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Dirk Jonathan Schmidt
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STRATEGIES FOR MOTIVATING BAND STUDENTS
EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTY IN SKILLS ACQUISITION

by

Dirk Jonathan Schmidt

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The thesis of Dirk Jonathan Schmidt is approved:

(Date)

Signature Deleted

12-15-93

Signature Deleted

12-15-93

Signature Deleted

12-15-93

Committee Chairperson

Accepted for the Division:

Signature Deleted

12-15-93

Accepted for the College:

Signature Deleted

Dean

12-16-93

Accepted for the University:

Signature Deleted

Dean of Graduate Studies

12-16-93

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to establish a consensus on the type of music learning environment that affords the band student the greatest level of individual success. Both cooperative and competitive environments were examined. This project also investigated alternative methods for helping the low ability band student enjoy success in an instrumental music curriculum. Finally, the research identified teaching strategies for aiding the low ability student to be successful in a competitive learning environment.

The research results do not conclusively reach a consensus about the teaching environment that affords band students the greatest amount of success. The majority of the band director respondents utilized a cooperative learning environment, with some competitive elements. This environment utilized many of the teaching-learning methods needed for success by the low ability band student.

The needs of the low ability band student proposed in the research for certain instructional environments and strategies were supported by the responses of music educators to a questionnaire. It was discovered that while

the low ability band student could enjoy group success, individual success was also important. It was determined that the band director could foster individual success by encouraging all students to do their best and to use teaching strategies, such as mastery learning, to aid the low ability band student.

Specific strategies were suggested by the research and supported in the questionnaire results, which aid the low ability band student. Data indicated that providing students with extra help, including the use of peer tutors, helped students perform on the same level as their peers. Providing instruction in small units aided the low ability band students in mastering difficult passages of music. Seating the high and low ability music students next to each other enabled students to work together in class.

Chapter I

Introduction

"I want my band to win the competition." J. W. Brownlee (personal communication, October 15, 1992.) How often do band directors make this, or similar statements when asked about the goals for their school bands? Do their music students share this desire to win?

Studies show that many band directors and a high percentage of their students share a desire to win a competition as a common goal (Austin, 1990). As band directors work toward this goal they often encourage or require the students to compete individually by challenging for chairs. A challenge is defined as a competition between two students for a seating assignment which reflects the student's level of musicianship. But what about the students who cannot win the challenge? They may be the frustrated students who try to win a higher chair in the band numerous times, always failing, until they finally give up. The band director's response is often to dismiss these students as problem students. The students are transferred to non-performing groups or "encouraged" to quit the band (Hagner, 1985).

Does failure to win mean that students do not have

talent? The answer to this question may depend on the quality of the challenge, the levels of student musicianship, or the criteria used for assessment. A beginning band student competing against an advanced student can lose because he/she lacks experience instead of musical ability.

So, why do students fail? One answer is clear to the student. The first few failures are attributed to a lack of effort. However, subsequent failures are ultimately attributed to their lack of ability (Covington & Omelich, 1985).

Students like to succeed. High ability students can succeed consistently enough to warrant their continued effort. However, low ability students do not succeed often enough and are quick to give up when confronted with another competition.

In order for low ability students to continue to exert effort they must be able to succeed. The research was designed to establish a consensus on one of two teaching environments, either cooperative or competitive, which afford students the most success. This research project investigated alternative strategies which enabled low ability students to be successful. Following an extensive review of the literature, the writer developed an instrument designed to identify the methods of motivation used by band directors for low ability, middle school instrumental music

students. Data was collected using a written survey of middle school/ junior high band instructors teaching in North Florida area school districts.

Based upon responses to the survey, plus a review of related literature, the writer recommended strategies which showed promise for enabling low ability students in band to succeed in a competitive learning environment. The data collected was analyzed and collated into a written teaching guide to assist directors of middle school bands in motivating and teaching low ability students. It is intended that the material be disseminated to band directors for use in the Northeast Florida area school districts. While it is beyond the scope of the present study, the writer intends to collect data regarding the effects of the study's recommendations on the music performing skills of middle school band students and teaching strategies of band directors.

Definition of Terms

Attribution Theory - A research theory stating a student's perception of his/her performance is linked to his/her perception of his/her ability (Weiner, 1990).

Challenge - A term used with instrumental groups to describe the competition between two students for a seating assignment which reflects the student's level of musicianship.

Mastery Learning - A term referring to a teaching strategy where a student achieves at his/her own rate and value is placed on effort to stay on task.

Musical Achievement - A term referring to the attainment of musical qualities measured over a short period of time, such as a week or a month (Colwell, 1970).

Pass Off System - A system of testing that allows the band student to play an assigned musical selection as soon as the student has it learned. This system is often used to select performing members of a group.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

"It is widely recognized in our society that personal worth depends largely on one's accomplishments" (Covington, 1984, p. 8) When the topic is music, success largely depends on how well the students can perform, or how many notes they can play. Researchers are beginning to recognize differing strategies for motivating students to succeed and to perform more difficult skills.

Research in the field of motivation is fairly new. Most of the research prior to 1960 was conducted on animals, as humans were considered too complex to study (Weiner, 1990). In the 1960s, motivation was linked with the levels of energy and drive. Then in the early 1970's, Thorndike and Hull reported that if the student perceives a reward as a controlling factor over the learner, the effect of the reward was diminished (Weiner, 1990).

In the late 1970's, research on motivation shifted from studies of the mechanics of motivation and behavior to investigations on how personality influences cognition. Researchers focused new attention on individual differences, such as ability levels. Rotter was among the first to

document that the learner's expectancy of further success increases after a success and decreases after a failure (Weiner 1990).

In the 1990's motivational research addressed achievement motivation. Also called attribution theory, achievement motivation is the theory that the perception of performance is related to the perception of ability. Attribution theory suggests that perceived successes are attributed to internal forces, while perceived failure is often blamed on external forces (Weiner 1979, Chandler, Chiarella, and Auria, 1988). Chandler, Chiarella, and Auria (1988) examined 234, ninth through twelfth grade music students. Their study revealed that effort attribution led to more practice; more practice led to more confidence; more confidence elicited more success; and increased success led to increased effort, thereby completing the cycle of success (Chandler, et. al., 1988).

Playing a musical instrument is a complex skill often attempted by students of widely varying abilities. Such students often possess a talent, or natural ability, for some or all areas of music, such as performance, composition, music research, conducting, or listening (Colwell, 1970). However, it requires more than just talent to become an effective instrumental music performer. Students need a high level of skill and coordination to achieve success on a musical instrument (Kohut, 1973).

Musical achievement is the attainment of musical qualities of student performance which can be measured over a short period of time (Colwell, 1970). For example, musical achievement includes a beginning student's ability to play the first line of an instrumental methods book. Distinct differences in students' abilities appear even after the first few weeks of study (Kohut, 1973). In a group setting, the higher ability students become bored from not being challenged, while the lesser ability students become frustrated because they cannot keep up with the level of performance expected.

In addition to teaching music in the classroom, the teacher must also motivate the students to practice at home. Colwell suggests that the most frequently used motivational strategy by music teachers is extrinsic or "ego" motivation. An example of extrinsic motivation is the need to "beat your neighbor" to succeed (Colwell, 1992).

Competition is one form of extrinsic motivation. Kohut (1973) states that friendly competition can motivate students to practice at home. Band directors also commonly use competitive seating plans for motivation, an example of the "beat your neighbor" motivation strategy. Colwell (1992) states that research is indicating that competition creates an inequity of motivation in the field of music. He continues that music motivation should be intrinsic, reflections of such exhortations as "have fun" or "do your

best". Colwell (1992) states that intrinsic motivation will persist longer and is more equitable for the students.

If the learning environment is favorable, students will often succeed. Students who are satisfied with their current level of performance will try harder, while those who are not satisfied will try less (Chandler et al., 1988). Student satisfaction often translates into feelings of self-worth. There are three factors that influence self worth: 1) ability, 2) effort and 3) performance. Both ability and effort have an influence on performance (Covington, 1984). Students are more willing to learn if they have a reason to learn and believe they can learn.

Instead of being a fixed, innate attribute, ability is determined, in part, by perceived talent and sense of competence. Covington (1984) tells us "the degree of certainty about one's ability status, as well as level of ability perception, appears to be a crucial factor in resiliency to failure." If students are uncertain about their ability, they often seek success to resolve the conflict. Students prefer to believe that they have high ability. According to Covington (1984), younger students believe that ability is changed through effort and that trying hard increases intellect. However, Weiner (1985) disagrees, arguing that students see ability as relatively stable and internal. He argues that the factor that changes is luck, which is unstable and external. Consequently, low

ability persons compensate for lack of ability by valuing effort over ability.

Low ability students require differing motivational strategies than higher ability students. Failure combined with perceived lack of ability often leads to a lack of motivation (Ames 1984). Students often disguise this lack of motivation with excuses or complaints.

In a competitive environment, ability is at a premium. High ability students thrive, often looking for extra work to enhance their learning. However, low achievers feel trapped. They are not sufficiently talented to compete and are not taught how to compete, and so they often fail. The teacher is ultimately the cause of this failure because instruction is driven by competition and performance (Austin, 1990).

While competence can be shown in the absence of competition and successful competition is possible by those who are not competent, students competing often concentrate more on their ability than on the task (Ames, 1984). In a typical competitive environment, students proceed to the next level without necessarily mastering the current level. Low ability students, who often need several attempts to succeed, do not have an opportunity to remedy failures in a competitive environment.

As noted, in competition students concentrate more on their ability than on the task. Thus it is hard to get

students to concentrate on improving their performance in a competitive situation. Satisfaction is often based on winning or losing and not on how hard the students worked or how much they learned. For the winners, satisfaction comes only from improvements over earlier attempts (Clinkenbeard, 1989).

In a competition there are one or more losers for every winner. Ames & Ames (1984) state that a student's failing in a competitive environment leads to his/her developing strong negative feelings. Competition is also likely to encourage students to create unreachable performance goals, thus insuring their failure. Some students react to competition by trying to hide some of their ability, as part of their failure avoidance strategy.

"It is well known that competition raises doubts about students' ability by directing their attention to social comparison information" (Covington & Omelich, 1984, p. 1039). Students evaluate their performance as low after losing and high after winning. Complex skills such as creativity are hindered by competition and the performance of the students is not enhanced.

Band students often compete in groups as well as individually. A group competition can elicit a very different response to success or failure. Once again, the low and high achievers react differently to success or failure.

Group success can be very beneficial for the low achieving student (Ames & Ames, 1984). In a group environment, failure is often attributed to others in the group and not to the individual. Unfortunately, according to Austin (1990), high achievers tend to point fingers at low performers for the reason for failure. In a cooperative environment, group success enhances the low performer's self confidence, while group failure tends to lessen all students' self confidence.

A continuing controversy surrounds the use of cooperative learning and competitive learning to teach low ability students. Covington and Omelich concluded that when competition gives students no opportunity to compensate for failure, the students lost their motivation. In 65 of 122 studies, the results showed more cooperative environments resulted in higher achievement than do competitive environments (Austin, 1988). This extensive body of research confirms that the classroom environment is very important to student performance. Hamann and others (1988) state that a student-centered classroom should result in the highest musical achievement for all ability levels.

Reward systems are perceived differently by students within competitive and cooperative environments. In competition, success is equated to being better than others in the group. In cooperation, success is seen as doing good work. Motivation in competition continues only as long as

success follows or until the student loses. Motivation in cooperation continues as long as students continue to work hard. Competitive classroom environments also lead to uncertainty about the criteria for success. In failure, the student wonders about the fairness of the grading. These doubts work to inhibit student performance (Covington & Omelich, 1984).

One method for helping the slower learner succeed is to use an individualized approach, such as mastery learning. With an individualized approach, motivation to succeed works because one student can be successful even though others fail. Covington and Omelich believe that mastery learning may be the best approach for the low ability students, since it allows students many opportunities to succeed. A study conducted in 1984 showed that even though low ability students have many failures, the use of mastery learning enables them to persist to the goal and derive the satisfaction that comes from success.

One basis for students' success in skills acquisition is the opportunity to master small segments of a skill at a time. This is possible in a task-oriented structure, such as mastery learning. Mastery learning in a teaching strategy where a student achieves at his/her own rate and value is placed on effort to stay on task. Slower learners profit from an environment which allows the students to work at their own pace. This type of environment gives the

slower learner many opportunities to succeed (Covington & Omelich, 1984).

Students enjoy learning more when they are successful in reaching their goals. "Asmus (1985) found that his sample of music students attributed success and failure more to effort than to ability, which is frequently viewed as uncontrollable and unchangeable" (Chandler et al, 1988, p. 250). Junior high students judge the likelihood of success by: 1) how difficult the assignment is, 2) their perceived ability, and 3) the amount of preparation and effort they have expended (Covington 1984). If students are successful, they often try to replicate the event to lead to future successes. If students fail, they try to alter the cause of the failure. A low ability student can increase the effort level to offset low ability or attempt to change events to insure success. If students fail too frequently they begin to believe that they have little control over future performances (Austin, 1990).

As students try to reduce guilt after a failure, they often increase their effort. However, high effort elicits high negative reactions if a failure ensues, while low effort directly triggers guilt (Covington & Omelich, 1984). Low ability students often avoid the guilt by avoiding the task itself.

Research suggests that students' experiencing failure progress from motivation to be successful, to avoidance of

failure, and finally to acceptance of failure (Covington & Omelich, 1985). The research further shows evidence that failure-oriented students see failure as inability. Procrastination is a typical failure avoidance technique. It presents an excuse for the failure other than lack of ability. However, more achievement and effort is manifested by failure-avoidance students than by failure-accepting students. A failure-avoidance student suffers more humiliation at failure than does a failure-accepting student. When the failure avoidance-students cannot find ways to succeed, they finally accept their lack of ability and move into the failure-acceptance stage (Covington & Omelich, 1985).

Failure-avoidance and failure-acceptance students have a great deal of difficulty in competitive environments. Unfortunately, students often turn unclear situations into competitive situations (Ames & Ames, 1984). Competitive conditions exaggerate the role of ability in students' perceptions of self worth. In competition, students either win or lose. Austin (1988) suggests, further, that prior experience with competition often leads to a dependency on continued involvement in competitive situations.

A crucial part of teaching is motivating the student to learn. According to Chandler, the responsibility for motivation lies with the teacher (1988). To be an effective instructor, a teacher must provide students with reasons to

learn the information which they are given. Motivation of students is an important educational goal, both for the teacher and the student (Covington & Omelich, 1984). Teachers often create a competitive environment for students as a method of motivation.

All teachers should follow some general rules when creating the learning environment. Teachers should vary the techniques of teaching to reduce boredom. They should attempt to keep tedious routines to a minimum. When a student is perceived as having a poor self-concept, the teacher should attempt to attack that with positive statements (Bey, 1986).

One critical component of any successful model is teacher response. Teacher actions in the classroom affect the self-esteem of students. Asmus (1985) suggests that teachers should handle success or failure by students in the same manner. This advice varies, depending on the age of the student. The younger students internalize praise while the older student does not take the praise internally, but attributes it to outside forces.

Austin (1988) cautions the teacher not to treat high and low ability students alike. Treating students alike will not lead to lasting motivation in all students, since low ability students think that they cannot do a task and value effort over ability. High ability students usually try to create strategies to accomplish a difficult task.

Ames and Ames (1984) demonstrate that students similar in achievement can hold different self views under different reward structures.

A wide variety of abilities creates a difficult situation for teachers. The instructors must teach to the middle of the class, at the same time helping the low students keep up and not boring the high students. Kohut (1973) suggests that teachers give remedial work for the lower students while giving extra work to the higher students.

Many teachers use competition as a motivational technique. Competition helps the student meet short term goals. However, it also may hinder a long term love of learning. Some students thrive in competition while others feel threatened in an environment of high competition, order, structure, and teacher control. Competition is effective with gifted students to motivate them to perform to their ability (Clinkenbeard, 1989).

To aid low ability students, teachers often use techniques that de-emphasize ability, such as cooperative learning and mastery learning. Teachers using learning-to-learn skills help to de-emphasize ability. However teachers should be cautioned to avoid rote learning, which has limited value for skills acquisition. According to Covington (1984), teachers should instruct so that any emphasis on ability does not interfere with the willingness

to learn.

Competition tends to influence the teacher by separating the students into winners and losers. As the winners raise the level of competition, the teacher tends to further differentiate between high and low achievers. Since a competitive environment does not offer many avenues for low ability students to succeed, teachers should work to lessen the amount of competition in the classroom. Teachers can minimize competition by rotating seating and encouraging peer tutoring (Austin, 1990).

"Students want caring and helpful teachers - those who are willing to help them reach their individual goals" (Hamann, 1988, p. 215). Different motivational orientations result from different classroom goal structures. If the goals are too high, the students become discouraged. If the goals are too low, then success loses its value. Thus, to sustain motivation a student's goals must be realistic. Often competition leads to unrealistic goals. Bey (1986) encourages teachers to tailor the subject matter for low ability students to help them meet their specific goals.

Kohut (1973) also cautions teachers not to become frustrated or impatient with the slower students. These students often can become very successful musicians. Low ability students will be aided by being taught how to practice and by being given small sequences to learn. This is a form of mastery learning applied to the music

curriculum.

Chapter III

Design

In order to make recommendations to junior high/ middle school band instructors on strategies for aiding low ability students in skills acquisition, the researcher gathered data over a period of six months. The collection of data was organized into two phases. The first phase of the investigation was accomplished by researching the following five topics: 1) the history of motivational research and current trends, 2) teaching environments, including competitive, cooperative, and the affects of these environments on low ability students, 3) the characteristics and needs of low ability students, 4) the characteristics of music students, both low and high ability, and 5) the recommendations made by researchers for teaching techniques for both low and high ability music students.

The second phase of the study involved the development of an open-ended questionnaire on teaching strategies, distributed to junior high/ middle school band directors in northeast Florida. The data collected from the directors was compared with the data collected in the research for evidence of common attributes. The data was also compiled

to identify common techniques stated by the directors as being successful in assisting low ability students to succeed. Simple descriptive statistics were used to interpret this body of information. These analyses serve as the basis for recommended teaching strategies for junior high/middle school band directors.

Participants

During the 1993 meeting of middle school and junior high band directors attending the Florida Music Educators Association Conference held in Tampa, Florida, 111 questionnaires were distributed by the writer. A total of 43 questionnaires were returned.

A short letter explaining the purpose of the questionnaire was attached to the questionnaire (see Appendix A for a copy of this instrument). The researcher was granted a few minutes during the meeting to invite all those attending to complete the questionnaire, and to explain the purpose of data collection. To encourage candid responses, the questionnaire was completed anonymously.

Procedures

Participants were asked to respond to 22 open-ended questions covering two basic areas. The first area pertained to their actions as a band director in response to a hypothetical student situation, such as a "challenge". Directors were also asked about actions taken both toward the winners and toward the losers of the challenge. The second section of the survey investigated the classroom teaching environment. The band director was asked about the perceived effect of the environment on different ability level students.

The writer requested all surveys to be returned by January 31, 1993. Surveys were checked for completeness and a percentage of return was calculated. The writer then charted the responses to each question for similarities and differences. The results were compared with the results of research undertaken at the beginning of the project for any correlations. Finally, recommendations for effective teaching strategies for low ability students were made by the researcher. The results were made available to the research participants.

Chapter IV

Findings

The following information was ascertained through a questionnaire distributed to northeast Florida band directors. The questions from the questionnaire are presented and followed by a summary of the responses in narrative form.

1. What grade(s) do you teach?

The instructions for the questionnaire requested that all answers be based on only grades six, seven, and eight. Instructors of other grades were asked to use information from only the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students. 98% of those responding indicated teaching grades six, seven, and eight. 12% of those polled also instructed grades other than six, seven or eight. (See Appendix B).

2. What subject(s) do you teach?

All of the respondents indicated teaching band, although only 19% were specific about having both a beginning and an advanced band, with 14% indicating an additional intermediate band class. 42% of those polled responded that they taught other subjects as well as band, including in-school suspension, computers, general music,

chorus, guitar, physical education, Spanish, biology, and health. (See Appendix B).

3. How many years have you been teaching?

The years of teaching ranged from 1 to 35, with one person not responding. The average number of years of experience was 13.2 years. (See Appendix B).

4. What method(s) is used to group your students in class periods? (i.e., ability, grade, random, etc.)

The primary means of grouping students was by ability, especially into advanced groups which was the method used by 74% of the respondents. The basic grouping method of 51% of the respondents was grouping by grade level. 28% used a combination of ability and grade level. Other methods for grouping included by instrument family, by attitude, according to desire, and through attendance at summer band sessions. (See Appendix B).

5. What criterion are used for grading band students?

The majority (93%) of band teachers used playing tests as a portion of the band grade. Another 60% used class participation, while 56% used practice records for grading purposes. 51% made use of written assignments and tests for a portion of the grade. Other grading criteria noted were attendance at activities (23%), attitude (12%), audition (2%) and instinct (2%). A combination of two or more of the above methods was used by a large majority (96%) of the educators. Only 4% used one method for grading. 4% of

those completing the questionnaire did not answer the question. (See Appendix B).

6. Is this grading system consistent for all levels of students? (Beginning, Intermediate, Advanced)

All of the respondents indicated that they used the same grading criteria for all levels of students. One respondent noted that the percentage weighing of the different criteria changed for different times of the year, but remained constant for all levels of students. (See Appendix B).

7. Are the students required to play tests for part of their grade?

All of the responses indicated that the students were required to play tests as part of their grade. An inconsistency was noted in response to question 6, as only 93% noted playing tests as part of the grade. Allowing for the 4% non-response rate for question 6, there remained a 3% discrepancy. (See Appendix B).

8. Are the tests performed privately (one-on-one) or in front of the class?

98% indicated testing was done in front of the class. The remaining 2% did not answer the question. Private tests were used by 16% of respondents in some situations, based on the directors' analysis of each situation. Some of these situations included challenges, auditions, and students with low confidence levels. (See Appendix B).

9. Do you assign seating? (1st chair, 2nd chair, 3rd chair, etc.)

Ability seating was assigned by 96% of those responding, while only 2% indicated that ability seating was not used (2% did not answer this item). One respondent noted that even though ability seating was used, the 1st chair player did not always receive the 1st part. Often the parts were moved around among section members to insure uniform learning by all students. (See Appendix B).

10. Do you assign seats based on the playing test grade?

The majority of respondents (79%) assigned seating based on test grades for instrument playing. While 2% did not answer the question, the remaining 19% did not use the "playing" test grades for seating, but instead chose other methods, such as challenges, auditions, and written test grades. The writer noted that of the other methods, all include playing ability, including the written test options, since that director also used playing tests to determine seating. Thus, all of those responding used playing ability in some form to determine ability seating of their students. (See Appendix B).

11. Do you encourage students to "challenge" other students for chairs?

Student challenging was encouraged by 84% of the directors but not emphasized. The challenge system was used by the students to earn a better seating assignment. Once

introduced, the interested students used the system, often without encouragement from the director. (See Appendix B).

12. Are the students required to challenge other students?

A large majority (94%) did not require challenges. 4% indicated that challenges were required only if another student challenged a particular student. No answer was given by 2% of those completing questionnaires. (See Appendix B).

13. Do you use any method other than tests and challenges for seating students? If so, what method(s)?

The responses to this question were evenly split with 44% answering no and 44% responding yes. 12% did not answer the question. Of the methods proposed (44% of responses), the most frequent method was dependent on the director's preference or observed ability (25%). Behavior of the student (20%) and the "pass off system" (20%) both were listed equally, although the behavior of the student often caused him/her to lose a chair. The "pass off system" allowed the student to gain chairs by performing or "passing off" their music for the band director as soon as the student learned a musical selection. The other responses offered were All- County band performance (10%) seniority (5%), attitude (5%), written tests (5%), and auditions (5%). Seating strong players next to weaker players so that students helped each other was also listed (5%). (See Appendix B).

14. Are the students required to pass an audition to advance to a higher level band class?

56% of those responding indicated that the higher level classes required the students to pass an audition for placement. 42% of respondents did not require auditions and 12% did not answer the question. Of those responding positively, 8% indicated that advanced classes were available to all and the audition was required only for the top performing group. (See Appendix B).

15. Do you vary teaching strategies for students who cannot win in competition with other students?

Different strategies were used by 47% of those responding including the use of peer tutoring and other forms of extra support. 20% of those responding indicated they did not vary strategies. (See Appendix B).

16. Are students with low abilities allowed to advance to higher band classes even if they cannot perform on the same level as their classmates?

63% of the respondents indicated that, under limited conditions, the low ability student was allowed to advance to higher classes. 25% did not allow these students to advance while 12% did not answer the question. Of those 63% allowing advancement, only 15% allow advancement to the intermediate group and not to the highest ability group. (See Appendix B).

17. Does your band participate in competitions on a regular

basis? If so, how many yearly?

Regular competitions are attended by 68% of those responding, while 23% did not attend competitions, and 9% did not answer the question. Respondents emphasized that the Florida Bandmasters Association Concert Festival is classified as a festival evaluation and not a contest between bands. The average number of contests attended, including Florida Bandmasters Association Concert Festival, was 2 per year. The highest number attended by any given band was 5, with the majority (60%) attending only the Florida Bandmasters Association Concert Festival. (See Appendix B).

18. Are the students' grades based on the rating received at these competitions?

An overwhelming majority of respondents (82%) indicated that they did not use contest rating as grading criterion. Only 4% used such ratings for grades while 14% did not answer the question. One respondent answered, "absolutely not", in response to this question. (See Appendix B).

19. Do you use differing teaching techniques for students of different abilities?

Many of the directors (72%) did vary their teaching techniques to match the different ability levels of their students. Only 14% indicated they did not vary techniques, while an additional 14% did not answer the question. Some of the techniques used include varying material for each

student, using supplemental materials, using peer tutors between high ability and low ability students, private tutoring, using additional examples, repetition, modeling of correct techniques and concepts, and review and remediation. Many of the responses indicated a willingness to help any student outside the scheduled class time. (See Appendix B).

20. Would you classify your teaching environment as competitive or cooperative?

42% considered their environment to be competitive, while 88% classified the environment as cooperative. 9% not answer the question. 39% considered their teaching environment both cooperative and competitive at different times, accounting for the discrepancy in total percentage for this item. (See Appendix B).

21. Does your classroom environment benefit the low ability student and the high ability student equally?

The majority (60%) of directors answered positively that all students were benefitted equally. The negative respondents comprised 26% of the answers, while 14% did not respond. The majority of the positive responses indicated that they believed that through the techniques listed in question 19 all students benefitted equally within the type of environment the director chose to use. As noted in question 20, the environment often changed to meet the immediate needs of the students for a given activity or skill. (See Appendix B).

22. Do you use the same classroom environment and teaching strategies for all levels of students?

This question was designed to discover whether the beginning and advanced classes were instructed in an identical manner, or if the techniques changed, depending on the ability level of the students. A slight majority (51%) indicated that they used the same technique for all classes, while 37% change the environment and/or techniques for the different class levels. The non-response rate for this item was 12%. One respondent cited differing grade levels as the chief reason for the different techniques. Also noted was an attempt to maintain the same classroom environment while varying the techniques used. (See Appendix B).

Chapter V

Conclusions

The literature reports that students desire success and are motivated by successes to continue in their school work. In an instrumental music curriculum, success often is dependent on a student's music performing ability. The more ability a student possesses, the more successful that student often becomes.

Many of the successes of instrumental music students are group successes, as much of the performing and competing is on a group level. Lack of music ability can eliminate a student from performing group participation when ability grouping is used. Therefore, it is imperative that bands be organized in a manner that includes low ability students as well as the high ability students.

The research indicates that the learning environment is important for the low ability student. A cooperative environment allows students to help one another. A competitive environment allows low ability students to experience group success when they may not be able to succeed on their own.

A large body of research is available which compares

cooperative environments and competitive environments. Austin (1988) reported that in 65 of 122 studies, the results indicated that a cooperative environment results in higher achievement than does a competitive environment. Therefore, these particular research studies do not provide conclusive support for either environment. Hamann and others (1988) suggest that a student centered-classroom is the best environment for all levels of students.

A student-centered classroom encourages the instrumental music teacher to structure the learning for each individual. A low ability student achieves more when ability is de-emphasized and effort and achievement is emphasized. This is the basis for Mastery Learning, where each student achieves at his/her own rate and value is placed on effort to stay on task.

Austin (1990) suggests the use of peer tutoring to help the low ability student. This is accomplished by rotating the seating assignments. The careful placement of students to aid in peer tutoring will help the low ability student.

The presence of low ability students in the band necessitates changes in the conduct of that class. The areas of ability, seating, and environment are each important concepts when helping the low ability student become successful in the class. The questionnaire designed for this research project dealt extensively with those three areas.

The first section of the questionnaire was used to verify that the participants in the study were music teachers for middle grades six, seven and eight. It was determined that the participants were teaching sixth, seventh, or eighth grade instrumental music 98% of the time. Instrumental instructors teaching other grades or subjects as part of their responsibilities did not include data for groups other than the sixth to eighth grade instrumental music groups.

The second grouping of questions concerned the methods used for assessing student progress. All of those polled used instrumental playing tests which were based on student ability as a portion of the student's grade. This ability grading criterion was used for all levels of band students by 100% of those responding to the questionnaire.

The ability tests were also used by 79% of the band directors to assign the seating placement for the students. Other methods were used to assign seating, as 95% used seating assignments for the students. Unfortunately the remaining 16% did not state the methods which were used. It was noted that seating of students based on ability often grouped the high ability students together while also grouping the low ability students together.

The research suggested the use of peer tutoring. When ability was the criterion for assigning seating, the ability levels were segregated. This arrangement did not foster the

concept of peer tutoring in the classroom. A different type of seating arrangement was necessary for the low ability student to receive the peer tutoring.

One respondent offered a solution for this problem. One day each week the students in each section were combined with more competent players with higher abilities, sitting next to, or adopting, a less skilled student. The instructor then worked on unison music, scales, and other exercises, allowing the students to help each other.

The final section of the questionnaire explored the type of teaching environment used by the instructor. A large majority (88%) used a cooperative environment while 42% used a competitive environment. Interestingly, 39% used both environments at different times during the year for different activities. There was no correlation between the type of environment used by an instructor and the years of teaching experience.

Over half (58%) of the band instructors using a cooperative environment state that the learning environment benefits both low and high ability students equally well. Even though 53% of cooperative teachers required an audition to advance to a higher group, 60% of band directors using a cooperative learning environment allowed students to advance. Even if the student could not perform on the higher level, the directors did not allow the student to advance to the highest level band. The questionnaire

results did not provide a criterion for advancing the lower ability students.

Some of the music teachers using the cooperative approach (39%) used competitive elements in their teaching. Ability testing was used by 63% of the cooperative teachers. This ability testing was used for seating assignments by 70% of the instructors.

Despite the competitive elements used in the cooperative environments, 58% of cooperative teachers stated that all students benefited equally in a cooperative environment. In addition, 35% of these instructors did not use the same teaching strategies for all levels of students. The cooperative environment allowed the instructor the flexibility to vary his/her teaching strategies.

In contrast, only 28% of competitive instructors stated that a competitive environment benefited all levels of students equally. Only 21% of these instructors varied the teaching strategies for the different levels of students. The research supports these findings that a competitive environment does not allow the instructor the advantage of tailoring the teaching strategies to the students.

The research does not conclusively support either a competitive environment or a cooperative environment. The results of this project demonstrate that a majority of music instructors (88%) used a cooperative teaching environment. However, 39% of those instructors used competitive elements

in their instruction and organization of the class, such as ability testing and seating.

The use of ability testing is necessary to the music curriculum as an evaluation tool for assessing student progress. The use of seating by ability test grades is a part of band tradition. This researcher was unable to locate the origin of this practice. Seating by ability does not allow for peer tutoring and groups the low ability students together. The research includes studies documenting this type of grouping as damaging to low ability students.

Recommendations

The recommendations which follow are a result of the study.

1. The research was designed to provide band directors with a body of research to aid in the evaluation of their classroom teaching strategies. As a result it is suggested that the Florida Bandmasters Association sponsor a seminar on teaching strategies and classroom environments, at their annual clinic held each January.
2. It is recommended that teacher education programs include a discussion of teaching environments as applied specifically to the music curricula. A comparison and contrast between cooperative and competitive environments and their use in the music field should be presented to undergraduate music students. Strategies for aiding low ability music students should also be presented.
3. It is recommended that the project be duplicated with a larger sample population to verify the results. The extension of this project to include grades nine, ten, eleven, and twelve would aid the band instructors of those students. As the high school level band programs tend to be more competitive, especially through the marching band

emphasis, the questionnaire results might be different.

4. The questionnaire required the respondent to classify his/her teaching environment as either competitive or cooperative. Further surveys should include questions that allow the researcher to determine the type of teaching environment. These questions would present the researcher with an opportunity to correlate the teacher's evaluation of his/her teaching environment with the researcher's determination of appropriate teaching environments.

5. The survey may have influenced the responses by providing choices for the respondents. Many of the questionnaires were returned with the applicable word circled with no explanation given. Further research using this survey should either provide the respondent with a complete list of choices or no choices at all.

6. For successful learning in instrumental music, a band student uses all domains of knowledge, cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. While much research has been conducted on other academic subjects, such as mathematics or science, not much research is available on the application of teaching strategies to the music curriculum described in this study. More research is necessary to correlate the research previously conducted in other academic areas to the music discipline.

Appendix A
Introduction Letter
Questionnaire

Appendix A

Bradford Middle School

527 N. Orange Ave.

Starke, FL 32091

(904) 964-6800 x158

January 6, 1993

NAME _____.

SCHOOL _____.

Dear Band Director:

I am a Candidate for a Master's degree in the College of Education and Human Services at the University of North Florida. I am currently completing my research, and would appreciate your help. The purpose of this research is to compile and analyze teaching strategies used by directors of middle school/ junior high band. This data will be compared with literary research and correlations or differences will be identified. Finally, recommendations will be made on

Appendix A (cont)

teaching strategies for band students, concentrating on the low ability students' needs.

Please return this survey to the attention of Dirk Schmidt at the Westshore Marriott Hotel in Tampa before 8 am Saturday January 9, 1993, or mail to the above address by January 31, 1993. All responses in my report will remain anonymous.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. The results of this survey will be available by April 30, 1993 at the above address. Please complete the address label at the bottom of this page if you wish to receive a copy of the results.

Thank You,

Dirk J. Schmidt, Band Director

Choral Director

Detach and return with your survey

Name _____

Address _____

Appendix A (cont)

DIRECTIONS: Please answer each question that applies to your teaching situation. Please include only data for sixth through eighth graders. (Junior high directors please omit 9th grade information). If a question does not apply, write "NA" (not applicable) for that question. Comments about each item are welcomed.

- 1) What grade(s) do you teach?
- 2) What subject(s) do you teach?
- 3) How many years have you been teaching?
- 4) What method(s) is used to group your students in class periods? (ie. ability, grade, random, etc.) Please explain.
- 5) What criterion are used for grading band students?
- 6) Is this grading system consistent for all levels of students? (Beginning, Intermediate, Advanced, etc.)
- 7) Are the students required to play tests for part of their grade?

Appendix A (cont)

- 8) Are these tests performed privately (one on one) or in front of the class?
- 9) Do you assign seating? (1st chair, 2nd chair, etc.)
- 10) Do you assign seats based on the playing test grade?
- 11) Do you encourage students to "challenge" other students for chairs?
- 12) Are the students required to challenge other students?
- 13) Do you use any method other than tests and challenges for seating students? If so, what method(s)?
- 14) Are the students required to pass an audition to advance to a higher level band class?
- 15) Do you vary teaching strategies for students who cannot win in competition with other students?
- 16) Are students with low abilities allowed to advance to higher band classes even if they cannot perform on the same level as their classmates?

Appendix A (cont)

17) Does your band participate in competitions on a regular basis? If so, how many yearly?

18) Are the students' grades based on the rating received at these competitions?

19) Do you use differing teaching techniques for students of different abilities? Please explain.

20) Would you classify your teaching environment as competitive or cooperative?

21) Does your classroom environment benefit the low ability student and the high ability student equally? Please explain.

22) Do you use the same classroom environment and teaching strategies for all levels of students?

Appendix B

Table 1

Appendix B

Table 1

<u>Question #</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No Answer</u>
1. What Grades?			
Sixth	98%		
Seventh	98%		
Eighth	98%		
Other	12%		
2. Subjects			
Band	100%		
Other	42%		
3. Years Teaching	13.2 yrs. ave.		1 na
4. Method of Grouping			
Ability	74%		
Grade	51%		
Instrument Family	9%		
Other	9%		
5. Method of Grading			
Practice	56%		4%
Participation	60%		4%
Playing tests	93%		4%
Written tests	51%		4%
Activities	23%		4%
Audition	2%		4%
Attitude	12%		4%
Instinct	2%		4%
6. Grading Consistently for all levels	100%		
7. Playing tests used	100%		
8. Testing in			
Private	16%		2%
Class	98%		2%

Appendix B (cont)

Table 1

<u>Question #</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No Answer</u>
9. Use seating assignments	96%	2%	2%
10. Seating based on playing test grades	79%	19%	2%
11. Use challenges	84%	16%	
12. Require challenges	4%	94%	2%
13. Other seating	44%	44%	12%
14. Auditions	56%	42%	12%
15. Vary for non-winners	47%	20%	33%
16. Non-winners advanced	63%	25%	12%
17. Participate in band competitions	68%	23%	9%
18. Grades based on contest ratings	4%	82%	14%
19. Different teaching techniques	72%	14%	14%
20. Type of teaching environment used:			
Competitive	42%		9%
Cooperative	88%		9%
Both	39%		
21. Environment benefit all equally	60%	26%	14%
22. Same for all levels	51%	37%	12%

Appendix C
Thesis Worksheet

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Vita

Name: Dirk J. Schmidt

Current Address: 714 S Cherry Street
Starke, FL 32091

Birth Date:

High School: Bradford High School
Starke, FL
Graduated May, 1980.

College: Bachelor of Science in
Music Management
Florida Southern College
Lakeland, Florida
Graduated May, 1984.

Master of Education in
Music Education
Division of Curriculum and Instruction
College of Education and Human Services
University of North Florida
Jacksonville, Florida
Graduated December, 1993.

Employment: Florida Bank at Starke
Bookkeeper and teller
May 1982 - August 1988

Bradford County School Board
Bradford Middle School
Assistant Band Director
Choral Director
August 1988 - Present

Bradford High School
Assistant Band Director
August 1988 - May 1990
August 1993 - Present

Honors: Eagle Scout 1980
Who's Who in American High School
Students 1980