 5 communities in the state of Texas. Learning from the pitfalls and successes of current programs will help optimize our own program.

Soon, ADM: RnR hopes to connect first year medical students to the organization quickly, create liaisons at each individual campus, and streamline musical service opportunities for students. This will provide a connecting point for students to overlap their passions of music and patient care. Additionally, we will aim to create resources for students and professionals for understanding the role of areas like music therapy in patient care, especially those patients with prolonged hospital stays. Helping serve not only the Bryan-College Station area, but Round Rock, Dallas, Willowbrook, and downtown Houston will help A&M improve it's reach and impact on patients in need across the state of Texas. As the program grows, we hope that other medical schools in the area follow suit in design and implementation, with possible collaborations to improve impact.

One of the difficulties staying involved and active in music that is commonly cited by medical students is the time-intensive demand of both pre-clinical and clinical training throughout medical school.⁵ With the number of programs appearing defunct through thorough search, it's clear how easy it is for medical student musical opportunities to disappear without active interest, involvement, or leadership. A faculty liaison able to control the sheer number of administrative tasks associated with developing relationships with hospitals, clinics, or nursing homes would be essential to a successful program. In the meantime, ADM: RnR officers are committed to improving the program and building a foundation to be grown by future classes, to include both students and faculty.

References

1. Chen, S., yuan, Q., Wang, C. *et al.* The effect of music therapy for patients with chronic pain: systematic review and meta-analysis. *BMC Psychol* 13, 455 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-025-02643-x>
2. Li G, Yu L, Yang Y, Deng J, Shao L, Zeng C. Effects of Perioperative Music Therapy on Patients with Postoperative Pain and Anxiety: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *J Integr Complement Med*. 2024;30(1):37-46. doi:10.1089/jicm.2022.0803
3. Angkoonattassaneeyarat, Chuenruthai, et al. "The Effect of Music Therapy on Treating Patients Pain and Anxiety in Emergency Department: A Randomized Controlled Trial." *International Journal of Emergency Medicine*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, 2025, doi:10.1186/s12245-025-00878-4
4. Kamioka, Hiroharu et al. "Effectiveness of music therapy: a summary of systematic reviews based on randomized controlled trials of music interventions." *Patient preference and adherence* vol. 8 727-54. 16 May. 2014, doi:10.2147/PPA.S61340
5. Tu, Alexander & Truong, Tiffany & Carlson, Kristy & Brooks, Matthew & Dowdall, Jayme. (2021). Reducing "Treble" with Performance Focused Music Programs in Medical School. *Journal of Wellness*. 3. 1-6. 10.18297/jwellness/vol3/iss2/5.
6. Orchard, Alice Rae et al. "Music in medical education: A critical interpretive synthesis." *Medical education* vol. 58,5 (2024): 507-522. doi:10.1111/medu.15255
7. Sun, Ryan R et al. "Influence of musical background on surgical skills acquisition." *Surgery* vol. 170,1 (2021): 75-80. doi:10.1016/j.surg.2021.01.013