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## Music Educators Who Take the Lead: A Phenomenological Study of School Leaders With Formal Backgrounds in Music and Experience as Music Educators

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Jeanne M. Porcino Dolamore  
*Concordia University - Portland*

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Concordia University–Portland  
College of Education  
Doctorate of Education Program

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Music Educators Who Take the Lead:  
A Phenomenological Study of School Leaders With Formal Backgrounds in Music  
and Experience as Music Educators

Jeanne Porcino Dolamore

Concordia University–Portland  
College of Education

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in  
Educational Administration

Marty A. Bullis, Ph.D., Faculty Chair Dissertation Committee

Douglas Anthony “Tony” Goss, Ph.D., Content Specialist

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Concordia University–Portland

2018

## **Abstract**

This dissertation contributes to the scholarly conversation on the effects that leaders and leadership models have on educational organizations and how to cultivate a diverse pool of educational leaders within a complex educational landscape. The researcher developed a three-tiered conceptual framework related to: (a) the components of effective school leadership, (b) musicians and their capacity to lead, and (c) the developmental stages of teacher-to-leader transitions. Using an approach rooted in hermeneutic-interpretive phenomenology, the researcher led seven participants—each music educators who became educational administrators—through a series of semistructured interviews to reflect upon their lived experiences during their pathway to leadership, connecting their roles as musicians, music students, educators, and lifelong learners to their self-professed understandings of the qualities and practices that lead to successful school leadership. Findings revealed a participant transition to leadership marked by a dynamic, nonlinear continuum toward the formation of leader identity and the practice of educational leadership, and centered on the discovery of three overarching thematic strands—competencies, relationships, and values related to change action—that highlighted the participants composite utilization of: (a) a range of observable, well-exercised leadership competencies, (b) productive, nurturing, and reciprocal relationships with a wide variety of educational stakeholders, and (c) idealistic individual and community values to guide transformative change. Findings support the development of leader capacity through a shared leadership model, the management of unintentional organizational impediments to the recruitment, training, and selection of effective educational leaders, and further research on unique teacher reference groups and their relationship to effective educational leadership.

*Keywords:* music educators, educational leadership, school leader, school administrator, arts-based leadership, effective leadership, transformative school leadership, shared leadership, leader identity, teacher reference groups, principal recruitment

## Dedication

I would like to dedicate this doctoral dissertation to my parents, whose model of living life joyfully and lovingly, of giving fully and passionately, and of working tirelessly to transform our fragile world, is witnessed today in the dedicated works and gracious lives of their children and grandchildren and their partners. I am forever grateful for Chet Porcino, my Dad—who never ceased saying that being a music teacher was the best job in the world and who personally gave standing ovations to each and every child he taught, and to Dr. Jane Porcino, my Mom—who never stopped delighting in revealing and accomplishing goals by harnessing the collective strengths of community.

It is this life spirit that I dedicate to my children Matthew, Christina, and Sophie, who are the finest human beings I know and have reached heights well beyond a mother's imagination.

It is this life force that I dedicate to my grandchild, Joseph, who is my heart's smile.

It is this life message of gratitude that I dedicate to the seven study participants whose expressive, articulate voices provided the lens through which the research narrative was crafted. Both the rich uniqueness and the abundant similarities of their lived experiences, perspectives, personalities, and passions shined through to *forward the possibility of transformative leadership* to the musicians, artists, educators, and scholars who will resonate with their stories.

And finally, it is the essence of the word *dedication* that embodies the compassion and the wisdom of Dr. Marty Bullis, who wholeheartedly journeyed with me as professor of my first doctorate level class, The Ethical Educator, and onward as the advisor and mentor who championed the writing and eventual defense of my dissertation 4 years and 8 months later. Dr. Bullis will forever serve as my model of how to teach and probe, seek truths and share knowledge, and inspire excellence and mutual purpose while holding out the belief that words like *beautiful, courage, love, and respect* have scientific merit and scholarly value.

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Beyond Concordia University Portland, on a journey that often felt like a solitary pursuit, I am grateful for both the places and the people who have contributed to my academic and spiritual passage throughout this dissertation:

The sheer beauty and reflective nature of environs like Kingston and Brooklyn, NY, Naples, FL, Baltimore, MD, and Kettleburgh and London, England sustained and energized me as I worked.



My daughter-in-law, Dr. Stephanie Dolamore, and my daughter, Sophie Dolamore travelled the road before me with their own Doctoral and Master's degrees and helped me to map out every phase of this journey.

My sisters Mary Porcino and Ann Porcino stepped in to read and edit large portions of narrative whenever I needed their feedback, professional advice, or loving guidance.

My brothers and sisters, Mary, Ann, John, Paul, and Victoria and their spouses, Amy, Malcolm, Marilyn, and Frank never doubted me or the value of this project, even as they themselves continued their own pursuits as organizational leaders, teachers, engineers, life coaches, artists, consultants, storytellers, musicians, dancers, writers, theologians, and lifelong learners.

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## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	ii
Dedication .....	iv
Acknowledgements .....	v
Table of Contents .....	vii
List of Tables .....	xiii
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
Context of Study: 21st Century Leadership Challenges .....	2
Teacher Reference Groups .....	3
Statement of the Problem .....	5
The Purpose of the Study .....	7
Research Questions .....	8
Central Research Question .....	9
Constructing the Conceptual Framework .....	10
Significance of the Study .....	15
Definition of Terms .....	16
Leadership .....	16
Leader .....	18
Music Educator .....	19
Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations .....	19
Assumptions .....	19
Limitations .....	19
Delimitations .....	21

Chapter 1 Summary .....	22
Chapter 2: Review of Literature .....	25
Conceptual Framework.....	27
Construing Leadership: A 21st Century Perspective .....	29
Transformational Leadership .....	34
Educational Leadership Constructs.....	34
A Comprehensive Framework of Effective Educational Leadership Practices ....	43
Connecting the Arts and Leadership.....	47
A Retrospective Summary (1960–2012) .....	47
Confronting the Limitations of the Literature.....	51
Connecting Musicians With the Capacity to Lead .....	53
Summary .....	62
Becoming a School Leader: Transitioning from Teacher to Educational Leader .....	64
Leadership Role Conceptualization .....	69
Initial Socialization .....	70
Role-Identity Transformation .....	71
Purposeful Engagement .....	72
Teacher Reference Groups: External and Internal Marginalization .....	73
Review of the Methodological Issues.....	75
Educational Leadership.....	75
Arts-Based Leadership.....	76
Becoming and Being an Educational Leader .....	77
Summary .....	78

Chapter 2 Summary .....	79
Chapter 3: Methodology .....	82
Research Questions.....	82
Central Research Question.....	82
Purpose and Design of the Study .....	83
Purpose.....	83
Design .....	83
Research Population and Sampling Method.....	88
Target Population.....	88
Sampling Method.....	89
Instrumentation and Data Collection .....	91
Primary Data Source .....	91
Secondary Data Sources .....	93
Data Analysis Procedures .....	94
Limitations and Delimitations of the Research Design .....	96
Validation.....	97
Expected Findings.....	97
Ethical Issues .....	98
Risks, Discomforts, and Benefits for Participants .....	101
Chapter 3 Summary .....	102
Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results.....	105
Description of the Sample.....	109
Recruitment of Study Participants .....	109

Data Collection Timeline, Methodological Strategies, and Actions.....	114
Phenomenological Interview Questions and Protocol .....	114
Data collection .....	114
Research Methodology and Analysis.....	116
Interview Transcription Process .....	116
Analyzing, Reducing, and Coding the Data.....	117
Theme Development: Structure of Analysis.....	121
Two Main Sections and Eight Major Categories .....	121
Three Overarching Themes.....	123
Thematic Strands, Motifs, and Keynotes .....	125
Individual Participant Portraits .....	126
Presentation of the Data and the Results.....	128
Section One: Becoming .....	128
Participant Portraits: Chromatic Motion.....	129
Becoming: From First Notes to Choosing a Career.....	144
Section Two: Being.....	153
Passing it Forward: Being a Music Teacher .....	153
Loving to Learn: Being a Lifelong Learner .....	189
Section Three: Building .....	196
Reaching Beyond the Classroom: Building Upon Leadership Competencies....	196
Transitioning From Teacher to Leader: Building Upon Leadership Role Identity	
.....	215
Section Four: Belonging .....	237

Framing Educational Leadership .....	238
Mapping the Conversation .....	240
Orchestrating Leadership: Belonging to a Community of Educators .....	241
Belonging at the Leadership Table: Aesthetic Cadence .....	317
Chapter 4 Summary .....	333
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion .....	337
Summary of Chapters 1–4 .....	337
Chapter 5 Organization .....	339
Empirical Findings and Discussion of Results .....	339
In Answer to the Central Research Question .....	339
Reframing the Research Subquestions.....	344
Findings Related to the Literature.....	377
Connecting Music and Leadership.....	377
Effectively Leading Educational Organizations: Reaching Leadership Goals...	382
Study Limitations and Delimitations .....	383
Study Implications .....	387
Recommendations for Future Research .....	392
Effective Educational Leadership.....	393
Music Teachers Who Take the Lead: Their Potential to Lead Effectively.....	394
Teacher Transitional Experiences and Advancement Toward Formal Educational	
Leadership Training and Certification .....	396
Researcher Policy Recommendations and Conclusion.....	397
Future Directions in Educational Policy, Practice, and Related Research .....	402

Forwarding the Possibility of Transformative Leadership .....	408
Final Researcher Reflections .....	410
References.....	412
Appendix A: Informed Consent Form .....	427
Appendix B: Interview Protocol and Questions .....	429
Appendix C: Researcher Reflections of Semistructured Interview Process .....	442
Appendix D: Interview Transcription Overview and Researcher Reflections .....	444
Appendix E: Coding Process Overview and Codes Defined.....	447
Appendix F: Poetry Notes.....	449
Appendix G: Statement of Original Work.....	451

## List of Tables

Table 1 <i>Unified Model: Domains and Dimensions of Effective Leadership Practices</i> .....	45
Table 2 <i>Browne-Ferrigno (2003) Transitional Stages and Central Concepts</i> .....	66
Table 3 <i>Participant Attributes</i> .....	113
Table 4 <i>Overview of Analysis Sections, Categories, and Overarching Themes</i> .....	124
Table 5 <i>Competencies Defined</i> .....	125
Table 6 <i>Becoming: From First Notes to Choosing a Career—Thematic Overview</i> .....	145
Table 7 <i>Passing it Forward: Being a Music Teacher—Thematic Overview</i> .....	154
Table 8 <i>Problem-solving: Related Thematic Keynotes and Significant Participant Statements</i>	162
Table 9 <i>Identifying and Overcoming Discipline-specific Realities: Thematic Keynotes</i> .....	167
Table 10 <i>Loving to Learn: Being a Lifelong Learner—Overarching Themes, Strands, and Motifs With Significant Participant Statements</i> .....	192
Table 11 <i>Building Upon Leadership Competencies—Thematic Overview</i> .....	197
Table 12 <i>Building Upon Leadership Role Identity—Thematic Overview</i> .....	216
Table 13 <i>Confronting Discipline Related Bias: Thematic Keynotes and Significant Participant Statements</i> .....	228
Table 14 <i>Effective Leadership Practices: A Comparison of Hitt and Tucker (2015) Domains and Researcher Established Thematic Strands</i> .....	241
Table 15 <i>Orchestrating Leadership: Belonging to a Community of Educators—Thematic Overview</i> .....	242
Table 16 <i>Building Capacity: Inspiring Growth: Thematic Motifs With Significant Participant Statements</i> .....	260
Table 17 <i>Hire Great People: Thematic Motifs with Significant Participant Statements</i> .....	309



## Chapter 1: Introduction

This study on 21st century leadership was prompted by the audible call for new and updated paradigms for effective leadership in the nation's corporate and educational institutions. The researcher sought to expand the range of literature on leadership by examining educational leadership from the perspective of one distinct group of teachers within the discipline of music, and by investigating the phenomenon of music educators transitioning into educational leadership roles. Emphasis was given to the developmental process by which music educators who are or have been engaged in the purposeful practice of educational leadership apply their leadership qualities, experiences, and practices within school and school district settings (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008, Hitt & Tucker, 2015).

The study focused on the distinct group of teachers referred to as *music educators* for two key reasons: (a) evidence linked to artists and musicians as an often untapped pool of leaders predisposed to effective, transformative leadership practices in corporations, suggested the need for similar research on arts and music educators and leadership practices within educational institutions; and (b) to explore commonalities or themes in the transitional experiences and leadership practices of educational administrators with a background in music education in order to inform further research on current practices in school leadership, as well as the process of recruitment, training, and selection of effective educational leaders.

The central construct or phenomenon at the heart of the study rested with the singular known commonality among participants, that is, that they have each experienced the process of transitioning from being a music educator to becoming and practicing as an educational leader.

## **Context of Study: 21st Century Leadership Challenges**

Adler (2006, 2015), Northouse (2001, 2016), and Seifert (2004), among others, write about a 21st century crisis in organizational leadership that is marked by uncertainty and calamity. They emphasize a pattern in which traditional cause-and-effect understandings about how to lead have been replaced by continuous, unexpected, and often contradictory challenges that will continue to interact and collide unless those placed in leadership positions can learn to lead effectively (Seifert, 2004). Educational scholars and researchers have also struggled in recent decades to understand the effects of leaders and leadership models on schools, and to decipher and identify through evidence-based research, which approaches to leadership make the greatest contribution to school culture, teacher effectiveness, and ultimately, to student learning (Fullan, 2001; Glatter, 2006; Hallinger, 2003, 2005; Hitt & Tucker, 2015; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2008; Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Marks & Printy, 2003; Nedelcu, 2013; Printy, 2014; Robinson, 2008; Spillane, 2005; Timperley, 2005). Fullan (2001) remarked at the start of the new century that “leaders in business and education face similar challenges—how to cultivate and sustain learning under conditions of complex, rapid change” (p. vii). Businesses and schools, he stressed, “both must become learning organizations, or they will fail to survive” (p. vii).

Educational practitioners and policy makers have also been experiencing severe challenges recruiting, training, and retaining high quality leaders, and researchers have identified this as a critical problem facing 21st century educational institutions (Armstrong, 2012; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Collay, 2006, 2014; Hitt & Tucker, 2015; Newton, 2001). In the last two decades, there has been a reduction in the number of school personnel (primarily teachers) pursuing administrative licensure training and advancement to roles as educational

administrators, and there exists a shortage of trained administrators and qualified school leadership candidates who are available to fill vacant leadership positions (Armstrong, 2012; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Fink & Brayman, 2006; Newton, 2001; Newton & Witherspoon, 2007).

Scholars have focused on three key priorities of equal importance in the charge to recruit, train, and retain effective educational leaders. The first purposefully restructures and retools the position of school leader to address the stressful conditions and high degree of responsibility and accountability associated with hierarchical leadership; the second redefines school leader recruitment, training, and transition to leadership as a developmental, multistage, transformative process; and the third calls for an increase in the diversity of leaders and leadership approaches employed at administrative levels in educational institutions to address challenges and promote positive change action in schools (Armstrong, 2012; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Collay, 2006, 2014; Fink & Brayman, 2006; Glatter, 2006; Hallinger, 2003, 2005; Hitt & Tucker, 2015; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2008; Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Marks & Printy, 2003; Nedelcu, 2013; Newton, 2001; Printy, 2014; Robinson, 2008; Spillane, 2005; Timperley, 2005). These will be explored in detail in the review of literature presented in Chapter 2.

### **Teacher Reference Groups**

For the purpose of gaining a deeper understanding of the priority issues examined in this study (in particular, the transitional processes experienced on the pathway from teacher to leader and subsequent patterns of engagement in the practice of leadership) Browne-Ferrigno (2003), Collay (2006, 2014), Armstrong (2012), and several of the researchers cited throughout this study, have sought to distinguish, through scholarly examination, the experiences of specific subgroups of teachers who share: (a) a similar frames of reference, group-identification, and/or social or professional profiles, and (b) membership in a recognized cohort or focus group of

teachers with similar backgrounds and often parallel lived experiences in their educational careers based on subject or professional discipline, vocational outlook, years of experience, or racial, ethnic, sexual, social, and/or cultural identification and orientation. Collay (2006, 2014) in fact, stated that the experiences of group membership for teachers is significant and that discussion surrounding clearly identifiable subgroups of teachers whose members transition to leadership has been largely absent from the literature on educational leadership. Collay further suggested that the practices and behaviors exhibited by members of distinct subgroups of teachers might be strong predictors of their leadership potential and expressed her belief that school leaders often connect experiences defined by their past reference group to future leadership actions that are clearly identifiable.

Armstrong integrated this idea recurrently into her 2012 study which focused on the experiences of personal change and organizational passage for 15 transitioning teachers who became school administrators. Armstrong referred to a number of different reference groups including *teacher reference groups*, *administrator reference groups*, and *professional reference groups* who were connected not only by professional, social, or cultural factors and shared experiences, but by their group “identities, perspectives, and values” (Armstrong, 2012, p. 399).

In this study, the researcher followed the trend established by Collay (2006,2014), Armstrong (2012), and other scholars, in this case utilizing the term *teacher reference group* throughout the study to refer to groups of teachers that are part of a distinct educational discipline (such as music, science, or English), and/or groups of teachers who are part of a racial, ethnic, cultural, or social group such as women, minority, or LGBTQ teachers (Collay, 2006). The researcher used the phrases *teacher reference group* and *discipline related teacher reference group* as the predominant identifying descriptor for the music educators who were at the heart

of this study. As part of a discipline-specific teacher reference group, the research examined not only the commonalities among the participants' lived experiences as music educators, but the common competencies, practices, and values associated with their transitions to their current administrative reference groups.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The review of literature that follows reveals a lack of educational research at the empirical and theoretical level focusing on the experience of transitioning from teacher to educational leader, particularly as related to research on discipline-related teacher reference groups. For example, it is not known how individuals with formal education in music and experience as music teachers would describe the lived experiences associated with their transition from teacher to educational leader, including the process of becoming and practicing as educational administrators. To date there has not been sufficient scientific research conducted on how the individuals who have experienced this phenomenon have interpreted their experiences nor to what extent these experiences have influenced their practice as educational leaders.

Further, although calls for diversity among school leadership candidates are typically not directed specifically toward music teachers or teachers from any particular tenure area, preliminary research stressing the critical need for diversity among school leaders, has helped to position the research problem, and defend the direction of this study and its investigation into the experiences of one subset of educational leaders who are part of a distinct group of teachers who share a background as musicians and experience as music educators (Armstrong, 2012; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Brunner & DeLeon, 2013; Collay, 2006, 2014; Curry, 2000; DuPre, 2011; Fink & Brayman, 2006; Ghaus-Kelley, 2014; Hasson, 2011; Jarmon, 2014; Myran, Sanzo, & Clayton, 2011; Steele, 2015; Zafft, 2013).

Collay (2006,2014) for instance, pointed to the general reality that despite the need for transformative educational leaders in 21st century schools, some specific subgroups of educators have not been encouraged to participate in leadership recruitment and training opportunities, and have experienced the feeling of being marginalized in terms of access to leadership opportunities.

In the Chapter 2 review of literature, in fact, the researcher examines a range of qualitative studies, including a number of phenomenological dissertations that explored the experiences of teachers from reference groups that include women, minority, and LGBTQ leaders who have traditionally been considered outside the mainstream of educational leadership, have faced challenges in the transition from teacher to school leader, and have experienced difficulty gaining representation at the leadership table (Bizjak, 2017; Brunner & DeLeon, 2013; Collay, 2006, 2014; Curry, 2000; DuPre, 2011; Ghaus-Kelley, 2014; Hasson, 2011; Jarmon, 2014; Zafft, 2013). One such researcher, Jarmon (2014), articulated the overriding belief among researchers reviewed, that unless the leadership potential of members of a variety of underrepresented teacher reference groups are fully explored, “organizations [may] lose the opportunity to capitalize on the skills and talent of a portion of their workforce” (p. 5).

The decision to focus this research expressly on music educators was also driven by preliminary evidence that has recently emerged regarding the leadership potential and distinctive experiential approach to the practices of leadership exhibited by artists and musicians. A small band of researchers in business, government, and educational organizations have described this evidence as significant to the ongoing study of the types of transformative leadership archetypes required to lead organizations (Adler, 2006, 2015; Asbjornson, n.d.; Bathhurst & Ladkin, 2012;

Cimino & Denhardt, 2012; DePree, 2004, 2008; Kelehear, 2008; Nissley, 2010; Vaillancourt, 2007).

Understanding how one unique subgroup of educators experiences the developmental process leading to and involved in the practice of educational leadership will contribute to the body of literature that explores: (a) the benefits of diversity among school leaders, and (b) the benefits of promoting a range of updated, innovative approaches to the practice of leadership in 21st century educational institutions.

### **The Purpose of the Study**

Since there is limited research on educational leadership from the perspective of those with a background in music education, this research study focused specifically on professionals who have experienced the phenomenon of transitioning from music teacher to educational leader for the purpose of highlighting their untold stories and advancing the core meaning of their experiences (Creswell, 2013). The researcher used a phenomenological research design that enabled participants: (a) to describe their unique pathway to educational administration, including the extent to which their early training and background in music and experience as music educators has influenced their work; and (b) to explore how they personally perceived their role as practicing educational leaders and change agents in schools.

The researcher's primary goal was to understand how each participant experienced the developmental transition and transformation from teacher to leader, and to investigate participant beliefs about how their background as musicians and music educators has influenced their approach to leadership in educational institutions. The researcher's secondary purpose in conducting this study was to examine the similarities and differences that may exist between the commonly shared experiences of the study participants and the findings from the literatures that

explore the connections between arts and artistic practices and what is known about effective educational leadership.

### **Research Questions**

The researcher's intention in the current study was not only to gather stories from a selected group of school leaders who share a background in music and experience as music teachers, but to design and ask questions that would allow the participants to reflect and assign their own personal meaning to their lived experiences of transitioning into leadership positions, and to describe which understandings and experiences have had the greatest impact on their current leadership style and approach to practicing leadership (Creswell, 2013; Foss & Waters, 2016; Shagoury & Power, 2012). Creswell (2013) recommended that establishing the central construct of qualitative research is key and suggested adding what or how questions to the central construct as a means of formulating central research questions. The central question and subquestions, he suggested, should address the research problem fully, but be broadly stated to allow for "open-ended, evolving, and nondirectional" (p. 138) explorations of a problem or phenomenon.

The central phenomenon examined in this study was the shared experiences of individuals who were part of a teacher reference group with a background in music and experience as music teachers who have transitioned to the role of practicing educational administrators. The researcher asked study participants to describe their lived experiences during the transition from music teacher to educational administrator, including the process of becoming and practicing as an educational administrator. The researcher also asked participants to consider how their background and experiences have influenced their leadership style and approach to practicing leadership.



## **Central Research Question**

How do individuals with a formal education in music and experience as a music teacher describe the essence of their transition from teacher to leader, including the process of becoming and practicing as an educational administrator? Three subquestions delineated and extended critical elements encompassed in the central question, and they are as follows:

**Subquestion 1.** How do study participants describe their lived experiences prior to and during the transition from music teacher to educational administrator?

**Subquestion 2.** How do study participants describe their leadership style and approach to practicing leadership in their administrative role?

**Subquestion 3.** In what ways do study participants view their transitional experiences, current leadership style, and approach to practicing leadership as an extension of their formal training in music and background as music educators?

Taking Moustakas' (1994) recommendation to address the context of participant experiences within the phenomenological research domain, the researcher designed interview questions that enabled data collection focused on: (a) how participants' formal background in music and experience as music educators has influenced their leadership style and practice; (b) how their transitional experiences (including role conception, initial socialization, role identity transformation, and purposeful engagement in leadership) have shaped their approach to leadership; and (c) what styles and practices of leadership they would define as most effective and transformative in educational settings (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Moustakas, 1994).

## **Constructing the Conceptual Framework**

This dissertation has a conceptual framework based on three linking perspectives derived from an extensive and focused review of literature on: (a) the components of effective leadership and effective school leadership as theoretical constructs, (b) the connection between the arts and leadership, and (c) the process of becoming and practicing as an educational leader. These three frames of reference are each directly related to the aspects of leadership that have defined this study.

The first frame highlights leadership theories in general and educational leadership frameworks specifically. It has been informed by an historical perspective of educational research from a number of scholars who have been active and prominent in the field of leadership, and whose combined work, both in quantitative and qualitative research, has been seen as highly valuable within the scientific community (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Bass, 1993; Glatter, 2006; Hallinger, 2003, 2005; Hickman, 2010; Hitt & Tucker, 2015; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2008; Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Marks & Printy, 2003; Nedelcu, 2013; Northouse, 2001, 2016; Printy, 2014; Robinson, 2008; Spillane, 2005; Sun, 2010; Timperley, 2005). Methodological approaches employed in the reviewed literature include quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research, formal meta-analysis of research, and scholarly summaries and syntheses of key findings on effective leadership.

Hitt and Tucker (2015), for instance, conducted a systematic literature review of theoretical and empirical studies conducted on school leadership and effective leader practices between 2000 and 2014. Hitt and Tucker's goal was to develop an up-to-date framework that detailed what constitutes effective practice by school leaders and to clearly identify which leadership practices best support student achievement. As a result of their extensive literature

review of 56 research studies, Hitt and Tucker identified three well-respected existing leadership frameworks on effective educational leadership practices. Each of these frameworks had previously been developed by researchers who had, between them, analyzed and synthesized a total of 323 studies, 100 of which confirmed a link between leadership and student achievement. Hitt and Tucker synthesized the three frameworks in order to develop selection criteria for leadership practices that would be included on one unified leadership matrix on effective leadership. The final unified leadership matrix was organized into five central domains that specified 28 effective leadership practices that Hitt and Tucker (2015) concluded have been shown decisively to have a direct and/or indirect effect on teachers, students, and school environments.

Hitt and Tucker's (2015) model of educational leader practices, with its focus on 21st century research on effective educational leadership, is examined further in Chapter 2. This model was used to categorize leader action components and accompanying leadership practices that articulated the construct of effective educational leadership that guided this study. The Hitt and Tucker framework provided an essential frame of reference upon which the researcher examined participant descriptions of their transition from teacher to leader and their own views of effective leadership as it relates to their leadership practice in educational settings. Myran, Sanzo, and Clayton (2011), in fact, state emphatically, that the acquisition of research-based knowledge regarding up-to-date information on effective educational leadership traits and practices should be integrated with 21st century goals for leadership recruitment, training, and selection processes in order to avoid the "reculturation of school leadership from historically and structurally limiting views" (p. 694).

The second conceptual frame will introduce the reader to an emerging field of study that highlights a connection between artists (specifically musicians) and leadership. This conceptual building block is based on qualitative studies, scholarly reports, and arguments for new directions in arts-based leadership research, which suggest that arts-inspired leadership may serve as an important vehicle for achieving political, social, cultural, and economic benefits in organizational environments (Adler, 2006, 2015; Cimino & Denhardt, 2012; Nissley, 2010; Selkrig, 2011; Seiffter, 2004; Vaillancourt, 2007).

Harvey Seiffter (2004), who is the author of *Leadership Ensemble: Lessons in Collaborative Management from the World's Only Conductorless Orchestra* (2001), and a board member of the *Arts and Business Council* in New York City, described how businesses from law firms to financial corporations are tentatively experimenting with the artists' tools of inventiveness, flexibility, and spontaneity within their organizations. Organizations, he asserted, are seeking enhanced performance through improved presentation and improvisation skills inspired by artists and by recent studies conducted on the internal working practices of musical ensembles. Improvisation, for example, which is in continuous use by musicians, has been compared to the critical experimentation and trial and error that enables creative problem-solving and inventiveness to flourish in the work place (Bathurst & Ladkin, 2012; Cimino & Denhardt, 2012; Nissley, 2010; Seiffter, 2004). Cimino and Denhardt (2012), in their chapter in the book *The Transforming Leader: New Approaches to Leadership in the Twenty-First Century*, similarly reported that business leaders are beginning to reinvent their organizations through a sharp focus on their leaders, and are focusing on artistic skills like originality, imagination, flexibility, commitment, rehearsal, and reflection as prospective practices that would help to shape new models of organizational leadership worldwide.

Nancy J. Adler (2006), who is a global leadership researcher and professor of international management at McGill University in Montreal, strongly advanced the potential of arts-based leaders to help close the gap between what organizational leaders can conceptualize and envision for their corporations and what they are actually able to accomplish. She wrote about an increasing number of corporate leaders who are welcoming both artists and artistic processes into their companies as a means of gaining organizational performance advantages through the cultivation of unconventional approaches to leadership and as a way of dealing with new challenges and rates of organizational change that were “heretofore unimaginable” (p. 489). She marked the artists’ fundamental ability to collaborate and co-create, as well as to “create on cue . . . [and] innovate . . . on a deadline” (p. 492), as a critically valuable resource for organizations. She offered a view of a 21st century society that “yearns for a leadership of possibility, a leadership based . . . on hope, aspiration, and innovation” (p. 487).

Seifter (2004) summed up what he considered to be a vital connection between artists and leadership this way:

Artists have profound insights into the creative [leadership] process, gained from years of hands-on experience, backed by specialized training and fostered by carefully honed achievement enhancing skills. . . . Their knowledge represents a formidable resource, waiting to be tapped by companies in search of creative solutions and managers striving to enable, empower, and engage their employees’ imaginative and inventive powers.  
(p. 2)

While no single seminal body of research on the connection between artists and leadership framed this study, the body of scholarly peer-reviewed writings and preliminary research on the topic is compelling, and supported the selection of educational administrators

with a background in music as research participants. In the present study, the researcher sought to understand if connections exist between the qualities, characteristics, and learned competencies of trained musicians and music educators and known effective leadership practices in schools. The researcher also considered benefits that may exist in the field of education when music educators are recruited for and/or appointed to positions of leadership in schools. In fact, the idea of studying music educators, as a unique teacher reference group, was supported by a third body of literature that provided an important foundation for the conceptual framework.

The third conceptual frame focuses on the multi-step developmental process that marks the transition from teacher to educational leader (including the transition of specific teacher reference groups). Browne-Ferrigno (2003), for instance, in a yearlong, peer reviewed study (detailed in Chapter 2) identified four key transitional stages that mark the conversion from teacher to educational leader. These developmental stages include *role conceptualization*, *initial socialization*, *role identity transformation*, and *purposeful engagement* in leadership, and provide a research-based platform upon which to formulate the inquiry in relation to the central question (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). Brown-Ferrigno's research on teacher transitional stages was also fundamental to the development of the research protocol that was used to answer the central research question.

This section of the conceptual framework was supported by related works of both novice researchers and prominent scholars in the field of educational administration who have integrated the same or similar concepts into their studies. As explored further in Chapter 2, research findings by the authors cited, have concurred with Browne-Ferrigno's (2003) assertion that the recruitment, selection, training, and retention of effective educational leaders will not be achieved unless the multi-step developmental process by which teachers transition to roles as

educational leaders is both understood and acknowledged (Armstrong, 2012; Brunner & DeLeon, 2013; Collay, 2006, 2014; Curry, 2000; DuPre, 2011; Fink & Brayman, 2006; Ghaus-Kelley, 2014; Hasson, 2011; Jarmon, 2014; Myran, et al., 2011; Steele, 2015; Zafft, 2013).

Each of the three interrelated frames that defined this study's conceptual framework helped to set boundaries for the research and provided a theoretical structure for the development of the phenomenological research design and the phenomenological interviewing protocol.

### **Significance of the Study**

The researcher anticipates that the results of this study will contribute to the practical and theoretical conversation regarding the recruitment, training, and selection of future educational leaders with the goal toward innovative approaches to promoting and securing effective leadership and transformational change in the nation's schools.

The unique group of educational leaders whose transition to leadership was examined, share a history of early training in music, a subsequent vocation of being music educators, and the experience of transitioning from music teachers to a position of educational leadership within their organizations. This study investigated the experiences of this subset of educators during their transitional process, while focusing on the leadership qualities and practices that they believed formed the essence of effective leadership in the context of educational administration.

Since the voices of this unique reference group of educators have not yet been understood in the literature, this phenomenological study is a step toward listening to and construing meaningful understandings of the individual and collective stories of participants. It is anticipated that commonalities or themes that are discovered in the transitional experiences and leadership practices of the educational administrators represented in this study will serve to inform a variety of educational stakeholders including school administrator associations, music

educator associations and music teachers themselves about the issue of how educators, and scientific researchers might begin to creatively answer the questions of how and with whom to fill the need for effective leaders in 21st century educational institutions.

### **Definition of Terms**

#### **Leadership**

For the purposes of this study, *leadership* was defined according to four leadership components identified by Northouse (2016) including leadership as a process that involves influence, occurs in groups, and contains common goals (pp. 16–17). This definition describes the parameters in which leadership exists, and has been used by subsequent scholars to define an integrated, overlapping, and conceptual process that is part of a *phenomenon* of leadership (Northouse, 2016; Sun, 2010). This broader conceptual definition includes a hybrid of leadership frameworks and theories that 21st century researchers are in a unique position to examine. Among these definitions are:

**Educational leadership.** *Educational leadership* is defined as the manner in which trained educational leaders’ practice and apply their leadership qualities, experiences, and practices in “contextually sensitive combinations” in school settings (Leithwood, et al., 2008, p. 31).

**Instructional leadership.** The definition of *instructional leadership* practices is associated with the managerial processes of leadership, which focus on supervision, organization, and monitoring of individual and group performance as well as the series of constructive transactions between leaders and followers that take into account the role of managerial rewards, expectations, cooperation, and compliance (Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Printy, 2014).



**Transformational leadership.** A number of scholars define *transformational leadership* as the manner in which individual leader characteristics, leader behaviors, and leader interactions with their environment are promoted by the use of one or more of the *Four I's* of transformational leadership designated by Bernard Bass (1985). These include *idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation* and *individualized consideration*. (Hitt & Tucker, 2015; Printy, 2014; Sun, 2010).

**Transformational school leadership (TSL).** *Transformational school leadership* is defined within the scope of the definition of transformational leadership prescribed above, but is a term used to integrate instructional and managerial leadership processes into an overarching definition of TSL that is also grounded in the moral foundations of its leaders. TSL denotes a holistic leadership model that is participative and collaborative and “has aimed to absorb and integrate many other leadership models, a goal considered worth pursuing by a number of scholars” (Sun, 2010, p. 4).

**Shared leadership.** *Shared leadership* is defined as “a dynamic, interactive influence process among individuals in groups for which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of small group or organizational goals or both” (Pearce & Conger, 2003, as cited in Bathhurst & Ladkin, 2012, p. 104).

**Group or plural leadership.** *Plural leadership* is defined “within groups as a social construction that relies on a reflexive attitude and where individuals continually reassess their relational dynamics in order to act in ways that improve the group’s ongoing welfare and its social contribution” (Bathhurst & Ladkin, 2012, p. 103).

**Integrated leadership.** *Integrated leadership* is defined by the degree to which educational leaders are able to simultaneously perform transformational and instructional

leadership tasks to invoke both follower satisfaction and high organizational performance among students, staff members, and within the school culture in general (Hallinger 2003, 2005; Hitt & Tucker, 2015; Marks & Printy, 2003).

**Arts-based leadership.** The term *arts-based leadership* “describes a wide range of approaches by which management educators and leadership/organization development practitioners are instrumentally using the arts as a pedagogical means to contribute to the learning and development of individual organization managers and leaders, as well as contributing to organizational learning and development” (Nissley, 2010, p. 13).

### **Leader**

As early as 1978, James MacGregor Burns described the individuals who actually perform leadership roles and the Bass (1985) *Four I's* of transformational leadership as leaders who “transform and inspire followers to perform beyond expectations while transcending self-interest for the good of the organization” (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009, p. 423).

**Educational leader.** Decades later, Hitt and Tucker (2015) defined leaders in an educational environment as those who in the “context of student achievement” (p. 533), participate in specific dimensions of leadership and initiate actions and “practices that can be and are enacted by a range of individuals who influence [and mobilize] others in pursuit of a goal” (p. 534). For the purposes of this study, the terms *educational leader*, *school leader*, *educational administrator*, and *school administrator* have been used interchangeably to define individuals who are certified as educational administrators in a nationally recognized school system and who have been engaged in the practice of educational administration.

## **Music Educator**

The terms *music educator* and *music teacher* have been used frequently and interchangeably throughout this study to refer to members of the teaching profession who have had formal training in both the fields of music and education.

### **Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations**

#### **Assumptions**

This study was based on the assumption that the participants chosen to participate in the study represent an unknown percentage of the population of music educators who have transitioned to educational administrators. Subject participants were willing volunteers who provided an informed consent. The researcher assured confidentiality for the interviewees, providing details to participants supporting the strict confidentiality of the interviews and data analysis to promote participant confidence and truthfulness (Simon, 2011). Moreover, because the interviews and free-response prompts were semistructured and the answers to questions and experiences were self-reported, the researcher assumed a high degree of honesty and integrity from participants during the interview process and in their answers to all questions asked

#### **Limitations**

Among the limiting factors in this phenomenological research was the restricted number of participants resulting from the small pool of educators who both responded to the recruitment survey and met the criteria for selection and the limited geographic boundaries of the participants' school districts or regions as determined by the pool of candidates available for participant selection. Further, since the study was conducted during a relatively short period of time due to the nature of this doctoral study, and since interviews occurred over the course of just

a few months, the researcher was limited in ability to analyze how long-term contextual and/or situational factors relate to participant experiences.

An additional limitation was related to the researcher herself being a musician who became a music educator who has also transitioned into the role of a school administrator. Since the researcher conducted this phenomenological study from the hermeneutic-interpretivist point of view, the researcher needed to remain highly conscious of her personal assumptions, presuppositions, and autobiographical perceptions, and remain committed to ensuring that her prior viewpoints did not inhibit or negatively bias the data collection. The researcher worked to support an ethical and scientifically sound interviewing protocol that reduced negative bias and enabled participants to give voice to their unique and personal lived experiences.

Further limitations of qualitative research and the transferability of results are often cited in comparison to the internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity of the data collection and analysis used in quantitative studies. In this qualitative study, the researcher, while noting the qualitative limitations of nongeneralizable results, sought to exhibit credible and dependable research practices and confirmed and validated these through the use of: (a) multiple interviews and collected artifacts; (b) the continued checking, feedback looping, and rechecking of transcripts and materials for consistency and correctness; (c) member checking in which the participants had the opportunity to review and cross-check transcripts for accuracy and appropriate interpretation of participant meaning; and (d) rich and thick descriptions gathered through the interview techniques of reflective questioning and active listening (Creswell, 2013; Elshafie, 2013; Wolcott, 2009).

## **Delimitations**

Delimitating factors of this study included the researcher's decision to restrict the study to fewer than eight participants, and to limit the type of sampling techniques used to semistructured interviews. The researcher confirmed and validated data from the interview protocol: (a) against data collected through a pre-interview demographic survey, (b) against data from an optional participant-artifact submission, and (c) by means of member-checking.

Additionally, the study was delimited by the researcher's decision to focus strictly on music educators, while acknowledging that much of the research reviewed in Chapter 2 was focused more broadly on artists as an overarching profession that includes musicians. While every attempt was made by the researcher to faithfully reflect the group of authors reviewed in Chapter 2 and their intent regarding the arts and artists, the researcher at times made assumptions that the word *artist* also applied without significant limitation to *musicians*, and that the words describing the discipline of *the arts* also included the discipline of *music*.

This research was also delimited further by its focus on the participant transition from teacher to educational leader. Results are related to the participants' own interpretations of how their background in music has influenced their approach to and practice of leadership. The research was not a comparative study of educational leaders who come from one professional discipline or another, nor was the study itself a study of effective leadership. Rather, the researcher considered the understanding of evidence-based effective leadership paradigms as a critical prerequisite to embarking on the active research and interview process in a phenomenological study on leadership.

## Chapter 1 Summary

The researcher built this study upon the perspectives garnered from the integration of three distinct bodies of literature reviewed in Chapter 2 that supported the study's conceptual framework. This integration of ideas by no means led to predetermined outcomes regarding the transitional and leadership experiences (or the use of effective leadership practices) of the study participants. It helped to ensure, rather, that the authentic voices of participants—expressed through the collection of meaningful data—were heard, understood, and interpreted within the boundaries of the study construct and the scientific research proposed.

The review of literatures in Chapter 2 will closely follow the building blocks of the conceptual framework outlined above. It begins by chronicling the literature on effective leadership paradigms in general and in educational institutions specifically. Next, the review informs readers of emerging evidence related to the positive effects of arts-based leadership in the corporate sector and defends the claim that a deficiency in the literature with regard to the connection between arts-based leadership and educational leadership should be addressed through further research. Third, the review of the literature turns toward the process by which teachers' transition to and participate in the practice of educational leadership, including institutional efforts to recruit, train, select, and retain effective educational leaders in schools.

Specifically, this study addresses the process by which teachers who were members of one specific teacher reference group (music educators) have made the transition from teacher to educational leader, have cultivated their leadership identities, and have defined the personal qualities and approaches to leadership that have guided their work as educational administrators. During the search for literature to review on the educators who are part of this phenomenon, however, the volume of information and research available on the topic appeared to be limited.

The researcher identified under researched areas in the field of educational leadership including: (a) the transition of distinct teacher reference groups from teacher to educational leader, and (b) the unique experiences of the teacher reference group of music educators who have made this developmental transition. The researcher responded to the need for further research in these areas when developing the design and direction of the study as well as the conceptual and methodological frameworks that inform the investigation.

The transition to and practice of educational leadership as experienced by one unique teacher reference group was approached through what Foss and Waters (2016) referred to as “interacting propositions,” in which “different theoretical models are applied to the same phenomenon” (p. 37). In this case, the interacting propositions referred to the connection between the three conceptual frames examined during the review of literature in Chapter 2 regarding: (a) effective educational leadership practices, (b) arts-based leadership, and (c) the developmental stages of teacher-to-leader transitional experiences. These interacting propositions guided the researcher in framing interview questions that supported an understanding of how the teacher-to-leader transitional experiences of the participants’ connected to their personal and reference-group leadership qualities, their unique approaches to practice, and their potential capacity to act as change agents in their schools (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Hitt & Tucker, 2015).

It is anticipated that the research will contribute to the field of educational research by presenting the essential lived experiences of music educators who have become educational leaders, including a synthesis of participant reflections upon the key influences in their own developmental trajectory toward leadership. The study seeks to accomplish this through a phenomenological investigation of the participants’ experiences throughout their early training as

musicians, through their years as music educators, and as they transitioned careers and role identities in order to become practicing educational leaders and join a national community of educational leaders who face the challenging task of transforming schools to meet the challenges of the 21st century.



## **Chapter 2: Review of Literature**

Urgent calls for new and updated paradigms for effective leadership in educational institutions have been driven by a number of high impact issues facing schools today. First and foremost, educational scholars and practitioners have struggled in recent decades to fully understand the effects of educational leadership on school communities, and to decipher and identify through evidence-based research the approaches or models of leadership that make the greatest contribution to school culture, teacher effectiveness, and ultimately to student learning (Glatter, 2006; Hallinger, 2003, 2005; Hitt & Tucker, 2015; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2008; Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Marks & Printy, 2003; Nedelcu, 2013; Printy, 2014; Robinson, 2008; Spillane, 2005; Timperley, 2005). Second, and equally troubling, educational institutions are facing severe challenges with regard to the recruitment, training, and retention of high quality leaders in the 21st century, which has led to concern regarding the ability of educational leaders to work in collaboration with other educational stakeholders to ensure improved levels of student achievement and promote transformative change in the nation's schools (Armstrong, 2012; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Collay, 2006, 2014; Hitt and Tucker, 2015; Newton, 2001).

At issue are the related questions of: (a) how the pool of educational administration applicants might be diversified in order to provide the leadership talent needed to achieve the goals of educational organizations, and (b) what information about the transition to and practice of leadership might be revealed through an investigation of the lived experiences of specific teacher reference groups who have not typically been recruited and/or represented among educational administrators.

Utilizing a phenomenological research methodology, this study addresses these challenges by enabling participants from one unique teacher reference group—that of music educators—to describe the essence of their distinctive pathway to educational administration, including the extent to which they believe their early training and background in music and experience as music educators has influenced their work, as well as how they personally perceive their role and the role of fellow educational leaders in achieving effective leadership that supports both student achievement and transformative change in schools.

This study focuses on the distinct teacher discipline of music educators for two key reasons. First, the review of literature has revealed preliminary evidence linked to artists and musicians as an often-untapped pool of leaders predisposed to effective, transformative leadership practices in corporations. Academic scholars and scientific researchers alike have suggested the need for similar research specifically on arts and music *educators* and their leadership practices within *educational institutions*.

Second, if commonalities and significant trends regarding the transitional experiences and leadership practices of educational administrators with a background in music education were to be revealed by the study, this would inform future research on a number of important topics including: (a) the leadership potential of music educators, (b) the leadership potential of other arts educators, (c) the leadership potential of other distinct teacher reference groups, (d) updated leadership paradigms specific to effective educational leadership delivered by such teacher reference groups, and (e) the recruitment, training, and selection of an intentionally diverse and discipline rich representation of 21st century educational leaders.

In sum, this phenomenological investigation addresses the current existing gap in the literature that examines the possible connection between arts-inspired leadership ideologies and

practices and the known components of effective educational leadership, as well as the insufficient educational research available on the developmental process of becoming and being a practicing educational leader. To do so, the study focuses on the progression of transitional stages experienced by music educators who have transitioned to and are engaged in the purposeful practice of educational leadership, including the ways in which they apply their personal leadership qualities, style, and experiences to their own approach to leadership.

To establish a basis for the investigation, the researcher presents a review of the literatures that: (a) analyzes the central ideas of several scholars and researchers in the field of leadership and educational leadership, (b) highlights three interrelated bodies of research that establish the conceptual framework for the study, and (c) synthesizes the various findings into a cohesive argument that supports the central research questions for the study.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study is based on three linking bodies of literature that served as a guide to the epistemological approach and helped to justify the investigation of the phenomenon presented (Lit Review, 2016; Ravitch & Riggan, 2012). The first conceptual frame was developed around a review of the literature corresponding to a set of concepts related to leadership constructs that have been researched in corporate and educational environments, including a retrospective look at leadership constructs and the development and use of 21st century leadership models in educational institutions. The second conceptual frame was developed around a review of literature that considers the connection between the arts and leadership, with specific emphasis on studied leadership qualities and practices observed among musicians. The third conceptual frame provided the investigative framework upon which to integrate all three frames into one cohesive proposition and was derived from recent literature

exploring the process by which teachers prepare for and transition to leadership roles and then practice administrative leadership in educational settings.

In addition to the collective body of knowledge gained from reviewing a wide spectrum of researchers and scholars in the fields of leadership, educational leadership, and arts-based leadership, two theoretical models were highlighted for special emphasis in the literature review. The first is a unified model of educational leadership practices developed by Hitt and Tucker (2015) through a meta-analytic synthesis of current research findings on effective educational leader practices. This model categorizes effective leader action components and accompanying leadership practices in a manner that is credible and dependable and is easily accessible to other educational researchers and practitioners. The second research model was generated as the result of a year-long, peer reviewed study conducted by Browne-Ferrigno (2003), who identified four key transitional stages that mark the conversion from teacher to educational leader. These developmental stages, including role conceptualization, initial socialization, role identity transformation, and purposeful engagement in leadership, provided a valid platform upon which to formulate the phenomenological inquiry upon which this study was based.

The conceptual frames and emphasized theoretical models informed and guided the researcher in the design of the study, influenced how the phenomena were viewed and understood by the researcher, and allowed for “creative new associations, applications and developments” (Lit Review, 2016, p. 4) regarding the construct of educational leadership as it relates to the recruitment, preparation, and selection of educational leaders and their subsequent approaches to the practice of leadership in schools.

By approaching the set of phenomena concerning the transition to and practice of school leadership from the point of view of members of the professional discipline of music education,

the research offers a unique interplay between the three broad leadership perspectives examined in the review of literature and the experiences of one uniquely situated teacher reference group (Lit Review, 2016).

The literature review will synthesize the three areas of research highlighted in the conceptual framework in light of the reviewed methodological approaches and limitations in the research literature. This will provide a strong basis upon which to establish the research question and set the stage for Chapter 3: Methodology.

### **Construing Leadership: A 21st Century Perspective**

In Northouse's (2016) seventh edition of *Leadership Theory and Practice*, he emphasized how research literature and the subsequent theories developed on leadership must inform the practice of leadership in a multitude of diverse organizations while dealing with a range of active crises, challenging circumstances, and critical conditions across the globe. Northouse categorized leadership as a complex process with a multitude of overlapping dimensions. He acknowledged that the image of leaders themselves is shifting, and that within the leader follower relationship, followers are demanding more of their leaders, and are more often viewed as emerging leaders themselves.

This aligns with Adler's (2006) earlier identification of five global workplace trends that have contributed to the need for immediate attention and updated collaborative leadership solutions in 21st century organizations. These five trends included: (a) increased global interconnectedness, (b) increasing domination of market forces, (c) turbulence and complexity in the work environment, (d) rapid advances in technology, and (e) the human need for significance versus success. Adler cited these as among the major issues facing organizations today, and

stressed the critical importance of embracing new leadership paradigms to meet the challenges they present (Adler, 2006, pp. 488-492).

Leithwood et al., (2008) argued that it is critically important for those in a position of leadership in schools to understand both the interrelated theoretical constructs of a variety of leadership paradigms, and their implications regarding educational leadership in particular. Further, they continued to seek answers from those in the educational research community regarding their claim that “a small handful of personal traits [have] explained a high proportion of the variation in leadership effectiveness” (p. 28). They also ask why “some leaders [seem to be] more expert than others, [and] . . . some people seem to develop leadership capacities to higher levels and more quickly than others” (p. 36).

Hitt and Tucker (2015) have cautioned that there is a disconnect between “what we know leaders should be doing, and what we know leaders are actually doing” (p. 561). Beyond understanding leadership, itself, they suggested, the scientific and educational communities must work together to ensure that school leaders understand and have the competencies needed to face intense 21st century challenges and accomplish the myriad of tasks required of them. Day, Gu, and Sammons (2016) also urged that new and updated research on effective leadership should consider not only what educational leaders do in terms of strategic action steps, but who they are, including their backgrounds, professional and ethical orientations, personal traits, relationships, and value sets.

### **A Summary of Major Leadership Theories: Northouse (2001, 2016)**

In 2001, Northouse systematically examined the major theories of leadership, more than a century of perspectives on the meaning of successful leadership, and the evolution of approaches and practices in leadership. Northouse identified the phenomenon of leadership as a process that

involves influence, occurs in groups, and involves common goals. Considering the influences of both hierarchical positioning and power assigned to leaders, Northouse noted that historically, both have been willingly afforded the leader by followers who believe that their leaders offer something of value. In this first edition of his book, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, Northouse (2001) stressed that leadership could not be considered fully without understanding the cultural background and ethical orientations of the leaders themselves and looked at a number of studies that researched universally desirable and undesirable leader attributes.

In the 2016 edition of *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, Northouse (2016) framed his discourse in what he described as an evolution of leadership definitions from 1900 and beyond. Each leadership approach (trait, skills, behavioral, situational, psychodynamic); leadership theory (path-goal, leader-member exchange); and leadership model (transformational, authentic, servant, adaptive, team) was examined for its unique conditions and applications. Further, strengths and limitations of each leadership approach, theory, or type were discerned through a review of qualitatively analyzed case studies that utilized leadership instruments comprising questionnaires, skills inventories, integrity scales, and association testing (Northouse, 2016). The summary of the five approaches to leadership that follows, aligns with Northouse's (2016) effort toward clarity and simplification in an updated definition of leadership as simply "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p. 6).

**The trait approach.** The *trait approach*, which has been systematically studied for several decades, is based on the claim that some people are born with traits that are later observed to transfer to the ability to lead (Northouse, 2016). While research has produced a number of attempts at formulating lists of traits that could be counted on to predict success in

leadership, many such catalogs of leadership characteristics proved to be quite subjective, and could not be isolated from the relational, social, and situational frameworks within which leadership existed.

**Skills-based approach.** A second prominent approach, *skills-based leadership*, came to the forefront in the 1990s with the hope of a leadership model that would definitively connect knowledge and skill with effective leadership. The skills approach, which focuses on conceptual, humanistic, and technical skills, supported the idea that leaders could be trained and their leadership potential developed. Northouse (2016) again warned that research was inconclusive, recognizing that different skills were important in each situational context and that skills were not always a clear match for the requirements at any given level of management.

**Behavioral approach.** Simultaneously, the *behavioral approach* was gaining momentum, and was considered by those in the leadership field to be “strikingly different” (Northouse, 2016, p. 90). Researchers who focused on behavioral leadership, examined the actual task and relational behaviors of leaders, and stimulated a great deal of scholarly conversation about the process and practices of leadership. Once again, however, researchers were not conclusively able to draw direct connections between any one particular set of leader behaviors or practices and improved outcomes in meeting organizational goals or accomplishing positive results on student achievement measures.

**The situational approach.** The *situational approach* considers the environment within which leadership occurs and how essential it is for successful leaders to adapt their leadership styles to meet the time, location, community, and cultural conditions within which their leadership influence exists (Northouse, 2016). This approach requires leaders to adjust both their relational and task-oriented behaviors to help followers meet goals and expectations, and to



adjust levels of social and emotional support to ensure open lines of communication and employee well-being. While this approach affords leaders a great deal of flexibility and is practical enough to be used in any number of situations, it is often criticized for not fully addressing the well validated leadership elements of trait, skills, and behavioral models.

**The psychodynamic approach.** The *psychodynamic approach* to leadership adopts the belief that “the essence of leadership is about human behavior and effective leadership is rooted in the underlying motives that govern such behavior” (Northouse, 2016, p. 305). Its focus is on the psychological, social, and emotional processes between leaders and followers. While typically utilized in conjunction with other leadership models, this approach fosters a deeper understanding of the psychodynamic forces that contribute to the overall understandings of effective, humanistic leadership.

Beyond an analysis of the leadership approaches summarized above, Northouse (2016) detailed how leadership as a trait differs from leadership as a process, how appointed leadership differs from emergent leadership, and how the concepts of power, coercion, and management differ from sound, positive leadership in general. In this restructured view of effective leadership models and practices, Northouse summarized how both assigned and emergent leaders take part in an ongoing, multifarious process of leadership that can be learned and practiced and is available and accessible to everyone.

### **A Hierarchical Taxonomy of Leadership Behaviors**

Taking steps in a direction similar to Northouse (2001, 2016), a number of researchers have attempted to categorize decades worth of research on effective leadership practices and behaviors into easily understood and clearly accessible formats that can be utilized by researchers and practitioners alike (Hitt & Tucker, 2015; Newton & Riveros, 2015; Yukl,

Gordon, & Taber, 2002). Yukl et al., (2002), for example, organized the components of leadership into a hierarchical taxonomy of three metacategories of successful leader characteristics and behaviors. This taxonomy of behaviors, which has been widely supported in the field, cited essential leadership behaviors and the integration of practices related to: (a) tasks and operations, (b) relationships and interactions, and (c) change behaviors that lead to action.

### **Transformational Leadership**

Twentieth century theories on transformational leadership began with the groundbreaking work of James MacGregor Burns (1978), who heavily influenced the discourse about effective leadership, and has emerged as a central, oft-cited, and broadly-interpreted expert on leadership exemplars, often referred to as part of the “*Burns’ conception*”(Bass, 1993, p. 376). Burns (1978) was among the first to suggest that successful leaders actually transform their followers, contributing to their “motivational maturity and moral development” (p. 376). Leaders who utilized the transformational approach were thought to call on at least one of the following strategies outlined by Bass (1985), which have come to be known as the *Four Is* of transformational leadership: *idealized influence*, *inspirational motivation*, *intellectual stimulation*, and *individualized consideration* (Printy, 2014; Sun, 2010; Hitt & Tucker, 2015).

### **Educational Leadership Constructs**

Leadership in general, as interpreted by a number of educational scholars and practitioners, is exhibited within the relationships between and among individuals and is dependent upon the values, thought processes, and actions of leaders and followers who are situated in cultural, historical, and/or organizational settings (Leithwood, 2012; Spillane, 2005; Timperley, 2005). Hitt and Tucker (2015) added a definition of leaders themselves as the goal setters, creators, and protectors of an inspirational vision, whose influence commands a high

impact on a diverse group of stakeholders and has a significant influence on the level of achievement among both teachers and students.

Bridging the arc of evidence in both non-school and school contexts, Leithwood et al., (2008) claimed that “almost all successful leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices” (p. 27). They were among the first to provide ongoing reviews of empirical studies on leadership in both school and non-school contexts. Their 2008 article, “Seven Strong Claims about Successful School Leadership,” named school leadership as second only to classroom teaching as a key indicator of student learning. Their work connected the influence of school leaders to their ability to integrate effective patterns of shared leadership and to motivate and inspire commitment toward this goal by staff members.

Leithwood et al., (2008) also claimed that it is not the practices alone, but the way in which leaders apply their leadership practices in “contextually sensitive combinations” (p. 31) that truly demonstrates responsiveness and effective leadership. Findings reviewed in the Leithwood et al. synopsis of international literature support the understanding that both contextual and relational responsiveness are key to effective school leadership.

**Instructional leadership (IL).** The term *instructional leadership* in educational settings can be most closely compared with the widespread understanding of the process of transactional leadership in corporate organizations, which is often referred to as *constructive transactional leadership* (TA), (Printy, 2014). Although the term cannot be used interchangeably with instructional leadership (IL) as exercised in schools, both have come to be associated with the managerial processes of leadership, which focus on supervision, organization, and monitoring of individual and group performance (Printy, 2014).

Hallinger's (2005) empirical review of the educational leadership literature, examined 116 studies on instructional leadership in school settings conducted in North America, Europe, and Australasia between 1983 and 2005. The review sought to identify trends and the core characteristics underlying the instructional leadership approach, to define the predominant models of *instructional school leadership* (ISL), and to report on the empirical evidence of the ISL effect.

Hallinger (2005) characterized ISL as “a rational model of leadership. . . . [stating that] schools would improve if principals were able to create clear academic goals, motivate staff and students to work towards those goals, monitor progress, and align teaching and learning activities to achieve the desired academic outcomes” (p. 231). Hallinger, while recognizing the difficulty of enacting instructional leadership within the loosely structured environments that often characterized educational institutions, noted what he described as a wealth of findings concerning the effects of personal training and characteristics of leaders and the use of instructional leadership on student achievement and a variety of school outcomes. Hallinger's (2005) review resulted in the advance of a comprehensive list of successful practices associated with instructional leaders working in the educational arena, including the high visibility of a school leader focused on school climate, clear goals and expectations, and the regular monitoring of staff with regard to curriculum and instruction, and school improvement initiatives.

**Transformational school leadership (TSL).** The concept of *transformational leadership* emerged in educational organizations as the model needed by school leaders to promote the “ingredients of change—ideas, innovation, influence, and consideration for the individual in the process” (Marks & Printy, 2003, p. 391).

By 2005, Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) had begun to synthesize a corpus of information about *transformational school leadership* (TSL) that they considered significant. Derived from empirical reviews of the research that included 66 studies and spanned a 20-year period from 1996 to 2005, their amalgamation of the evidence pointed to four conclusions. Together, these conclusions provided a coherent set of transformational leader practices that demonstrated a relational and largely positive cause and effect association with regard to: (a) TL effects on perceptions of organizational effectiveness; (b) TL effects on objective, independent measures of organizational effectiveness; (c) TL effects on independently measured student outcomes; and (d) TL effects on students' engagement in school (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005, p. 193). Their findings also suggested that the skills of TSL were observed to be most critical during "times of crisis or excessive turbulence" (p. 185).

Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) noted in their analysis of both qualitative and quantitative studies, however, that transferability of the data could not be confirmed due to contextual factors and variability in leader practices. They concluded that the circumstances and variables that were impacted by TSL could be positively or adversely affected by the characteristics of the leader, leader colleagues and students, and/or the organizational structures and processes. The authors urged further research, stating that the study of TSL in schools was in its infancy (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005).

Leithwood and Sun's subsequent 2012 meta-analytic review of 79 unpublished studies on TSL utilized six well-known research instruments to measure both TL (transformational leadership) and TA (transactional leadership) practices in schools and compared results with earlier reviews. Findings reflected a positive correlation between studies regarding the identified

positive TSL effects on school conditions, teacher's internal states and behaviors, and student achievement (Leithwood & Sun, 202, pp. 402-405)

**Collaborative school leadership.** Throughout the 21st century, the words *collaborative*, *shared*, *blended*, *integrated*, and *distributed* have all been used as prefixes to the words leadership and educational leadership (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Hitt & Tucker, 2015; Marks & Printy, 2003; Printy, 2014; Spillane, 2005; Timperley, 2005). Authors like Spillane (2005) and Timperley (2005) suggested that the development of collaborative leadership models in the 21st century was precipitated in part by the growing pressure placed on principals and other school leaders to act as the sole agents of change and accountability to improve schools and raise student achievement levels.

**Integrated leadership.** In 2003, Marks and Printy targeted a sample of 24 elementary, middle and high schools and used a form of hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) to conduct an investigation into the use of a combination of instructional leadership (IL) and transformational leadership (TL) in educational organizations. Their findings showed that highly effective principals worked simultaneously at ISL and TSL tasks and that when they “coexist in an integrated form of leadership, the influence on school performance, measured by the quality of its pedagogy and the achievement of its students, is substantial” (p. 370). Specifically, findings revealed that strong transformational leadership was essential to gaining the commitment of teachers and accomplishing the articulation of vision, promotion of a positive school culture, participatory decision-making, and collaborative leadership approaches representative of TSL. Findings also suggested that this type of consensus building led to ISL tasks and structures taking on the characteristics of TSL.

Almost a decade later, Printy (2014) examined the work of six junior researchers, who each conducted similar, smaller-scale studies under her direction. Her article described the start of a process that took the integrated leadership model developed by Mark and Printy (2003) on the road in search of integrated leadership practices employed by principals in six schools (Printy, 2014). These unique studies did not directly seek data about student learning and achievement, but rather about the variety and scope of organizational structures and leader decision-making processes as they related to policy implementation and the integrated leadership model. Each study sought to demonstrate what educational leaders actually did (with regard to specific actions taken) and how they chose to communicate and implement school policy in order to improve the level of teacher competency enough to enhance student achievement in schools (Printy, 2014). Study variables focused on relationships, trust, and program coherence as they related to change action in schools.

In her discussion of the findings, Printy (2014) noted results that were in line with both the Marks and Printy (2003) study of integrated leadership and the subsequent work of Avolio (2011) on a form of integrated leadership termed *full range leadership*. Printy (2014) summarized that full range leadership acknowledges the transactional leadership practices of setting direction, articulating expectations, and communicating information about policy and process as prerequisites to developing trusting relationships among leaders and followers and achieving transformational leadership. Avolio (2011), Printy noted, identified leadership behaviors that ranged from laissez-faire to highly transformational, and emphasized the interdependency of transactional, transformational, and shared leadership. Full range leadership at its core, Printy (2014) summarized, is centered on the belief that critical relationships between

leader and follower are interdependent, and rely on a high degree of trust, mutual responsibility, and dependency as required in each new situation.

Printy (2014) qualified the results of the six studies completed by junior researchers, noting the frequent absence of all three of the interrelated leadership configurations (instructional, transformational, shared) among principals and teachers in the research sample, and stating that instituting integrated or full range leadership in schools is “highly aspirational and difficult to achieve” (p. 310). Printy (2014) added that the junior researchers witnessed many lost leadership opportunities among positional leaders in one or more of the interrelated components of instructional, transformational, and shared leadership that might have helped leaders to reach their goals to improve teacher capacity and student achievement. Printy’s ongoing goal, she concluded, was to inspire school leaders and researchers to continue focusing on the potential implementation of integrated leadership with a shared leadership component at its core and to developing the “kind of [school] system[s] necessary to maximize the potential or capital of the human resources available” (p. 310).

**Distributed leadership.** Spillane (2005), in a peer reviewed article in the *Educational Forum*, summarized distributed leadership as a leadership practice that is defined exclusively by the interactions between school leaders and followers, and the context within which they are situated. In this model, the specific actions on the part of those who are assigned leadership roles, is less important than the quality of the interactions between the leader and other educational stakeholders.

Timperley (2005) grounded her 4-year empirical study on distributed leadership in elementary schools that were implementing school improvement initiatives. Throughout the study, Timperley focused on practice-context modalities and sought to determine if school



improvement could be linked to the degree to which leadership was distributed. Timperley found that the distribution of leadership roles and promoting teamwork across multiple people and situations within schools had value whether school improvement goals had been met or not. Distributing leadership, Timperley noted, often led school communities to develop a useful framework for understanding the realities facing their schools, for diagnosing school conditions and for planning school improvements. School reform, she suggested, requires a “complex interplay” between “leadership traits, behaviors, tasks, and/or artefacts” analyzed together” (p. 416). Future research, she urged further, should focus on the “quality of activities and their consequences” versus “the extent of distribution” (p. 417).

A few years later, Robinson (2008), in a review of the empirical research on distributed leadership, concentrated specifically on who was involved in distributed leadership in schools and who was taking responsibility for assigning and completing the tasks associated with leadership in schools. Robinson also sought evidence of known effective leadership practices (those associated with positive student outcomes) that had been observed being performed in a distributed manner (Robinson, 2008).

Like Spillane (2005) and Timperley (2005), Robinson (2008) was not able to definitively link distributed leadership to positive student outcomes. Conversely, Robinson (2008) concluded that when leadership tasks were distributed to staff members other than the principal, those with leadership capabilities and expertise were not always willing to exercise them, and their colleagues were not always willing to be influenced by a new person in charge. She named aspects of this phenomenon as the “distribution of influence processes” (p. 241) and noted that success in this area was key to effective distributed leadership in schools. Robinson also expressed her concern that research to date “on distributed leadership in schools, like research on

educational leadership itself, is only very loosely coupled to research on the improvement of teaching and learning. . . . [and] does not yet serve the goal of educational improvement” (p. 254).

Collectively, Spillane (2005), Timperley (2005), and Robinson (2008) observed distributed leadership practices that spanned approaches from democratic to autocratic. They separately came to the same conclusion that the impact of distributed and collaborative leadership on educational institutions and student learning remains an ambiguous concept. Spillane (2005) observed that identical structures of leadership distribution affected students and schools quite differently. Timperley (2005) warned that “distributing leadership over more people is risky business and may result in the greater distribution of incompetence” (p. 417). And Robinson (2008) noted the current reality of principal jurisdiction over the teacher evaluation process, and how this is a significant limiting factor in the development of authentic teacher leadership.

As with the success of other models of leadership, researchers described the success of collaborative models as dependent upon the style and quality of the leader, the context and situational factors, and the extent to which the model was integrated with other approaches to leadership. Robinson (2008) envisioned collaborative leadership as uniquely situated for positive outcomes in a variety of school environments. If nurtured, she presumed, an increase of collaborative leadership opportunities would follow an inevitable course to distribution by “following the contours of expertise in an organization made coherent through a common culture” (Harris, 2005, as cited by Robinson, 2008, p. 253).

There seemed to be an agreement among researchers that models of collaborative leadership as they have been understood and implemented in schools to date, do not provide “a

blueprint for effective leadership nor a prescription for how school leadership should be practiced” (Spillane, 2005, p. 149). Distributed leadership, Spillane suggested, simply offers “a perspective—a conceptual or diagnostic tool for thinking about school leadership” (p. 149).

### **A Comprehensive Framework of Effective Educational Leadership Practices**

In 2015, Hitt and Tucker took on the much-needed task of systematically reviewing almost four decades of work on educational leadership. In phase one of their empirical review, Hitt and Tucker (2015) analyzed 56 empirical research studies on school leadership practices conducted between 2000 and 2014. Two important findings stood out. First, research confirmed student learning and achievement as a primary measure of educational success, noting that: (a) high quality teachers have been the most fundamental resource for the stimulation of high level student learning, and (b) school administrators are also of critical importance, setting the stage and nurturing school climates that support both teacher and student success. Second, findings pointed to the skills required of effective instructional leaders as essential to organizational management and revealed that it is “dexterity in this . . . capacity that unleashes the potential of other teachers and stakeholders through the removal of barriers and creation and refinement of conditions that influence school culture” (Hitt & Tucker, 2015, p. 561).

Expanding on phase one of their research and on previous syntheses of effective leadership traits and practices, Hitt and Tucker’s (2015) subsequent goal was to develop an up-to-date framework that details what constitutes effective practice by school leaders. To achieve their objective, Hitt and Tucker (2015) identified and synthesized three well-respected existing leadership frameworks, developed criteria for inclusion of recommended practices on a leadership matrix, and grouped each framework’s effective leadership practices into five overarching leadership domains and 28 practices. Selected frameworks included the Ontario

Leadership Framework (Leithwood, 2012), the Learning-Centered Leadership Framework (Murphy et al., 2006), and the Essential Supports Framework developed by Sebring et al., (2006) (as cited in Hitt & Tucker, 2015). By blending together these frameworks and findings, and a cumulative knowledge base about leader practices, Hitt and Tucker (2015) were able to create a holistic model for identifying the most effective leadership practices. These practices were described as *bundles of activities* exercised by a person or group of persons in a school leadership role. In short, Hitt and Tucker were interested in understanding what leaders actually do to transform school environments into places with increased student engagement and high student achievement (Hitt & Tucker, 2015).

Hitt and Tucker's (2015) unified model of effective leader practices, while not the first or the only well-respected synthesis of research, is among the most wide-ranging and up-to-date reports on leadership practices, confirming and extending previous evidence regarding the balance of transformational, instructional, and shared leadership practices that have been shown to be most successful in schools. This unified model of leadership, with its five central leader action components and their accompanying unified framework of 28 effective leadership practices, is highlighted in Table 1. The model served as a central frame in this research and as a theoretical basis upon which to articulate the conceptual construct of effective leadership. The five leadership domains include: (a) establishing and conveying the mission or vision, (b) building professional capacity, (c) creating a supportive organization for learning, (d) facilitating a high-quality learning experience for students, and (e) connecting with external partners (Hitt & Tucker, 2015).

Table 1

*Unified Model: Domains and Dimensions of Effective Leadership Practices*

Unified model	Effective leadership practices
Establishing and conveying the mission or vision	
E1	Creating, articulating, and stewarding shared mission and vision.
E2	Implementing the vision by setting goals and performance expectations.
E3	Modeling aspirational and ethical practices.
E4	Communicating broadly the state of the vision.
E5	Promoting the use of data for continual improvement
E6	Tending to accountability.
Building professional capacity	
B1	Selecting the right fit.
B2	Providing individualized consideration.
B3	Building trusting relationships.
B4	Providing opportunities to learn for whole faculty to include leader(s).
B5	Supporting, buffering, and recognizing staff.
B6	Creating communities of practice.
B7	Engendering responsibility for promoting learning.
Creating a supportive organization for learning	
C1	Acquiring and allocating materials and resources for mission and vision.

(Continued)

Unified model	Effective leadership practices
C2	Considering context to maximize organizational functioning.
C3	Building collaborative processes for decision-making
C4	Sharing and distributing leadership.
C5	Tending to and building on diversity.
C6	Strengthening and optimizing school culture.
C7	Maintaining ambitious and high expectations and standards.
Facilitating a high-quality learning experience for students	
F1	Maintaining safety and orderliness.
F2	Personalizing the environment to reflect students' backgrounds.
F3	Developing and monitoring curricular program.
F4	Developing and monitoring instructional program.
F5	Developing and monitoring assessment program.
Connecting with external partners	
P1	Building productive relationships with families and community.
P2	Engaging families and community in collaborative processes to strengthen student learning.
P3	Anchoring schools in the community.

*Note.* Adapted from “Systematic Review of Key Leader Practices Found to Influence Student Achievement: A Unified Framework,” by D. H. Hitt and P. D. Tucker, 2015, *Review of Educational Research*, 20, 16–29. Copyright 2016 by SAGE Publications.

Extending this line of discernment to school leaders themselves, the term *effective school leader* will be used to reflect educational leaders who have absorbed and integrated these well-researched and substantiated best practices into their work as educational leaders (Sun, 2010).

An extension of current research related to the practice of effective educational leadership. Research conducted by Day et al. (2016) focused specifically on investigating a pattern of leadership practices exercised by principals in schools that had already been determined to be either effective or improving. They analyzed empirical data from a 3-year mixed-methods study on 20 sample schools and explored the manner in which effective school leaders progressively shaped and layered the complex range and combination of strategies used to fulfill the important work of schools at different phases of each institution's school-improvement journey. Their discussion of findings serves as an important reminder to consider not only what practices are employed by effective school leaders, but the combinations of strategies, actions, and behaviors that effective leaders accumulate over time. Even the most effective leadership practices, they noted, will be subject to frequent leader decisions about which practices work and in which contexts they will be most successful in terms of both reform and sustained change (Day et al., 2016).

### **Connecting the Arts and Leadership**

#### **A Retrospective Summary (1960–2012)**

In the late 1960s, equipped only with the interest of private and public agencies, a small budget, and a number of novel ideas about the value of the arts, Nelson Goodman (a 20th century philosopher) launched an unparalleled research program called *Project Zero*, conducted at the Harvard Graduate School (Gardner, 2016). Researchers involved in this project investigated the nature of the arts as a unique discipline and considered how artistic knowledge and practice

might complement their scientific equivalents to support enhanced programming in schools and other organizations (Gardner, 2016). This scheme prompted a lively scholarly conversation about the aptitudes and training needed for the arts and sciences, and about Goodman's suggestion that "once the arts and sciences are seen to involve working with inventing, applying, reading, transforming, manipulating . . . the pertinent skills [begin to] inhibit or enhance one another" (Gardner, 2016, p. 245). Mirroring Goodman's ideas, Adler (2015) suggested that "art does not dismiss science, but rather, partners with all ways of knowing to go beyond what any one approach can produce on its own" (p. 481).

In Goodman's final report to the national office of education in 1972, two findings about the value of the arts in business and education were notable. First, the arts and aesthetics, like the sciences, offer an important vantage point from which to explore the nature of problem-solving and inquiry with an aim toward advancing change and rejuvenating organizational systems and policies. Second, when employed in educational settings, the arts support a new taxonomy of knowledge, which plays a critical role in integrating the entire educational process with new modes of teaching and learning (Gardner, 2016). Goodman's instincts and first expeditions into the aesthetic domains were confirmed through a slow but steady rise in the number of scholars who joined him in attempts "to demystify the arts, [and] to construe them as involving the same kinds of skills and capacities as are involved in other domains and other disciplines" (p. 247).

In 1980, Donald Hoffman, an associate professor of art education at the University of Kentucky, connected the arts with leadership in an article entitled *Developing the Leadership Role for Art Educators*, which was written for the journal *Art Education*. The article expressed his view regarding the development of leadership roles for arts educators, and the need for



informed, well-trained administrators in the nation's schools who possessed backgrounds in the arts. Hoffman (1980) advocated that artists in leadership roles would not only be able to exercise broad powers in favor of arts programming but would also be in a position to develop district and community-wide action plans that blended the learning of literacy, math, and sciences with the skills of creativity, inquiry, and innovation in order to guide the future philosophical direction of schools and school districts.

Two decades later, Clayton (2002), who was then president of the National Association for Music Education, wrote an editorial for the *Music Educators Journal* that offered a fresh perspective of the implications of music teachers transitioning to school administrators. Clayton (2002) noted that an increase of school administrators with arts backgrounds would be desirable not only for music and arts programs, but more importantly, to ensure a balanced, well-integrated view of educational programming and school policy.

By 2007, Freedman, a leading arts and education scholar, began to express a sense of urgency in his call to arts educators to take on leadership roles. In his article, "Artmaking/Troublemaking: Creativity, Policy and Leadership in Art Education," Freedman stressed the critical role that arts educators, school administrators, and community and governmental leaders must play in educating others about creativity and the arts as they relate to policy, curriculum, assessment, fiscal policies, environmental development, and global creativity. Freedman (2007) addressed the need for educational leadership among arts educators that drives change beyond typical teaching and leadership boundaries toward trouble-making in schools. Freedman used the word *trouble* as an action word referring to educational, cultural, and community challenges that deeply affect societal change. He urged school leaders to make lasting trouble that would serve to redefine the role of arts leaders in affecting international

policy decisions that impact creativity, inquiry, and innovation in educational, business, and political spheres.

In 2012, another five years later, Cimino and Denhardt (2012) were prompted to take a look back at early arts-based research, in search of a clear timeline for the growing awareness of the potential of arts processes within organizational environments. Unable to determine the historical trajectory of what they perceived as a corporate momentum in the direction of the arts however, they instead created a new chronological timeline that marked a variety of experimental projects between 1970 and 2000 that advanced arts-based leadership as an updated approach to organizational challenges. Groups like the Center for Creative Leadership (founded in 1970), and Creative Leaps International (founded in 1992), began to publicly acknowledge the value of the arts as a spark that was igniting new thinking, and accelerating discussions about the role of artists and artistic practices in corporate environments (Booth, 2015; CCL, 2016; Cimino & Denhardt, 2012).

Cimino and Denhardt (2012), in fact, pointed to the irregular conversations and haphazard nature of research on arts-based leadership with a positive outlook. In their chapter in the book *The Transforming Leader: New Approaches to Leadership in the Twenty-First Century*, they optimistically stated that beyond their profound conviction regarding the value of the arts and arts-based leadership, “the marvelous thing about this cluster of years was that no one knew what anyone else was doing. Each emergence [of arts-based practices employed in organizations] was spontaneous and independent, an experiment that seemed right for the times” (p. 204).

Other authors were more pessimistic about the seemingly haphazard progress in integrating arts and leadership, lamenting that the corporate field as a whole had to date, retained

many of their ongoing experiments with arts-based leadership as a well-kept secret (Adler, 2006,2015; Freedman, 2007; Gardner, 2016; Selkrig, 2009). Adler (2006) expressed a strong conviction that artists and musicians might have an important leadership role to play in modern day organizations, and asked when, if not now, would “the time [be] right for the cross-fertilization of the arts and leadership?” (p. 488). Freedman (2007) wrote about global security fears, conservative fiscal policies, and quick-fix economic development policies as among the negative forces that had impacted support for research on arts-based leadership. And Selkrig (2009) noted the inhibiting perception “that the artworld is an isolated realm that stands outside other forces such as contemporary mass culture, bureaucracy, politics, and education” (p. 16).

Finally, Gardner (2016) recently echoed the disquiet, pondering why understanding of the language and purpose of the arts is still sealed within the domains of “emotion, spirit, mystery, the ineffable and unanalyzable” (p. 247). He expressed concern about the factors that are preventing efforts to fully research the capacity of artists, and noted that research in this area might produce findings that would inform institutional approaches to the compelling issues facing organizational leaders in the 21st century (Gardner, 2016).

### **Confronting the Limitations of the Literature**

By stating the limitations of the scholarly literature connecting the arts to leadership at the midway point of this literature review, rather than within the summary of the review, the researcher both acknowledges the deficiencies in the literature available and provides a reasoned defense for the inclusion of each of the following sections of the review. The limitations of the reviewed literature that attempts to connect the qualities and practices of artists and musicians with their capacity to lead are characterized by: (a) the limited amount of formal, peer reviewed research available on the topic; and (b) the *representational interpretation* of artistic and musical

symbols, concepts, and practices that are utilized to describe connections between artists' competencies and practices and the known components of effective, transformative leadership. Adler (2006, 2015), in her own discussion of the limited scientific research on this topic, expressed her firm belief that the lack of evidence-based data connecting arts disciplines to their potential for leadership is the major factor hindering the promotion of artists and musicians as prospective organizational leaders.

In 2006, Adler began to address this issue by identifying several specific roadblocks to the type of transformational change required of 21st century organizations. These can be summarized in terms of the tendency toward: (a) slow, steady improvement rather than continuous creativity and innovative change, (b) utilizing prior structures and planning that no longer produce the same outcomes, (c) infrequent or unsuccessful attempts to implement team-based collaborative leadership, and (d) waiting for evidence to be in place before acting on new initiatives.

In each case, Adler (2006) responded to the challenges listed with an arts-inspired, alternative outlook, stressing the urgent need to dream, invent, and generate hypotheses about the arts in relation to leadership both before and during formal investigations. Businesses, she urged, should model their strategic plans on the artists' ability to offer a glance into the future—creating works of art “not only for the present generation but for those who have yet to be born . . . [thinking] years ahead of their time . . . and describe[ing] what lies over the horizon” (p. 491). Adler gave examples of how artists have assisted organizational leaders to develop a new kind of expertise that enables them to act spontaneously and improvise as needed to provide solutions and keep pace with any number of unpredictable events, essentially to “blend the

traditional skills of planning and analytical foresight with the ability to respond in the moment to problems and opportunities as they arise” (p. 492).

In the next three sections of this literature review, the researcher addressed some of the concerns raised by Adler (2006, 2015) and other scholars by highlighting the available research on the connections between musicians and their capacity to lead. This included an exploration of scholarly works that described specific artistic processes and elements engaged by musicians that are thought to be directly related to what is currently understood about leadership. The researcher anticipates that this close examination of the literature and the subsequent field work and related findings associated with this study will extend Adler’s (2006) earlier question by asking not only if the time is right for the cross-fertilization of the arts and leadership, but more specifically, if the time is right for the cross-fertilization of music educators and educational leadership.

### **Connecting Musicians With the Capacity to Lead**

Cimino and Denhardt (2012) observed that “music and leadership are rarely considered side-by-side, much less as integral aspects of a more comprehensive way of understanding human thought and human action” (p. 201). In their chapter “Music, Leadership, and the Inner Work of Art,” Cimino and Denhardt set out to explore the possibility that music and leadership share the same philosophical traditions, and that music enables the interfacing of mind, body, and spirit in a manner that is closely related to the components of transformational leadership. They compared music and leadership this way:

Both music and transformational leadership shape and are shaped by similar patterns of human experience and human energy . . . the best leaders display a certain “musicality” that distinguishes them from others . . . musical expressions, skillfully facilitated, can be

employed to tap and evoke significant aspects of the leadership experience and help to unveil its mysteries. (Cimino & Denhardt, 2012, p. 201)

Cimino and Denhardt (2012) highlighted a variety of leadership exemplars derived from a growing number of individuals who wove both music and leadership into their careers. With a view toward discovering commonalities among their leadership practices, Cimino and Denhardt actively observed percussionists who led workshops for “executives in drum circles to experience synchrony, collaboration, and listening. . . . jazz musicians to demonstrate improvisation in communities of practice” (p. 204), and conductors “who invited corporate groups right onto the stage with the orchestra to witness the dynamics of precision teamwork” (p. 205). Specific initiatives as varied as IBM’s 2007 *Jazz Impact Program* and violinist Miha Pogacnik’s leadership program consultations, supported business leaders in a movement toward the effective leadership practices of creativity, risk-taking, and innovation. In each instance, Cimino and Denhardt (2012) claimed, leadership was demonstrated as a finely attuned, distributed process that enabled contemporary organizations to redefine their performance outcomes as an “unfinished product, with which we are all more or less consciously engaged” (p. 213).

Cimino and Denhardt (2012) compared the constant back-and-forth motion between musicians and leaders in ensembles with organizational teams who transfer information and integrate new ideas in a musically inspired dance between leader and follower, and between the use of traditional knowledge and understandings created anew through a collaborative process. They cited groups like the conductor-less *Orpheus Chamber Ensemble*, whose purpose is to explore leadership as the equal possession of all group members, while at the same time recognizing the singular responsibility of the ensemble leader in promoting vision, selecting

music and musicians, shaping the creative process, and directing performances and public interactions.

In the same year, Bathhurst and Ladkin (2012) conducted one of very few formal qualitative studies on musicians and leadership. They interviewed both ensemble musicians and group leaders and studied the rehearsal processes and performances of one 45-member chamber orchestra and one jazz trio. Their objective was to increase scholarly understanding of the processes that enabled the music ensembles to work collectively to meet goals and achieve what Kort (2008) referred to as “*joint plural action*” (as cited in Bathhurst & Ladkin, 2012, p. 105). Bathhurst and Ladkin, both musicians themselves, felt that they had to move beyond the confines of theoretical analysis to “flesh out the plurality of leadership as a lived, embodied experience” (p. 106). The four leadership components required for joint plural action to be successfully employed they suggested, include: (a) each member’s awareness of his/her own talent and expertise, (b) the recognition and respect for the skills and competencies of others in the group, (c) the willingness to accept the influence of peer expertise on the group, and (d) the leader’s ability to pass on authority to its members.

Bathhurst and Ladkin’s (2012) specific research questions focused on the micro-processes that musical ensembles employed and how individual group members contributed to and coordinated individual agency to produce collaborative processes that resulted in effective plural leadership results. Their study findings pointed to five practices, simultaneously acted upon by ensemble musicians, that supported similar claims regarding the prevalent use of known effective leadership practices among musicians. These effective plural leadership practices summarized, include: (a) personal preparation, (b) readiness to begin, (c) the establishment of

ways of operating, (d) dealing with the unexpected, and (e) the notion of creating and taking space (p. 99).

***Personal preparation.*** Personal preparation, Bathhurst and Ladkin (2012) detailed, takes place before a single sound is made or action is taken, and is immediately supported by the plural action of readiness to begin established by ensemble warm-up routines and the acknowledgement of boundaries pertaining to roles and the negotiation of style and musical intent. *Effective ways of operating* include repeated practicing and viewing the leader as the “the arbiter of the tempo and style . . . conveyed in the preparatory beat” with the understanding that “as soon as the group begins to play, the conductor yields control to the entire ensemble” (p. 110). *Dealing with unexpected problems as they arise*, was described as an inevitability, with mistakes capitalized on to signify a new interpretation, opportunity, and/or direction expressed by any member of the ensemble toward the “new, previously undiscovered, and spontaneous” (p. 105). Lastly, the concept of *creating and taking space* within an organization in order to achieve harmony, was described by Bathhurst and Ladkin as akin to the idea that in a musical ensemble “players must attend to the sound that others in close proximity are creating and blend into that sound without either dominating or withholding” (p. 112).

**Music and artistic processes related to leadership.** Several key practices, regularly exercised by musicians and musical ensembles to ensure organizational success, have appeared throughout the literature and support the position put forward by Bathhurst and Ladkin (2012) and Cimino and Denhardt (2012) regarding the leadership potential of musicians (Adler, 2006, 2015; Asbjornson, n.d.; Bathhurst & Ladkin, 2012; Cimino & Denhardt, 2012; Jagiello, 2015; Nissley, 2010; Robinson, 2011; Seifter, 2004; Vaillancourt, 2007). These practices, although not definitively connected to leadership through wide-scale research studies, have nevertheless



gained a great deal of attention from corporations and their leaders, and are the result of several small preliminary studies and reports on the topic. These musical processes include but are not limited to the practices of creating, listening, risk-taking, rehearsing, and performing.

**Creating.** Nissley (2010), who is thought of as a pioneer in the field of arts-based learning, reported in an article for the *Journal of Business Strategy*, that artists and musicians are keenly “in tune with the creative process,” and have been able to use their “tacit knowledge” within their organizations “promoting creativity and fostering an innovation spirit” ( p. 17). Asbjornson (n.d.), a musician and leadership consultant, discussed how he strives to increase awareness of the creative, improvisational, and collaborative evolution of ideas orchestrated by musicians during their creative process. These exist, he suggested, in in a continual flow of interrelated musical and elemental ideas that can be utilized successfully by organizations who welcome possibility, growth, and transformative change.

Robinson (2011) in his book *Out of Our Minds: Learning to be Creative*, also listed creativity as among the most important stimulants for meaningful human interactions. Robinson also defined its precursor, *imagination*, as the ability to bring to mind events and ideas and creativity as the process of assigning value to these original ideas. Without the promotion of imagination and creativity in the nation’s workplaces, he suggested, the ambitious goal of unbound innovation in organizational life would never be realized.

**Listening.** According to Vaillancourt (2007), whose postdoctoral work included a peer reviewed article on music therapy as an instrument for leadership, the most important practice of a music ensemble leader is “listening, both analytically and semantically” (p. 1). The conductor, she explained, listens not only for how the instruments interact to create sound, but to how the music elements of rhythm, melody, harmony, and dynamics connect to create the finest

resonance. The transformative leader in a musical setting, she stressed, utilizes his or her keen listening ear and expects the same of ensemble musicians. Vaillancourt noted her observation that the ensemble leader and musician listen as one and are able to “adjust their musical play with each other in perfect synchrony” (p. 1). Both Vaillancourt (2007) and Nissley (2010) described the keen ability musicians have to interpret what they hear, to decipher the complexity of both sound and silence, and to intentionally make meaning of what they hear by adding color or expressing emotion that will affect their immediate actions and future performances.

***Problem-solving and risk-taking.*** Problem-solving as a practice employed by artists and musicians, goes hand in hand with the heightened levels of risk-taking and resilience often required to reframe problems and meet challenges (Adler, 2006; Nissley, 2010). It’s adjunct, risk-taking is a process that often assumes intensified emotional responses, and the ability to view turbulence, conflict, and emotional sensitivity as positive. Taking considered risks summons a deep understanding that mistakes and failures are critical to effective leadership, and that any attempts to predict success, avoid the unexpected, or diminish risk, will inhibit a leader’s ability to initiate even the smallest changes (Adler, 2006; Bathhurst & Ladkin, 2012; Jagiello, 2015; Nissley, 2010).

The complimentary process of improvisation, which is more or less in continuous use by musicians, is a leadership tool that is often mentioned in the literature on leadership as a process akin to trial and error and inventiveness in the work place. Like scientific experimentation and exploration, improvisation is communicated as a living process that welcomes a multitude of possible outcomes (Bathhurst & Ladkin, 2012; Cimino & Denhardt, 2012; Nissley, 2010; Seifert, 2004).

***Rehearsing.*** Rehearsing encompasses practicing and repeating ideas or changes to achieve what Nissley (2010) called “embodied learning” (p. 14). For leaders this would entail a process that required the skills of leadership and change action to be developed and repeated “until the change fits the person or the body corporate like a glove” (p. 14). This concept of ongoing rehearsal as a prerequisite to effective leadership has been reinforced by several authors on the topic. Cimino and Denhardt (2012) compared organizational leaders to musicians who must regularly overcome a range of technical difficulties, possess methodological competence and dexterity, and accept experiences of both mastery and vulnerability in their trade. Bathurst and Ladkin (2012) similarly stressed that the musicians’ high level of deference to the practice room and the rehearsal process is a discipline that is developed by musicians over many years of both solo and ensemble music participation.

***Performing.*** While performing well is the ultimate goal of any organization, scholars and researchers singularly highlighted performance as one of the most well-honed and familiar experiences of musicians. Bathurst and Ladkin (2012) stressed that the continuous replication of often high stakes, wide-ranging performance experiences, typically begins in childhood for musicians and develops into an art form of its own over a lifetime. Effective leadership, they added, while not wholly defined by a final performance, includes the similar transmission of intent from leader to followers, and the construal of organizational direction, logistical symbols, and accumulated meanings by each and every performer (Bathurst & Ladkin, 2012). Cimino and Denhardt (2012) added that performance is often associated with a celebratory finale that helps to counteract the exhaustive demands of creative development and the high energy levels required of risk-taking, constant challenge, attentive engagement with others, and the process of reflection, revision, and strategic analysis.

**Artistic elements related to leadership.** Preliminary qualitative research studies conducted by Kelehear (2006) and Selkrig (2009) and later summarized in peer reviewed journals (Kelehear, 2008; Selkrig, 2011), highlighted the successful application of the elements of visual arts and the use of arts-based practices (including those related to the elements of music) in the practice of transformational leadership in schools and community organizations respectively. According to Kelehear (2006), the seven elements of the artistic craft are perhaps the closest companion to the elements of music and have the potential to provide school leaders who employ them with an “interactive and relational . . . choreography of human understanding” (p. 4).

Selkrig (2009), whose phenomenological study was conducted specifically on how the development of personal role identities can occur through interactions with the elements of art, stressed in his findings that being engaged with the elements of art and the art world itself supported personal identity understandings and role transformations among his study participants. What the study participants had learned by interacting with the elements of art not only “folded into their identities,” Selkrig concluded, but also “assisted them to further develop agentic qualities [including assertiveness, independence, courageousness, and mastery level achievement] on which they could navigate their respective life journeys” (p. 181).

Further, both Kelehear (2006, 2008) and Selkrig (2009, 2011) stressed that the elements of music—including but not limited to the elemental duos of *melody and form*, *harmony and texture*, *rhythm and tempo*, and *tone and dynamics*—are terms that several scholars have conceptualized and analyzed for their meaning and dissected for their possible value in the practice of organizational leadership (Asbjornson, n.d.; Bathhurst & Ladkin, 2012; Cimino & Denhardt, 2012; Kelehear, 2008; Nissley, 2010; Vaillancourt, 2007). Cimino and Denhardt

(2012) for instance, specified that musicians are “at ease with complexity, dissonance, ambiguity, dramatic emotion, and more” (p. 202), and that they fully exploit the elements of music to inform a number of leadership practices and processes that can be successfully utilized by organizational leaders.

***Melody and form.*** The analogy of leadership as it relates to melody and form emulates identifiable organizational structures, agreeable associations, and stress-free accessibility to organizational stakeholders and can be cultivated by a leader’s ability to emotionally engage employees, clients, and organizational stakeholders (Asbjornson, n.d., Bathhurst & Ladkin, 2012; Kelehear, 2008).

***Harmony and texture.*** An understanding of the harmonic interplay and textural components explored in musical ensembles, supports the recognition of the inevitability of harmonic dissonance and interpersonal conflict as integral components of dynamic organizations (Asbjornson, n.d., Cimino & Denhardt, 2012; Kelehear, 2006, 2008; Nissley, 2010; Vaillancourt, 2007). Harmony, for example, expressed within an educational organization might be viewed as a unifying practice, bringing together a range of external policy matters with a range of instructional practices while directing energy toward “the core values, [and] the guiding and philosophical principles” (Kelehear, 2006, p. 8) This harmonizing practice can lead to what Kelehear calls the “synergistic effect” (p.8) of actions based on shared goals and values in schools and organizations.

***Rhythm and tempo.*** The creation of a workplace culture that is concerned with the rhythmic patterns and the intense rhythmic pulse of modern-day schools, Kelehear (2008) asserted, supports “schoolwide initiatives that bring vitality and relevancy to instruction” (p. 7). Effective leaders, Cimino and Denhardt (2012) agreed, pay close attention to the life signs of

their groups, noting the simple rhythm of breathing in and out, timing their interventions to align with the intake of breath and to arrive precisely on the beat of readiness. Establishing the rhythm and managing the accelerations and decelerations of the tempo within an organization, Cimino and Denhardt continued, is “careful, measured, and intuitive work” (p. 206).

***Tone and dynamics.*** The work of an effective organizational leader requires a constant and dynamic interpretation of original thought and actions produced by individuals and groups of employees, and is required to facilitate a deeply experienced, sustainable, and synchronous resonance within the heart of each organization (Asbjornson, n.d.; Cimino & Denhardt, 2012). The diverse dynamics within an organization, Bathhurst and Ladkin (2012) noted, may differ from moment to moment, with any given instrument or voice being given momentary prominence. Bathhurst and Ladkin (2012) echoed the sentiments of Asbjornson (n.d.) and Cimino and Denhardt (2012), who asserted that a collaborative tone within an organization allows for an endless combination of sounds and ideas to emerge and stimulates a dynamic environment within which to support strategic goals and ensure meaningful outcomes.

Kelehear (2008) emphasized the importance of understanding the interplay of the elements of art and music as they might apply to school environments. He suggested an elemental link to educational leadership practices that promote partnerships and meaningful connections between teachers and across subject areas. These practices also embrace diverse teaching styles, invite variety and creativity among individuals and collaborative groupings, and curtail the standardization of practice within schools.

## **Summary**

The authors cited in this section of the literature review framed the work of artists and musicians as a collaborative progression of creativity, commitment, innovation, and possibility,

in which the elements of art and music that define their work are seamlessly integrated to ensure effective outcomes (Adler, 2006, 2015; Asbjornson, n.d.; Bathurst & Ladkin, 2012; Cimino & Denhardt, 2012; Jagiello, 2015; Nissley, 2010; Robinson, 2011; Seifter, 2004; Vaillancourt, 2007).

Two additional scholars offered anecdotes regarding the connection between musicians and leadership that also add to this body of knowledge and serve to reiterate the overriding reference to the collaborative practices of musicians presented in this section of the literature review. Talgam (2009), in his Ted Talk, *Lead Like the Great Conductors*, highlighted a number of successful conductors, describing how each gesture from the conductors urged the full participation of ensemble musicians, giving them space to add their individual musical stories and instrumental voices to the performance, while creating optimal structures and conditions for successful collaboration. Similarly, DePree (2008), in his book *Leadership Jazz*, suggested that organizational leaders who face unpredictable markets and are trying to achieve an often daunting array of overlapping goals, seek leadership role models in music ensemble leaders who expertly set tempos and give directives while encouraging ensemble members to individually express “their own variations on a tune,” and collectively learn “to improvise as part of a team, [and] to innovate in concert with others” (DePree, 2008, p. xi).

In sum, the information which has been explored in relationship to the second building block of this study’s conceptual framework, presents artists and musicians as a possible untapped pool of educational leaders. Like the first conceptual frame on effective leadership, the outlook offered by the scholars reviewed in this section contributes an arts-based conceptual construct that urges new and updated research on effective leadership, both citing and offering solutions to a number of struggles with the implementation of transformative and collaborative leader

practices in educational organizations. In addition, this information lends support to the call for diversity among future educational leadership candidates, particularly among specific teacher reference groups who may be underrepresented in educational administrative positions.

Scholars from the fields of both arts-based and educational leadership agree on one point unequivocally, that future research must consider not only what effective educational leaders do in terms of strategic action steps, but who they are, including their backgrounds, professional and ethical orientations, personal traits, relationships, and belief systems (Adler, 2006, 2015; Bathurst & Ladkin, 2012; Cimino & Denhardt, 2012; Day et al., 2016; Hitt & Tucker, 2015).

### **Becoming a School Leader: Transitioning from Teacher to Educational Leader**

According to Browne-Ferrigno (2003), the “making of a principal” (Lane, 1984, as cited in Browne-Ferrigno, 2003, p. 470) “is an intricate process of learning and reflection that requires socialization into a new community of practice and [the] assumption of a new role identity” (p. 470). She and other current scholars view the road to becoming an educational leader, like the nature of educational leadership itself, as a transformative, developmental process that is advanced and articulated through a number of marked stages over a period of time and under a wide variety of conditions and contexts (Armstrong, 2012; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Collay, 2006, 2014).

Browne-Ferrigno’s (2003) seminal research study set the stage for a new understanding of the transition from teacher to educational leader as a progression of stages. Browne-Ferrigno collected data for a full year in an exploratory case study involving 18 educational practitioners enrolled in administrative training programs. She employed a variety of qualitative research instruments including questionnaires, self-assessment inventories, semistructured interviews, and focus groups to gather first-hand accounts of participant experiences. In a second stage of her



research, participant-observation and content analysis of reflective writing were also collected and analyzed qualitatively.

Browne-Ferrigno's (2003) findings resulted in a thematic framework centered on four key stages of development that marked the common, prevalent transitional experiences among participants. These included: (a) role conceptualization, (b) initial socialization, (c) role-identity transformation, and (d) purposeful engagement. Each of the Browne-Ferrigno transitional stages and their accompanying central concepts and teacher experiences related to identity and role transference toward leadership are presented in Table 2.

Throughout the study, Browne-Ferrigno (2003) stressed the high degree of positional support and training, as well as career and personal transformation necessary for teachers to ascend into an administrative role. Several difficulties in the passage to leadership were discussed in the findings which revealed that many "administrator licensure and certification programs often fail to estimate the personal cost to the individuals who participate" (p. 497), and that a significant number of students fail to complete programs or reach the stage of purposeful engagement in a leadership role.

Table 2

*Browne-Ferrigno (2003) Transitional Stages and Central Concepts*

Transitional Stage	Central Concepts
Role conceptualization	
R1	Articulating educator work as leadership work.
R2	Influences toward this new frame of reference (people, policies, programs, events, experiences).
R3	Implementing first steps toward leadership roles.
R4	Communicating intent to others.
Initial Socialization	
S1	Linking educator experiences with leadership characteristics (not articulated by others).
S2	Taking on recognized teacher leadership roles (articulated by others).
S3	Leadership mentoring: programs or policies.
S4	Key stepping stones/events during transition.
S5	Encouragement to become a leader (from family, peers, school, district and/or community stakeholders).
S6	Obstacles to becoming a leader (from family, peers, school, district, and/or community stakeholders).
Role Identity Transformation	
T1	Building a new role identity.
T2	Making a commitment to career advancement.
T3	Confidence levels increasing in leadership roles.
T4	Assuming a new leadership role identity, dis-engaging from role of teacher, engaging in role as administrator.

(Continued)

Transitional Stage	Central Concepts
Purposeful Engagement	
P1	Displaying familiarity with structure, culture and political dimensions of leadership in schools/districts.
P2	Setting goals, making decisions and taking action as leader.
P3	Developing and recognizing effective educational leadership practices.

*Note.* Summarized by researcher based on “Becoming a Principal: Role Conception, Initial Socialization, Role-identity Transformation, Purposeful Engagement,” by T. Browne-Ferrigno, 2003, *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 49(1) 161–203. Copyright 2003 by SAGE Publications.

Almost a decade later, Armstrong (2012) explored Browne-Ferrigno’s (2003) ideas further, conducting a qualitative study involving a series of focused interviews with 15 current vice principals who were purposefully engaged in the work of educational administration and were questioned about their experiences during their transition from teacher to vice principal. Armstrong examined the transition as social phenomena and considered both the intellectual and socioemotional dimensions of the process experienced by the participants. Her stated goal was to:

provide insight into the participants lived experiences, the subjective (e.g., attitudes, feelings, and perceptions) and objective (e.g., reality and events) factors that influenced this career trajectory, and the meaning that they made of the complex interactions and processes they encountered. (Armstrong, 2012, p. 403)

One of Armstrong’s (2012) most significant findings revealed that most participants described their transitional period as an often haphazard, confusing, and chaotic pathway to administration. Armstrong (2012) described what is often perceived to be a straightforward

linear, progression of steps through a highly regulated and structured sequence of training programs, as more of a “transitional epicycle, or cycles within cycles” (p. 405). These cycles Armstrong (2012) suggested, marked a number of evolving cognitive and emotional transitional phases that had to be internalized and reflected upon by the administrative candidates interviewed before they were ready to break through the real or perceived boundary between the profession of teaching and school administration.

A variety of other studies, dissertations, and reports have detailed what is still considered to be initial work on the multiple transitional phases required to become and practice as an educational leader. Each considered the lived experiences and perceptions about school leadership and career advancement as described directly by those most intricately involved with the process. Using the qualitative research methodologies of narrative, phenomenological, and case study, the authors administered reports on the transitional experiences of current school leaders based on teacher gender, race, sexual preference, education levels, teaching experience, and career stage. Researchers focused their inquiries on their study participants’ lived experiences on the pathway to leadership, as well as their self-professed understandings of what qualities and practices lead to successful school leadership, and their self-described individual capacity for effective school leadership (Armstrong, 2012; Bizjak, 2017; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Brunner & DeLeon, 2013; Collay, 2014; Curry, 2000; DuPre, 2011; Fink & Brayman, 2006; Ghaus-Kelley, 2014; Hasson, 2011; Jarmon, 2014; Myran, et al., 2011; Steele, 2015; Zafft, 2013). Collectively, this body of research has exposed a number of issues regarding the formation of leadership role conception and identity, the levels of support from positional leaders and educational stakeholders in the transition process, and the impediments to assuming

leadership faced by underrepresented groups of teachers who share a collective social and/or professional history (Collay, 2006).

The researcher analyzed two case studies for this review of literature that investigated the implementation of leadership selection and succession plans. Fink and Brayman (2006) and Steele (2015) each conducted case studies of educational leaders in order to explore their experiences during the leadership succession process. These researchers reported that none of the school leaders who participated described involvement in a formal plan for their succession to leadership. Fink and Brayman (2006) reported that leadership succession plans to date had been described as “unplanned, arbitrary, and ethically questionable” (p. 85). And while the 10 participants in Steele’s (2015) case study described an informal transition period marked by mentoring and internal recruitment, they also noted the discomfort by what transitioning teachers perceived to be “inconsistent hiring preferences and procedures” (p. iv) demonstrated by school and district leaders at critical stages of their transition process.

In order to frame the third interrelated component of this study’s conceptual framework, and structure the diversity of ideas represented, the following four subsections of this review will briefly summarize the information collected as it relates to the transitional components of role conception, initial socialization, role-identity transformation, and purposeful engagement established through the work of Browne-Ferrigno (2003). This will include a discussion of study findings regarding specific teacher reference groups, transitional support resources, and the recruitment and selection of educational leaders.

### **Leadership Role Conceptualization**

To address the concept of leadership role conceptualization in general, Browne-Ferrigno (2003) asked her study participants, who were all current teachers in transition to leadership, to

consider the type of leaders and leadership approaches that they thought would best meet the challenges of today's schools, and how this applied to their decision to become an educational leader. Browne-Ferrigno (2003) focused her inquiry on both the timing and initial reasoning participants gave for making the transition, including changes of mindset and perceived stumbling blocks or impediments to assuming leadership roles. Armstrong (2012) substantiated the idea that a shift in leadership role conception is marked by a number of psychological and social modifications and a teacher-to-leader mind-set adjustment that sets the stage for a change in professional orientation (Armstrong, 2012).

Collay (2014) stressed that the conception of the leadership role for each individual is a precursor to the development of their leadership identity. She likened leadership role conception to a turning point or milestone experienced by prospective leaders that may have been shaped at any time during their educational development as children, students, teachers, and/or leaders. She asked her case study participant to reflect on what she described as the critical "steppingstones" (p. 784) in her life or career that shifted her outlook about leadership in general and instructed her decision to pursue a leadership role. Armstrong (2012) added the importance of becoming frequently exposed to and positively oriented toward a new administrative reference group as a prerequisite to developing self-conception as a leader.

### **Initial Socialization**

Browne-Ferrigno (2003) cited a teacher's field-based leadership experiences as their key initial socialization influence. Just as Browne-Ferrigno (2003) described the process of becoming a school leader as one that begins well before taking on administrative duties or graduate studies and one that occurs over an undefined period of time, Armstrong (2012) evoked Greenfield's (1985) definition of socialization among transitioning educational leaders as the

“formal and informal processes through which administrators learn the behaviors, technical knowledge, moral dispositions, and values required to perform [a new] role” (Armstrong, 2012, p. 400). Armstrong (2012) likened the transition to leadership as cyclical and described the initial socialization period as one of encountering and adjusting to a culture of leadership.

Fink and Brayman (2006) also stressed the role of positional leaders (those currently in administrative positions) in promoting significant teacher leadership opportunities as a precondition to their transition to formal leadership roles at the administrative level. Collay (2006) agreed that future leadership actions are highly influenced by the experiences teachers have had on a continuum of expanded leadership roles and responsibilities, particularly those afforded by collaborative, distributed leadership formats put into place by positional leaders.

While Collay (2006) described initial socialization in the form of teacher leadership roles that support trust and rapport-building, and provide pivotal experiences related to managing practice, policy, and diagnosing, she lamented the fact that the expansion of teacher leadership opportunities is still an emerging idea among current educational leaders and trainers. Collay (2006) questioned how many aspiring leaders are being “socialized into or away from positional leadership roles. . . . [in] systems that limit the potential of [some, but not all] teacher leaders” (p. 143) to advance within a hierarchal system of leaders and followers.

### **Role-Identity Transformation**

Browne-Ferrigno (2003) stated that “perhaps the most interesting evidence of professional growth from an interpretivist perspective was the mind-set shift reported by several study participants” (p. 488). “Role-identity transference” is critical,” Browne-Ferrigno stressed (p. 495). It requires “an individual to relinquish the comfort and confidence of a known role—such as being a teacher—and experience the discomfort and uncertainty of a new, unknown

role—being a principal” (p. 470). Study findings regarding role identity transformation pointed to levels of confidence, commitment to career advancement, teacher leadership experiences, and positive encouragement from others as dominant factors in a successful transition cycle (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). Several researchers also cited examples of potentially well qualified administrative candidates who found their role-identity transformation to be difficult and at times an insurmountable obstacle to their pathway to leadership (Armstrong, 2012; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Hasson, 2011). “Teachers do not suddenly view themselves as administrators,” Hasson (2011) emphasized: “They must go through a process of disengaging from the role of teacher while engaging in the role of administrator” (p. 2).

Collay (2014) conducted a qualitative case study on one teacher during her move from the classroom domain into increased teacher leadership roles at the school and district levels, and later as she entered an administrative training program. Collay employed the tools of critical reflection to help her study participant to reflect on her unique journey and interpreted the participant reflections and experiences to gain a deeper understanding of how leadership identities are formed and nurtured. Collay concluded that occurrences at all stages of life and career may contribute to aspects of a developing leader identity and eventually to the ability to “carry out their goals in broader and more expansive roles” (p. 141) as school administrators.

Collay (2014) also surmised from the study that candidates in administrative training programs had to be highly self-motivated and willing to embrace increased responsibility in order to develop the type of role transformation required of school administrators.

### **Purposeful Engagement**

Browne-Ferrigno (2003) described purposeful engagement as an important connection between learning to be a leader and purposefully engaging in both the pursuit of and eventual act



of leadership. Her development of this transitional stage was stimulated by how study participants responded to questions regarding their career aspirations and describing the moments they first considered seeking a leadership positions and began their first job as school administrators.

Expanding the concept beyond initial engagement as school leaders, Armstrong (2012) explained purposeful engagement in leadership as a period of stabilization in which teachers had crossed the boundary between teaching and school leadership and were experiencing a “complex range of technical, social, and micropolitical tasks that include mastering assigned administrative duties, building a role identity, establishing relationships within and outside their group, and gaining upward mobility, recognition, and power” (p. 401). At this stage, Armstrong stressed, school leaders were expected to display “familiarity with their school and district structure, culture and politics; acceptance of their role and their place within the district hierarchy; a deeper understanding of their strengths and limitations” (p. 417).

Collay (2006) supported the use of phenomenological research to examine and interpret unique and personal accounts of purposeful leadership practices among new and aspiring school leaders. Collay described this as an essential step to understanding the connection between teachers’ lived experiences on a school leadership transitional continuum and their subsequent leadership actions, decision-making, and approach to school leadership.

### **Teacher Reference Groups: External and Internal Marginalization**

Collay (2006) noted that it is not uncommon for members of particular teacher reference groups to experience both “external and internal resistance” (p. 136), and impediments to their involvement in school leadership. She noted two forms of external resistance to leadership that have been evident, including the historical exclusion of some groups of teachers from “authentic

decision-making about education” (p. 136), and the negative stereotypes toward some teacher reference groups becoming leaders that has been corroborated by community stakeholders and at times by family and friends (Collay, 2006).

In terms of internal, building-wide influences, Collay (2006) noted that members of teacher reference groups may respond negatively to teachers who are perceived as breaking ranks from their professional colleagues in order to join leadership teams or pursue formal school leadership positions. Additional internal barriers to pursuing leadership roles that Collay discussed included lack of: (a) teacher leadership opportunities, administrative support, and clarity regarding leadership opportunities; (b) effective leadership modeling; and (c) access to leadership training programs. In sum, Collay (2006) brought attention to the prevalence of “implicit or explicit messages to not take leadership roles” (p. 142) that have been directed toward some teacher reference groups more than others.

Several other studies cited the reality that feelings of marginalization, negative internal or external messaging, or lack of inclusivity related to the progression of specific teacher reference groups through the hierarchy of leadership training opportunities and educational administrative roles exist for many teachers. (Bizjak, 2017; Brunner & DeLeon, 2013; Collay, 2006, 2014; Curry, 2000; DuPre, 2011; Fink & Brayman, 2006; Ghaus-Kelley, 2014; Hasson, 2011; Jarmon, 2014; Myran, et al., 2011; Steele, 2015; Zafft, 2013). These studies contribute important information to the scholarly conversation and examination of factors that may limit teacher to leader transitional opportunities and consequently the education profession’s ability to ensure effective school leadership in the nation’s schools.

## **Review of the Methodological Issues**

The phenomenological design that was constructed for this study was developed in the context of a variety of methodologies used by the researchers reviewed, as well as a body of knowledge gleaned from peer reviewed scholarly writing on the three interrelated topics that frame the conceptual and theoretical foundations upon which the study is designed.

Methodological approaches reviewed on educational leadership, arts-based leadership, and the developmental transition from teacher to practicing educational leader are summarized below, considered for their strengths and weaknesses, and aligned to the conceptual framework in order to justify the selection of the phenomenological design that was used in this study.

### **Educational Leadership**

Educational researchers have used a variety of methods for synthesizing prior research in order to reveal new information or to lay the groundwork for additional research.

Methodological approaches reviewed on educational leadership included but were not limited to: (a) mixed-methods studies grounded in previous impact studies on educational research (Day et al., 2016; Marks & Printy, 2003); (b) syntheses of evidence generated from previous studies (Gardner, 2016; Hallinger, 2003, 2005; Hitt & Tucker, 2015); (c) summaries of key findings (Leithwood et al., 2008; Nedelcu, 2013; Printy, 2014; Robinson, 2008; Timperley, 2005); and (d) formal meta-analytic reviews (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008).

Although these types of research syntheses and meta-analytic reviews might be considered limited by not being primary investigative tools, in this case each provided a sound and credible analysis and integration of the findings of both quantitative and/or qualitative research on educational research, and mapped out and analyzed the effects of leaders and their

practices on student, teacher, and school outcomes (Glatter, 2006; Sun, 2010). Because of the pace at which research on leadership has been growing in the last two decades, syntheses of earlier research, and meta-analytical reviews: (a) serve as a critical guide to scholars and researchers regarding the broad accumulation of research available on a topic, (b) promote the critical understanding of a cumulative pattern of findings, and (c) inform future research targeted to specific concepts and/or audiences in the field. Additionally, these well-substantiated and rigorous methodologies have provided important new classification systems, models, and frameworks upon which to base the data coding and analysis of future research on educational leadership (Hitt & Tucker, 2015; Leithwood et al. 2005, 2012; Sun, 2010).

### **Arts-Based Leadership**

Methodological approaches reviewed on arts-based leadership and the connection between arts and leadership included: (a) qualitative analysis in the form of case study, phenomenological, and narrative research (Bathhurst & Ladkin, 2012; Jagiello, 2015; Juchniewicz, Kelly & Acklin, 2014; Kelehear, 2008; Selkirg, 2008); (b) summaries of key findings (Cimino & Denhardt, 2012; Gardner, 2016; Robinson, 2008; Selkirg, 2011); and (c) scholarly arguments presented for new directions in arts-based leadership research in both school and non-school settings (Adler, 2006, 2015; Asbjornson, n.d.; Clayton, 2002; Freedman, 2007; Hoffman, 1980; Kelehear, 2006; Nissley, 2010; Seifter, 2004; Vaillancourt, 2007).

As stated earlier in this review, the limitations of this body of knowledge rests with the lack of formal research on the topic, which significantly hinders the flow of information as well as the legitimacy and credibility of information that connects the arts and leadership. The accumulation of information, however, analyzed in relation to the small number of recent studies, well-substantiated arguments, and observed practices linking arts professionals and arts

educators to their capacity to lead others, strengthened the tenets of the overall study and informed the examination of new perspectives on educational leadership throughout the collection and analysis of data. This vital source of information helped to validate the leadership perspectives garnered directly through the voices of study participants who share a common background in the arts and experience as teachers within the discipline of music education.

### **Becoming and Being an Educational Leader**

The review of literature led to a range of qualitative studies, including a number of phenomenological dissertations that explored the experiences of teachers who have traditionally been considered outside the mainstream of educational leadership and have faced challenges in the transition from teacher to school leader, including difficulty gaining representation at the leadership table. Methodological approaches reviewed on this and related topics included: (a) qualitative analysis in the form of case study, phenomenological, and narrative research (Armstrong, 2012; Bizjak, 2017; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Brunner & DeLeon, 2013; Collay, 2006, 2014; Curry, 2000; DuPre, 2011; Fink & Brayman, 2006; Ghaus-Kelley, 2014; Hasson, 2011; Jarmon, 2014; Myran, et al., 2011; Steele, 2015; Zafft, 2013); and (b) scholarly arguments presented for new directions in leadership research, related to the transition from teacher to leader in educational institutions (Collay, 2006).

This section of the literature review was limited by the small number of formal analytic studies that were identified in the literature review search and the need to rely on doctoral dissertations from novice researchers in the field. Each of the authors cited, however, called for additional research on the topic. Scholars noted that the recent studies, dissertations, and reports available are still considered to be initial work. Educational administration, scholars stressed, is a field that requires immediate and expansive research on a diverse pool of candidates as well as

on each of the multidimensional transitional phases that teachers must pass through during the process of becoming and practicing as educational leaders.

### **Summary**

To complete a comprehensive review of literatures, every attempt was made to review a sufficient number of studies and related peer reviewed articles that were both up-to-date (in the past 15 years) and written or conducted by scholars and researchers who are active and prominent in the field, and whose work has been successfully applied to other contexts that support the transferability of the findings. The current research was grounded on a synthesized review of the past and current literature on the integrated topics of educational leadership, arts-based leadership, and the process of transitioning from teacher to practicing educational leader. These understandings were utilized to produce a new body of research, one that the researcher anticipates will inform future practices in the selection, recruitment, and training of educational leaders, and will be equally accessible to an audience of both researchers and practitioners in the fields of education and leadership.

The researcher recognized the limitations in the prior research throughout the review of literature, particularly with research on arts-based leadership and the transitional stages of becoming a leader, which are two of the three frames that made up the conceptual foundation. The researcher determined, however, that the risks associated with proposing to study a phenomenon related to an under researched area are outweighed by the appropriateness and potential benefits to the field of educational research as a whole (Lit Review, 2016). The choice of a phenomenological methodology was supported by scholars like Randles (2012), who suggested that phenomenology provides a meaningful way to describe the multiple layers and nuances of meaning that exist in a phenomenon that has never been studied before, and supports

the development of initial understandings, important new connections, and the immediate accessibility of new knowledge with regard to the phenomena being studied.

## **Chapter 2 Summary**

This literature review has been grounded in the theoretical principles, frameworks, and ideas generated by leading scholars in the fields of leadership, education, and the arts. Related literatures have been reviewed, analyzed, evaluated, and framed in a manner that supports the tenets of the research and the central construct of this study, which is focused on the experiences of individuals who are part of a teacher reference group who share a background in music and experience as music teachers, and who have transitioned to the role of practicing educational administrators.

The study's significance is situated within its in-depth analysis of the developmental process by which those who have experienced this phenomenon describe the essence of their transitional experiences and articulate the principles and approaches to leadership that closely emulate the manner in which they purposefully practice as educational leaders. Information garnered through this phenomenological inquiry will: (a) contribute to the ongoing research on educational leadership as it applies to specific teacher reference groups, (b) inform the recruitment and selection process utilized by educational institutions, and (c) add to the theoretical conversation regarding effective leadership practices in schools.

Primary among the challenges faced during the transition from teacher to leader throughout the review of literature, was the oft-discussed disparity and lack of formal connection between existing “administrator leadership paradigms and aspiring leadership mental models regarding who and what makes a good leader” (Myran, et al., 2011, p. 694). This is a dichotomy, Myran, et al., suggested, that can be overcome only by “embedding contemporary

leadership paradigms” (p. 694) into the mind-sets of those who recruit, mentor, and/or formally train educational leaders, and through the acquisition of research-based knowledge regarding new, updated leadership paradigms. Collay (2006) framed this in terms of “disrupt[ing] historical school hierarchies” (p. 136) in order to foster intentional diversity in the pool of leadership candidates.

The present study will address these interrelated issues by studying one unique teacher reference group and answering the call by the authors above and researchers like Bathhurst and Ladkin (2012) to turn a responsive ear toward meeting organizational leadership challenges with innovative solutions that are advanced through “the composite expertise, energy, and viewpoints available” (Bathhurst & Ladkin, 2012, p. 99).

By examining leadership through the lens of the conscious experiences of musicians and music educators in educational leadership roles, the researcher extended rather than replicated previous leadership studies. Specifically, this study invited school leaders who were once music educators to formally embed their own stories into the leadership literature. The researcher guided participants through a semistructured interview process, enabling them to reflect upon the development of their leader identity, leadership style, and approach to school leadership, and asking them to consider how their formal training in music and background as music educators has influenced their unique trajectory toward the practice of educational leadership (Collay, 2014; McCammon, n.d.).

Viewing the tenets of leadership through a study on music educators does not limit the view of leadership processes and practices to the spaces that music teachers alone inhabit. It will also inform individuals from an array of teacher disciplines and/or cultural, ethnic, social and professional teacher reference groups, as well as aspiring educational leaders from a variety of



related educational fields. Wheatley (1999) (as cited in Vaillancourt, 2007) considered the domain of leadership to be “field-rich”(p. 1), an indication that what is learned from one genre of leaders will very often apply to another.

In sum, in order to view the study of one teacher reference group of music educators and their experiences on the transitional continuum from teacher to leader through a cohesive, richly-supported interpretive lens, the review of literature and the subsequent development of a unique conceptual framework, has enabled the researcher: (a) to understand a complex set of literature on leadership and educational leadership, what is known about effective leadership traits, behaviors, and practices, and what they should look like in educational institutions; (b) to understand the characteristics and known leadership capabilities of artists (including musicians) and begin to analyze them through the lens of effective educational leadership exemplars; and (c) to understand the critical importance of embedding what is known about effective leadership paradigms and inspiring leadership practices into what is known about the benefits of intentionally recruiting, training, and selecting a diverse pool of educators to serve as 21st century school leaders.

The researcher’s goal was not only to understand the phenomenon experienced by this unique population of teachers, but to participate in a qualitative analytic process that linked participant stories and descriptions of their lived experiences of transitioning from music educator to school leader, to how they believe their lived experiences as musicians and music educators have influenced their purposeful practice of leadership. The researcher also linked study findings to what is already understood from the review of literatures about: (a) effective leadership in schools, (b) musicians and their capacity to lead, and (c) the developmental transition from teacher to school leader.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

In Chapter 3 the researcher describes the purpose and design of the study as related to the central research question and subquestions and her choice to employ the phenomenological method. This chapter also outlines the research population, sampling methods and instrumentation, as well as the data collection and analysis procedures that were employed. Finally, the researcher will discuss the limitations and delimitations of the research design, as well as the issues of credibility, dependability, and ethics related to the study proposal.

The researcher encompassed the transitional stages defined by Browne-Ferrigno (2003) (role conceptualization, initial socialization, role-identity transformation, and purposeful practice of leadership) in the design of interview questions and with the intent to use the categories as a priori themes for data analysis. During the initial inquiry, participants were led through an exploration of their own perceptions of how and when these conceptual transitional stages were experienced for them as musicians, music teachers, and educational leaders.

#### **Research Questions**

The central research question and subquestions guiding this inquiry within the phenomenological research domain are as follows:

##### **Central Research Question**

How do individuals with a formal education in music and experience as a music teacher describe the essence of their transition from teacher to leader, including the process of becoming and practicing as an educational administrator? Three subquestions delineated and extended critical elements encompassed in the central question, and they are as follows:

**Subquestion 1.** How do study participants describe their lived experiences during the transition from music teacher to educational administrator?

**Subquestion 2.** How do study participants describe their leadership style and approach to practicing leadership in their administrative role?

**Subquestion 3.** In what ways do study participants view their transitional experiences, current leadership style, and approach to practicing leadership as an extension of their formal training in music and background as music educators?

### **Purpose and Design of the Study**

#### **Purpose**

The overall purpose of this study was to address the limited amount of literature and research on educational leaders, specifically the subgroup of educational leaders who have a formal background in music and experience as music educators and who have transitioned into roles as educational leaders. Prior to the study it was not known, for example, how the individuals in this subgroup of educational leaders had experienced the transitional stages involved with the process of becoming and practicing as an educational leader, nor whether the nature of their training, learned behaviors, and practices employed as musicians and music educators had influenced their style and approach to leadership.

With a goal to answer the central research question and subquestions, the researcher recognized this study as an opportunity to begin to document the lived experiences of members of one subgroup of music educators in the scholarly literature.

#### **Design**

Reflecting on the guidance of Moustakas (1994) on the process of designing a qualitative phenomenological study, the researcher composed a series of purposely considered questions to precipitate an in-depth inquiry with a small, but potentially significant group of select participants who are part of the subgroup of music educators. During the investigative and

analytic stages of the inquiry the researcher addressed the context of participant experiences within the lens of a hermeneutic-interpretive design.

Moustakas (1994) defined the *qualitative phenomenological design* in terms of human science inquiry. He described *hermeneutics* as the science of discovering “how human studies are related to the fact of humanity” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 9). Within a hermeneutic-interpretive design, Moustakas explained, study participants describe both their conscious experiences and reflective interpretations in order to create meaning. While a phenomenological study begins with the voices of its participants describing their uniquely personal lived experiences, the hermeneutic-interpretive approach acknowledges that experiential themes may emerge from the composite data collected from a group of participants experiencing a similar phenomenon, and these thematic patterns may be identified, developed, and interpreted by the researcher for the purpose of discovering the authentic meaning and essence of participant experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

*Phenomenology* itself is a form of inductive, qualitative research that is grounded in the 20th century disciplines of philosophy advanced by Edmund Husserl (descriptive phenomenology), and Martin Heidegger (interpretive phenomenology). It is an approach based on a naturalistic paradigm that supports the philosophical concept of the intentionality of consciousness that allows meanings to be construed naturally from realities perceived by individuals through their lived experiences (Creswell, 2013; Reiners, 2012). Phenomenology is rooted in each study participant’s exploration and first-hand account of their lived experiences and is unique among the qualitative scientific methodologies in its attempt to gain a deeper understanding of the way individuals experience their world before themes are abstracted or classified and taxonomies reflected upon (Creswell, 2013). Further, phenomenology recognizes

lived experience as a “temporal structure . . . [that] can never be grasped in its immediate manifestation but only reflectively as past presence” (Bresler, 1995, p. 11).

The *descriptivist* phenomenological approach is grounded in epistemology, a branch of philosophy that explores the foundations of knowledge. The philosophical discipline of phenomenology was introduced by Edmund Husserl (1859–1938). To gain access to the foundations of human knowledge, Husserl utilized *bracketing*. Through bracketing, a phenomenologist places their personal assumptions and biases on hold in order to provide rich and accurate descriptions of the lived experiences that have shaped their study participants’ individual and/or group perception of reality (Reiners, 2012). Husserl referred to this bracketing process as the *epoché*, or the condition in which the epistemologist suspends all conclusions and judgments, in order to restrict any investigative biases, personal beliefs, and preconceived ideas that would otherwise interfere with the pure description of a phenomenon shared by a group of people (Creswell, 2013; Groenewald, 2004).

Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), who was a student of Husserl’s, extended phenomenology to include the branch of knowledge known as *hermeneutics*, which embraces the philosophy of interpretation (Reiners, 2012). Hermeneutics, from a phenomenological standpoint, is focused on *being in* rather than on *knowing* the world, and “makes it clear that the essence of human understanding is hermeneutic, that is, our understanding of the everyday world is derived from our interpretation of it” (Dahlberg, Drew, & Nystrom, 2008, as cited in Reiners, 2012, p. 2). Hermeneutic phenomenology supports the description of deep and rich participant experiences, as well as the context and complexities of the environments and timeframes within which these experiences exist. It offers a form of interpretivism with a goal toward the preservation of meaning and authentic voice made audible through participant accounts of their

unique human experiences (Ballad & Bawalan, 2012; Crist & Tanner, 2003; DuPre, 2011; Reiners, 2012).

Reflecting Heidegger's earlier work, van Manen (1990) later developed the interpretivist approach within the philosophy of phenomenology. Van Manen affirmed that personal values, experiences, and expectations of the researcher are an important part of the hermeneutic-interpretivist phenomenology and can support credible and dependable interpretation of data. He supported the development of interpretivism by providing a methodological structure made up of six components of hermeneutic-interpretive phenomenology that have been widely adopted by researchers in the late 20th and early 21st centuries:

1. Turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
2. Investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;
3. Reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;
4. Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;
5. Maintaining a strong and oriented relation to the phenomenon;
6. Balancing the research context by considering the parts and the whole (van Manen, 1990, pp. 30–31).

Van Manen (1990) reinforced the idea that the hermeneutic-interpretive design does not hold the expectation that researcher preconceptions and assumptions be bracketed, but rather become part of the “forward arc of the hermeneutic circle” (Crist & Tanner, 2003). The hermeneutic circle of understanding: (a) acknowledges researcher and participant knowledge, experiences, and meaning constructs; (b) recognizes that the researcher will guide the line of inquiry; and (c) urges the researcher to continually analyze, review, and interpret the data collected and the phenomena being investigated through the relationship between its component

parts and its hermeneutic whole (Crist & Tanner, 2003; Elshafie, 2013; Reiners, 2012; van Manen, 1990). Finally, the interpretive element enables researchers to act at once as drivers of dependable, ethical scientific procedures and active interpreters of the complex realities experienced through the lens of participants' real-life experiences (Elshafie, 2013; Ravitch & Riggan, 2012).

Specifically, the research questions employed in this phenomenological study have guided the line of inquiry that the researcher used to gain understanding of the lived experiences of seven individuals with a background in music education who have transitioned into roles as educational administrators. The researcher investigated how participants have assigned and interpreted meanings related to their development of a role conception oriented toward leadership, their experiences regarding initial socialization and role identity transformation toward educational leadership, and their purposeful engagement in educational leadership behaviors and practices (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). In a similar qualitative research study, Armstrong (2012) utilized the Browne-Ferrigno (2003) stages to design participant questions that related to: "the personal, professional, and organizational factors that affected their passage from teaching to administration; the people, structure, and events that facilitated or hindered their transition; and the challenges, dilemmas, and tensions they encountered" (Armstrong, 2012, p. 404).

The methodology has also been advanced by authors like Conklin (2014) and Randles (2012), who respectively suggested that phenomenology as a research methodology is well suited for use within the fields of education and music education. Conklin (2014) espoused his belief that phenomenology is "inherently reflective" (p. 117) and as a methodology can promote an important shift in 21st century understanding, offering researchers in the field of education a

fresh new way to study people and their interaction with life events. Randles (2012) described how phenomenology has been used specifically in music education research to explore areas of identity. He noted the musician's capacity to interpret the nuances of feeling states and asserted that "all the manifestations of music-making, including listening, performing, improvising, and composing, are experiences that are connected to identity" (p. 19).

## **Research Population and Sampling Method**

### **Target Population**

Throughout this study, the term *participant* was used to describe each of the seven individuals who were involved in the study. Although often referred to as a group of *participants*, the researcher approached each participant as a unique contributor to the study and retained an active respect for their diversity of backgrounds, perspectives, and viewpoints (Stake, 2010). Bresler (1995) also pointed out that "phenomenology is a human science which studies *persons*. . . . [and] emphasizes the uniqueness of each human being (p. 11). As such, the experiences voiced by the seven persons who were the subjects of the target population were the primary source of all information and data collected.

Study participants in this research were all individuals with a formal education in music and experience as a music teacher who during their careers transitioned to the role of practicing educational administrator. The central construct or phenomenon at the heart of the study, therefore, rested with the singular known commonality among participants, that they have each experienced the process of transitioning from being a music educator to becoming and practicing as an educational administrator.



## **Sampling Method**

The researcher did not randomly select participants from the general population, but rather, identified and recruited potential participants using specific, carefully established criteria and purposive sampling, a type of non-probability sampling. Creswell (2013) explained that purposeful sampling is frequently used to identify the primary participants of a qualitative study to ensure that all participants will be able to “purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and [the] central phenomenon in the study” (p. 156). The sample of participants that served as the target population for this study were selected only from the population of educational administrators who have experienced the phenomenon of transitioning from the role of a music teacher to the role of a practicing educational administrator.

In order to locate a sufficient number of participants to meet the criteria of the study design, the researcher contacted school administrators through a number of professional organizations that the researcher has membership in, including, but not limited to BOCES (Board of Cooperative Educational Services) organizations in New York State, national music educator associations and their affiliates, and national colleges and universities that host administration certification programs.

Recruitment began with the distribution of a recruitment flyer sent via email to organizational listservs, with an invitation to contact the researcher via phone or email and/or to complete an online demographic/interest survey, which included and required appropriate participant permissions. The participant recruitment flyer provided a description of the study purpose and process, the criteria for participant selection, and a statement of participant confidentiality.

The researcher recruitment efforts also benefited from snowball sampling, which helped to expand the participant sample by allowing one potential subject to pass on the email or flyer to other potential participants who he/she believed would meet the criteria for participation in the study (Creswell, 2013; Groenewald, 2004). Further, in order to preserve privacy and discourage third-party introductions of potential participants by name, the researcher asked interested participants to direct others toward available online information about the research and to contact the researcher directly.

Based on a review of the literature regarding phenomenologically designed studies, and in consultation with the researcher's doctoral advisory chairperson and committee, the researcher determined that 5 to 8 participants, participating in three in-depth, 60-to-90-minute semistructured interviews, would provide a sufficient amount of data from which to draw findings that would support answering the research questions (Creswell, 2013; McCammon, n.d.; Seidman, 2013). The final selection of seven participants was completed under the supervision of the dissertation advisory committee and gave consideration to ensuring that a variety of disciplines within the field of music education were represented and that no two participants were selected from the same school district and/or geographic worker population.

Individuals who responded to the participant recruitment efforts and who met the study's selection criteria were asked for their informed consent to act as a subject in the research, and were informed that their input would make up the primary units of analysis for the investigation. Persons not selected to participate in the research project were informed via email, and all data collected on them via the online survey or any email correspondence was immediately destroyed/deleted.

Starting with recruitment and throughout each phase of active research and data analysis, the researcher was mindful of the three principles of cultural competence, including but not limited to the ethical guidelines pertaining to: (a) *respect for persons*, including their autonomy; (b) *beneficence*, including respecting participant decisions, and balancing the risk of any unexpected confidentiality issues (including the potential re-identification of de-identified data), and the contribution and benefits of the research to the field of educational research; and (c) *justice*, and the assurance regarding the fair and impartial recruitment of study participants with regard to ethnicity, age, gender, and cultural diversity, as well as participant belief systems and values (OHRP, 2016).

## **Instrumentation and Data Collection**

### **Primary Data Source**

Semistructured interviews. The primary method of data collection was through semistructured, one-to-one, audio recorded interviews during which the researcher engaged participants in a multi-step, multi-question inquiry that employed active listening, involved the observation of non-verbal cues and other expressions of meaning, and took into account the contextual and situational factors that had influenced experiences related to the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2013; McCammon, n.d.; Mertens, 2014; Waters, 2016).

The researcher utilized a phenomenological interviewing model developed by Seidman (2013) in which the goal was for three interviews covering the same subject matter to be conducted with each participant. This enabled the participant responses and behaviors to become more meaningful and placed the interviews within the context of participant lives and work and the people they interact with on a daily basis. Throughout the three-stage semistructured interview process, the researcher collected data that was retrospective in nature, relating to the

participants' lived experiences during their childhood training in music, training as music educators, and each stage of their transitions from music teachers to educational administrators and leaders.

The first interview established the context of each participant's experience, including both an historical narrative of their backgrounds as musicians and music educators, and how participants viewed these experiences in relationship to their role as educational leaders. The second interview concentrated on exploring the details and nuances of each participant's process of becoming and being an educational leader and focused on what participants had actually experienced with regard to their transition from teacher to leader. During the third interview, participants were asked to reflect on the meaning of the experiences described, how they viewed themselves as purposefully practicing educational leaders, and how their experiences have influenced their practice of leadership (Seidman, 2013). During the phenomenological interviewing, the researcher allowed for both questions and answers to evolve and if appropriate, revised them during or between interview periods, asked follow-up questions, or clarified details with participants.

Seidman (2013) suggested that the three-interview process helps to address the intellectual and emotional connection between the participant's work, life, and the phenomena. Making sense or making meaning of experiences, he stressed, requires a close look at how the factors in their lives have interacted to bring them to their present situation, and how this is related to the context in which the phenomena occurs.

Although the Seidman (2013) interviewing approach guided the process, the number of interviews scheduled, number of questions asked, and total length of each interview varied slightly from one participant to the next. In all cases, the interview process was continued until

the researcher was satisfied that “the topic [had been] exhausted or saturated, that is when interviewees (subjects or informants), introduce no new perspectives on the topic” (Groenewald, 2004, p. 11).

In order to formulate the interview questions for this research, the researcher analyzed the questioning patterns of a number of qualitative studies focused on specific teacher reference groups and the transitional process from teacher to leader, and adhered closely to the guidelines for interview question design and process recommended by a number of phenomenological scholars (Armstrong, 2012; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Brunner & DeLeon, 2013; Collay, 2006, 2014; Curry, 2000; DuPre, 2011; Fink & Brayman, 2006; Ghaus-Kelley, 2014; Hasson, 2011; Jarmon, 2014; Myran, et al., ; Steele, 2015; Zafft, 2013). Interview questions and protocols for each of the three-interview cycle are detailed in Appendix B.

### **Secondary Data Sources**

**Field notes.** A secondary source of data was collected through the use of *field notes* that accompanied the transcribed audio recordings of the interviews. Field notes recorded the *what*, *who*, and *where* of the interviews and experiences noted, and were written soon after the completion of an interview. Field notes were: (a) observational, (b) theoretical (researcher reflections and attempts to derive meaning from described experiences), (c) methodological (instructive reminders or critiques directed toward the researcher), and/or (d) analytical (a summary or progress review), (Burgess, 1984, as cited in Groenewald, 2004, pp. 15–16). To ensure authenticity, the researcher supplemented her field notes with a reflective journal that voiced and examined the researcher’s thoughts, feelings, and views following each interview, and closely monitored researcher impartiality during the interviewing process.

**Artifacts.** The researcher invited participants to provide other forms of data, including any personal artifacts, reflections, written statements or accounts of their work as educational leaders that they believed would support their audio reflections regarding their experiences during the transition from teacher to leader and/or the values that guide their practice as school administrators. This data, like all information collected on audio tapes, was kept confidential and was utilized as one part of a holistic representation of participant experiences.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Data analysis for this study utilized the *hermeneutic circle of understanding*, which recognizes that analyzation, review, and interpretation of the data and information collected should inform the circular process of: (a) reflection; (b) organization of data; (c) close reading and memoing; (d) describing, classifying, and interpreting data into emergent themes; and (e) representing and reporting the data by aligning results with the central research problem and research questions as well as the research literature reviewed (Crist & Tanner, 2003; van Manen, 1990).

The first stage of the data analysis involved a close read of participant transcripts in which the researcher took on a reflective posture and adopted a holistic view of each participant's lived experiences before attempting to divide these described experiences into parts (van Manen, 1990). During this stage, participants also had the opportunity to engage in *member checking* of interview transcripts in order to review and cross-check transcripts for accuracy.

The second stage of data analysis involved repeated readings of the transcripts with the aim of creating a structured, systematic analysis of the data, employing the tools of: (a) highlighting statements or phrases that reflect each participants experiences through *horizontalization*, (b) *clustering units of meaning* or significant statements into themes using a

selective approach, (c) using *textural descriptions* and providing specific examples of experiences related to the phenomenon, and (d) recording *structural descriptions* related to the contextual and situational factors involved in participant experiences (Creswell, 2013). From this base, the data was further reviewed to examine emerging patterns as well as the similarities and differences between participant transcripts in order to allow new, emergent themes to be identified and coded.

Initially, the researcher planned to interpret and code data collected according to the a priori categories established by Browne-Ferrigno (2003) on the developmental stages of the transition from teacher to school administrator. Ultimately, based on stage one and stage two of the data analysis, the researcher chose not to use this approach, and this process change is explained in detail in Chapter 4.

The third stage of data analysis involved: (a) interpreting the overall essence of what and how participants experienced the phenomenon; (b) examining interpretations and reflections to ensure representation of the meaning of each participant's lived experiences, as well as the commonalities that established a relationship between the participants past, present, and future experiences; and (c) reaching a saturation level in which the information gathered from participant responses as well as researcher field notes provided sufficient analytical materials, information, or data-sets from which themes emerged and the discussion of results could be formulated (Creswell, 2013, Groenewald, 2004; van Manen, 1990).

During all stages, the researcher's analysis of codes, themes, and recurring patterns in the data was generated from direct quotes and "discrete categories were identified, compared, contrasted, and aggregated to create a composite picture" (Armstrong, 2012, p. 404) that richly illustrated each participant's lived phenomenological experiences. Information was reviewed

and revised several times by the researcher until a strong clarity and interrelationship existed between the participant responses and the categories, themes, or informational units established. Waters (2016) cautioned researchers not to over interpret data and to strive for the certainty that meanings assigned to participant descriptions in the written analysis would be recognized and understood by each participant.

### **Limitations and Delimitations of the Research Design**

The interpretive approach employed during phenomenological research is not without critics who state that the approach lacks objectivity and alignment with other qualitative methodologies and does not ensure consistent analyzation criteria (Mertens, 2014). In addition to what are considered to be *positivist labels* of credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability or consistency (reliability), and confirmability (objectivity), the interpretivist must take care to manage his/her subjectivity and be certain she has “taken steps to assure that data from human sources and contexts are meaningful, trackable, verifiable, and grounded in the real-life situations from which they were derived” (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, as cited in Elshafie, 2013, p. 38).

Additionally, the phenomenological design and small sample means that the study’s results are not generalizable and cannot be applied to the population of educational leaders as a whole, thus limiting the scope of new theoretical understandings gained by examining the phenomenon presented (Waters, 2016). The transferability of the study’s results and the understanding of the total context of the research will therefore be strongly influenced by reader judgment and interpretation of the results (Mertens, 2014).

Delimitations include the researcher’s decision to narrow the sample of arts educators specifically to music educators who have become school administrators, as well as to recruit



potential participants from local (New York State), and national professional organizations and colleges with which she has been affiliated.

### **Validation**

Credibility and dependability were supported through the use of: (a) multiple interviews and collected artifacts; (b) the continued checking, feedback looping, and rechecking of transcripts and materials for consistency and correctness; (c) member checking in which the participants had the opportunity to review and cross-check transcripts for accuracy and appropriate recorded interpretation of participant meaning; and (d) rich and thick descriptions garnered by employing the interview techniques of reflective questioning and active listening. The combination of these four procedures served to triangulate and validate the data sources utilized throughout the study. They further served to promote and strengthen research credibility to ensure that study results would provide participants, the researcher, and the study audience with a deeper understanding of the essence of the phenomenon studied (Noble & Smith, 2015).

Trustworthiness of the data collected assumes a high degree of researcher integrity and preciseness during the interview, transcript review, and editing process. The integrity of the data analysis process was also supported by the use of professional data analysis software and transcription services, and a third-party inter-reliability review.

### **Expected Findings**

A body of information has emerged from this phenomenological inquiry that the researcher expects: (a) will increase the understanding of the phenomenon of music educators becoming and being educational leaders, (b) will inform current practices in the recruitment, training, selection, and/or placement of effective educational leaders in 21st century schools, and

(c) will result in further research being conducted on a variety of teacher reference groups and their relationship to effective educational leadership.

Specifically, the researcher anticipates that the information obtained through this phenomenological research study—designed to learn more about the lived experiences of educational leaders with a background in music education and their developmental progression of role conceptualization, initial socialization, role identity transformation, and the purposeful practice of educational leadership—will provide a breadth of new information and a useful interpretive lens by which to discern how the process of becoming and being an educational leader is connected to the background experiences of one subset of teachers, thus providing a deeper understanding of musicians as leaders and how this connects to the field of education.

While Creswell (2013) stressed the qualitative validity in terms of the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the findings, Mertens (2014) also expressed hope that these types of qualitative findings will in some way be linked directly to change actions within the groups and/or environments studied. Mezirow (1991) introduced a similar view of the research process, suggesting that the meaning perspectives that emerge from new research in a field may serve as coordinates in construing the nature and values of lived experiences, and through conscious examination, will help to position next generations for a future of possibility.

### **Ethical Issues**

McGuire (2014) stated that “we need to wrestle, struggle, and scuffle with our prior knowledge, our culture, and our most tightly held concepts” (p. 2). He reinforced the idea that both prior to and during each stage of the dissertation process it is critical that the researcher act with reflectivity and closely examine their personal and professional background, declare any

personal propositions, and honestly convey any preconceived notions of what the research might reveal (McGuire, 2014).

For the purposes of this study, the researcher conducted an in-depth study of musicians and music educators who have become educational leaders—a group to which the researcher, herself, is a member, and in which she maintains both a personal and a professional interest. The researcher embarked on her own transition from teacher to school leader with a firmly held belief that school leadership requires a diversity of people and ideas manifested through multiple intelligences and capabilities, multiple formulas for practice, and multiple avenues of collaborative teaching and learning to effectively and transformatively lead the nation's schools in the challenging times ahead. Although the motivation for this research did not stem from the attempt to prove any one theory or champion any one group of educators over another with regard to what characterizes an effective educational leader, the researcher holds a view that the discipline of music education and the practice of music teaching has leadership opportunities embedded in it. A discussion of how this view was substantiated by the research data will be highlighted in Chapter 5.

Further, the researcher has often reflected upon whether the qualities required to succeed as an effective music educator are interrelated with those needed to be an effective educational leader. The study discussion in Chapter 5 sheds light on this too, suggesting that some of the traits and competencies required for effectiveness as a music educator are traits and competencies that are also readily useful in broader educational leadership roles.

Additionally, the researcher has a strong ethical orientation toward equity and access in educational arenas and areas of concern related to this issue were revealed through both the literature review and the researcher's professional observations prior to completing the study's

field work. Findings detailed in Chapter 2, for example, informed the researcher about the potential for individuals of some teacher reference groups to experience significant impediments during the transitional passage from teacher to educational administrator. The research agenda, therefore, was responsive to the possibility of challenges related to equity and access or other potentially negative issues emerging. Mertens (2014) has suggested, in fact, that every phenomenological study “should be conducted with an eye toward making recommendations to reverse . . . inequities” (p. 21). Such issues include feelings of being marginalized as members of a particular teacher reference group, or experiences or professional biases (both positive and negative) that may have interfered with the subject’s progress along the transitional continuum or in their attempt to acquire a job as an educational administrator.

While every researcher brings their own understanding of the nature of knowledge to a research project, and may note a number of personal assumptions regarding the topic of inquiry, there are no doubt many more assumptions implicitly present in the researcher, participant relationship. Most people have a myriad of experiences that have led to meaning perspectives that both justify and validate their “communicated ideas and the presuppositions of prior learning” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 5). In order to conduct research that was based on highly valid and ethical dialog and analysis, however, the researcher remained conscious of both her own and the participant’s possible presuppositions and autobiographical perspectives regarding the topics being explored (Mezirow, 1991).

Further, in order to establish a high level of trust, participant’s privacy and confidentiality were carefully considered by the researcher. The participant consent form clearly stated that the names, demographic information, and personally identifiable characteristics of participants would be protected throughout the study and would not be directly included in written reports.

## **Risks, Discomforts, and Benefits for Participants**

**Risks.** This research study entailed minimal foreseeable risk to participants. The questions used were the type of questions that participants might encounter in a number of professional settings, and the researcher was not employed in any supervisory or professional role that would have put participants at risk. An Informed Consent Form (see Appendix A) was obtained from each participant, emphasizing: (a) the volunteer nature of participation and participant control over scheduling and location of interviews; (b) participant right to privacy (including choosing not to answer or to skip any question that made them uncomfortable); and (c) participant right to withdraw data or withdraw their participation at any time during the study.

The selection of the participants was fair and equitable, and the researcher utilized well-organized procedures to ensure privacy and confidentiality throughout the data collection and analysis process. Further, the researcher took steps to ensure that unanticipated problems did not occur that would put participants at risk with regard to confidentiality. All data was carefully de-identified through the safety measures detailed above as well as throughout the final editing process in order to reduce and try to eliminate the risk of participants or participant information being re-identified or compromised (OHRP, 2016).

**Discomforts.** To minimize the possibility that participants would experience discomfort during the interviews, interviews were set up such that: (a) participant ideas and viewpoints would not be challenged in any way, (b) participants did not have to answer any questions that they chose not to and could ask for clarification at any time, (c) participants were invited to let the researcher know verbally at any time during an interview if they were feeling uncomfortable for any reason, and (d) the researcher sensitively responded to participants needs if the number of interviews or the interview length of 60–90 minutes was problematic for the participant.

**Benefits.** Participants directly benefited from participation in this study by having the opportunity to share their story and their lived experiences in a manner that they had not had the opportunity to do before. Participants also indirectly benefited from the study by contributing to the field of scholarship regarding how a subgroup of educators of which they are a member, has experienced the developmental process leading to and involved in the practice of educational leadership. Information gained through participant participation in this phenomenological inquiry will: (a) contribute to the ongoing research on educational leadership as it applies to educators from a diverse group of educational disciplines, (b) inform the recruitment and selection process utilized by educational institutions, and (c) add to the theoretical conversation regarding effective leadership practices in schools.

### **Chapter 3 Summary**

Curry (2000) affirmed her belief that the phenomenological aspect of the transitional experiences of teachers is directly connected to the paradigm of effective educational leadership as it is understood it to date. Curry suggested specifically that the phenomenological study of under-recruited teacher reference groups reveals several of “the intrapsychic aspects of the individual’s ascendancy to a leader position” (p. 18) including the development and integration of a leader persona and leadership identity. She also emphasized “identity as a way of being is brought to bear upon the varied tasks of leading, including building vision, building and translating culture, decision making, role design and assignment, planning, and policy development” (p. 65). Understanding the phenomena of specific teacher reference groups becoming and being educational leaders, she concluded, would offer profound insights and valuable information to educational institutions regarding to the recruitment and selection of effective and transformative educational leaders.

The phenomena under investigation in this study focused on one unique teacher reference group made up of individuals who were trained in the discipline of music, have served as music educators, have transitioned into roles as educational administrators, and have been purposefully engaged in the practice of educational leadership. Using an approach rooted in hermeneutic-interpretive phenomenology, the participants in this study were given the opportunity to explore the lived experiences that have mapped their path to school leadership and to articulate the pedagogical practices they employ as leaders.

It should be noted that the legitimacy, relevancy, and timeliness of a study focused on a teacher reference group made up of music educators has been buoyed and inspired by a relatively new and important body of literature reviewed by the researcher in Chapter 2. This literature explored the connection between artists and musicians and their capacity for exercising transformative leadership. While these connections have not been verified within educational contexts, the design and implementation of this study and the careful collection and analysis of information gathered from the participants for the purpose of researching this phenomenon, will have potential relevancy to the field of educational leadership, and make public a gap in the knowledge that may point other scholars toward future research in this area (Creswell, 2013).

The hermeneutic-interpretive phenomenological methodology that the researcher employed for this study is grounded in an empirical framework that spans several decades of research. It integrates the knowledge gained through the literature review and from the scholars who authored writings and conducted research on effective leadership, the connection between the arts and leadership, and the transition from teacher to educational leader. The researcher's high level of respect for the scholarly work that underpins this study supported the overall truthfulness and integrity of the hermeneutic-interpretive phenomenological approach that will

serve as a foundation upon which future research on music educators, other unique teacher reference groups, and educational leadership might be extended.



## **Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results**

The goal of this phenomenological investigation was to explore the lived experiences of one unique subgroup of educators—music educators—during their multifaceted developmental transition to and eventual practice of educational leadership in Pre-kindergarten to Grade 12 school systems in New York State. Each of the seven participants in this study contributed to a series of phenomenological semistructured interviews in which they reflected upon and answered questions related to their early training as musicians, their years as music educators, and their gradual transition of both career and role-identity from teacher to educational leader. In Chapter 4, the researcher will present the findings of this qualitative interviewing process and will illustrate both the investigative process and the results using detailed narratives and accompanying descriptive tables.

The researcher explored the importance of understanding how one unique subgroup of educators experienced the developmental transition leading to the practice of educational leadership within three conceptual frames that were established during the development of Chapters 1, 2, and 3 of this study. Chapter 1 provided the overall scholarly and educational context in which the research took place and named a number of significant 21st century leadership challenges in the fields of education and leadership. It outlined the critical need to understand: (a) the effects that leaders and leadership models have on educational organizations, (b) the body of evidence regarding what constitutes effective educational leadership, and (c) how to cultivate and promote a diverse pool of educational leaders within the current complex and ambiguous educational landscape.

Chapter 1 introduced the reader to: (a) the challenges faced in the recruitment, training, and retention of high quality educational leaders and the recent shortage of trained qualified

candidates, and (b) the current insufficiency of literature and educational research focused on the experience of transitioning from teacher to educational leader, particularly as this relates to specific teacher reference groups. The discipline-specific reference group of music educators, who this research is focused on, for instance, were investigated in part as a follow-up to preliminary evidence presented by a number of researchers and scholars regarding the leadership potential and distinctive experiential approach to the practices of leadership exhibited by artists and musicians (Adler, 2006, 2015; Asbjornson, n.d.; Bathhurst & Ladkin, 2012; Cimino & Denhardt, 2012; DePree, 2008; Kelehear, 2008; Nissley, 2010; Vaillancourt, 2007).

In Chapter 2, the researcher developed a three-tiered conceptual framework based on a review of literatures that highlighted and synthesized scientific research findings and scholarly perspectives on the following integrated frames: (a) the components of effective leadership and effective school leadership as theoretical constructs, (b) the connection between the arts and leadership, and (c) the transitional process of becoming and practicing as an educational leader.

The phenomenological design of the study and the phenomenological interviewing protocols were specifically informed by two seminal bodies of research that provided a synthesis of current understandings regarding: (a) 21st century research on effective educational leadership, and (b) the multi-step developmental process that marks the transition from teacher to educational leader. The first, a synthesis of theoretical leadership models compiled by Hitt and Tucker (2015) documented a unified leadership matrix of effective leadership practices that the researcher used to guide field work and data analysis. The latter, a study by Browne-Ferrigno (2003), identified four key developmental stages that mark the transition from teacher to educational leader. Browne-Ferrigno's detailed findings on these developmental stages provided a platform upon which the researcher formulated an interview protocol that enabled rich,

meaningful conversations about the participants' lived experiences and will inform the presentation of the research findings.

The methodology detailed in Chapter 3 outlined a research study conducted from the hermeneutic-interpretivist point of view. As such, the aim of the field work and data analyzation process was to enable a full hermeneutic circle of understanding including: (a) the collection of data through semistructured, one-to-one recorded interviews involving active listening by the researcher; (b) ongoing researcher reflection with written and recorded field notes; (c) close and repeated listening, reading, and memoing of interview transcripts to adopt a holistic view of each participants lived experiences; (d) describing, classifying and interpreting data into emergent thematic units; and (e) representing and reporting the data by aligning results with the central research questions and the review of literatures (Crist & Tanner, 2003).

In Chapter 4 the researcher provides a full report of the qualitative findings that emerged through the collection and analysis of data gathered from a sample of seven practicing educational administrators who share a background as musicians and began their educational careers as members of the teacher reference group of music educators.

During the interview process, participants reflected profoundly on their lived experiences during their pathway to leadership, connecting their first notes as young musicians and each of their roles as musicians, music students, educators, and lifelong learners to their self-professed understandings of what qualities and practices will most often lead to successful school leadership. Further, participants connected the gradual formation of their leadership role-identity as it unfolded and was advanced during their lived experiences to their own self-described capacity for effective school leadership.

The researcher in turn maintained a reflective and analytic posture during the interview, transcription, and coding cycles and used guided questions to ensure that the central research question and subquestions remained fundamental to the process.

### **Central Research Question**

How do individuals with a formal education in music and experience as a music teacher describe the essence of their transition from teacher to leader, including the process of becoming and practicing as an educational administrator? Three subquestions delineate and extend critical elements encompassed in the central question, and they are as follows:

**Sub-question 1.** How do study participants describe their lived experiences prior to and during the transition from music teacher to educational administrator?

**Sub-question 2.** How do study participants describe their leadership style and approach to practicing leadership in their administrative role?

**Sub-question 3.** In what ways do study participants view their transitional experiences, current leadership style, and approach to practicing leadership as an extension of their formal training in music and background as music educators?

The researcher also set out to determine if the answers to the research questions supported further research on the high impact issues that are discussed in Chapter 5. These include, but are not limited to: (a) understanding what effective leadership is and ensuring that schools and districts are led by capable and transforming leaders; (b) understanding the transitional process experienced by teachers who become leaders, and taking on the challenge to recruit, train, and retain a diverse pool of high quality leaders; (c) recognizing the need for and understanding how to achieve transformational change in educational organizations to ensure improved levels of student achievement; and (d) supporting further research on specific teacher

reference groups, like music educators, in order to discover if the competencies of such groups are aligned with the leadership qualities and level of talent required of educational leaders to be successful in the 21st century.

## **Description of the Sample**

### **Recruitment of Study Participants**

The central phenomenon investigated in this study was the lived experience of a group of educators who shared the following characteristics: (a) each had formal educational training in music; (b) each served as a music teacher and a practicing administrator in one or more school districts recognized by the New York State Department of Education (NYSED), and (c) each transitioned during their professional careers into the role of a practicing educational administrator.

The researcher focused this study on music educators who have transitioned into roles as educational administrators for two key reasons: (a) evidence linked to musicians as an often untapped pool of leaders predisposed to effective, transformative leadership practices in corporations, supported the need for similar research on music educators and leadership practices within educational institutions, and (b) the study might reveal commonalities and themes in the transitional experiences and leadership practices of educational administrators with a background in music education that will inform a variety of educational stakeholders, including universities and school administrators, as well as advisory boards, hiring committees, music educators, and professional associations.

**Participant recruitment process.** In order to locate a sufficient number of participants to meet the criteria of the study design, the researcher contacted school administrators through a number of professional organizations that the researcher has membership in, including, but not

limited to Ulster, Dutchess, Columbia and Albany County BOCES organizations in New York state, state and national administrator associations, national music educator associations and their affiliates, and national colleges and universities that host administration certification programs.

Recruitment began with the distribution of a recruitment flyer sent via email to organizational listservs, with an invitation to contact the researcher via phone or email and/or to complete an online demographic/interest survey using an online platform (including appropriate participant permissions). The participant recruitment flyer provided a description of the study purpose and process, the criteria for participant selection, and a statement of participant confidentiality.

The researcher's recruitment efforts also benefited from snowball sampling, which helped to expand the participant sample by one or more potential subjects passing on the email or flyer to other potential participants who they believed met the criteria for participation in the study (Creswell, 2013; Groenewald, 2004). The researcher was aware that when using snowball sampling, concerns regarding privacy of potential participants must be considered. Therefore, potential participants were asked to direct other potential participants toward information about the research, rather than providing persons' names directly to the researcher.

**Participant selection.** Participant selection occurred in February and March 2017. With a stated goal to recruit 5–8 research participants, the final number of participants who completed all phases of the research field experience was seven. The candidates selected: (a) met the criteria for selection described on both the recruitment flyer and the online survey, (b) expressed their willingness to complete all three interview phases of the project by completing the online survey, and (c) signed an online *Consent to Participate* form.

Despite attempts to distribute the recruitment flyers and information to a broad geographic area, all participants who responded to the flyers via the online survey were from New York State. Although this was unexpected, it made it possible for the researcher to conduct face-to-face interviews and could be considered a strength in the participant pool with regard to the consistency in administrative training certifications among the participants. The seven selected research participants represented a diversity of genders, ages, levels of education, music disciplines taught, administrative positions held, and school district demographics.

All persons who completed the recruitment survey but were not selected to participate in the research project were individuals who did not fully meet the criteria as described on the recruitment flyer, the online survey, and in the research methodology chapter. Each potential participant who provided contact information via the online survey was personally thanked and informed via email. All data collected regarding the above-mentioned candidates via the online survey was permanently deleted prior to the start of the interview protocol.

The final research sample included seven participants, three women and four men, who ranged in age from 35–65+, and taught general music (GM), band/instrumental (B), choral (C), and/or strings/orchestral (O) music programs, to students in elementary (ES), middle (MS) and high school (HS), in a variety of rural (R), suburban (S), and urban (U) communities in New York State. Each participant subsequently received further training, transitioned into one or more roles as an educational administrator, and has administrative experience varying from two to over 20 years. Between them, these professionals have served as music and arts supervisors (M&A), school assistant principals (AP), school principals (P), district assistant superintendents (AS), district superintendents (DS), regional or statewide assistant superintendents (R–AS), and superintendents (RS) who typically serve multiple school districts within specifically zoned

geographic entities throughout New York State. Table 3 details the participants' professional attributes at the time the interviews were conducted. Participant-approved pseudonyms, including a first and last name, were used throughout the study to personalize the telling of the participants' stories while fully preserving their personal and professional confidentiality.

Throughout Chapter 4 and 5, the researcher referred to participants using the pseudonyms Ashley King, Charles Carver, David James, Marilyn Nichols, Mitchell Kline, Patricia Charles, and Wyant Murray. Last names (also pseudonyms) were used in certain passages to adequately portray the formal use of title in school settings and to directly indicate student use of last names in specific quotations.



Table 3

*Participant Attributes*

Attributes	Ashley King	Charles Carver	David James	Marilyn Nichols	Mitchell Kline	Patricia Charles	Wyant Murray
Gender	F	M	M	F	M	F	M
Age	45–54	35–44	45–54	55–64	35–44	65+	55–64
Highest level education	PhD	EdD	MS+30	MM+30	MM MA+30	MA+30 PD	MM+30
Music specialty	B	GM B	B	GM C	B C	GM C S	B
Years teaching music	16	13	7	+20	10	16	13
Levels taught	ES, MS	MS	MS	ES,MS HS	ES, MS, HS	ES,MS, HS	MS, HS
School administrative positions	M&A ES P AS	MS AP	DS R–AS RS	M&A MS AP ES P	M&A HS AP	M&A ES P D AS D S	ES P MS/HS P
Years in joint teaching/music administration	4	0	0	3	0	8	0
Years in joint teaching, non-music administration	0	7	0	0	4	0	0
Years in full-time, non-music administration	17	2	28	13	2	14	16
District settings	R/S	S	R/S	S	R/S/U	S/U	R/U

## **Data Collection Timeline, Methodological Strategies, and Actions**

### **Phenomenological Interview Questions and Protocol**

The researcher crafted a set of interview questions for each of three interviews per participant, with an accompanying interview protocol. Both are described in detail in Appendix B. The semistructured interview questions served as a guide, enabling the researcher to be responsive, but not too rigid, monitoring the conversation by asking for clarification, prompting deeper descriptions, and making adjustments to order or follow-up questions in order to retain a natural flow of conversation and support the collection of rich and relevant data related to the central research questions (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Williamon, Ginsborg, & Perkins, in press). Jacob and Furgerson (2012) acknowledged that “researchers may use many different techniques, but at the heart of qualitative research is the desire to expose the human part of the story” (p. 1). Interviewers should strive to “gain insight into lived experiences, learn the perspectives of individuals participating in a study, and discover the nuances in stories” (p. 1).

### **Data Collection**

**Logistics.** The researcher contacted selected participants during the week of April 3, 2017 to schedule interviews, and 19 semistructured phenomenological interviews were conducted between April 6, 2017 and June 1, 2017. Interviews ranged from 31 minutes to 2 hours, 10 minutes in length. Specific data collection logistics are detailed in Appendix C.

As recommended by Jacob and Furgerson (2012), the researcher opted to use recording devices without simultaneously writing notes and remained cognizant that “in our fast-paced, largely self-focused world people rarely listen openly and fully to others” (p. 8). Seidman (2013) also listed benefits to recording interviews, including the confidence they afford both researcher and participant that the meaning of their words will be appropriately represented, and the greater

likelihood that word for word transcriptions will accurately distinguish a participants' mood and/or stream of consciousness while describing their experiences.

**Interview process.** During the interviews, the researcher focused on active listening, paying close attention to the substance of the participant answers to “encourage a level of thoughtfulness more characteristic of inner voice”(Seidman, 2013, p. 82). The researcher took very few notes while the participants were speaking, but occasionally jotted down words or key phrases that could be followed up later in the conversation or at a subsequent interview (Seidman, 2013). Participants responded positively to this approach and the evidence gathered reflects their willingness to share openly and reflectively about their lived experiences. At all stages of the three-interview cycle, the researcher understood that the social aspects of the research (including greetings, informal conversations, logistics, and scheduling) should be “nurtured, sustained, and then ended gracefully” (Seidman, 2013, p. 97).

Throughout the series of interviews, the researcher kept in mind van Manen's (1990), and Williamon, Ginsborg, and Perkin's (in press) suggestions that in hermeneutic-phenomenological research, interviews should be conducted for very specific purposes. First, the scholars noted, researchers should seek to understand a human phenomenon by developing a positive interviewer-interviewee relationship. Second, researchers should explore the meaning of each participant's life experiences as it relates to the topic through participant voice, viewpoint, and personal decision as to which aspects of their life stories they will share (van Manen, 1990). Third, when researching a phenomenon unique to one group of people, the researcher should “elicit subjective data on phenomena such as thought processes or feelings, which may not be easily or practically observable” (Williamon et al., in press, Chapter 5, p. 2). Fourth, when investigating a topic about something that is not well understood, interviews should be used as a

means of “gathering preliminary, explorative information about unknown phenomena through talking to people and collecting evidence of their experiences and/or practices” (Chapter 5, p. 2).

Importantly, the phenomenological analysis of the interview transcripts focused on both *textural* descriptions of what participants have experienced and *structural* descriptions of how these experiences were understood in terms of the context or conditions that influenced them (Creswell, 2013).

## **Research Methodology and Analysis**

### **Interview Transcription Process**

The interview transcription process began as soon as the first interview had been completed. Following each interview, the researcher listened to the interviews, took notes, recorded reflections, considered ways to hone her interviewing skills, and prepared for the next interview. Informal coding also began during this period, with the researcher noting common ideas that were emerging across multiple participants in a field journal. Williamon et al., (in press) confirmed that qualitative analysis “often begins during data collection as the researcher notices and documents emerging insights, and it continues as the research is written up and the researcher refines their understandings and conclusions” (Chapter 9, p. 2).

After careful evaluation and Concordia University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, the researcher employed two transcription agencies (*TranscribeMe* and *Trint*), to complete the first-round verbatim interview transcriptions. Original verbatim copy of the raw data from each transcribed interview was downloaded from the secure *Trint* and/or *TranscribeMe* internet sites to a Microsoft Word document saved in secured folder on the researcher’s computer. The researcher then reviewed and carefully edited the transcripts while: (a) listening to the audio transcriptions, and (b) editing each into a clean verbatim copy for

member checking. Creating verbatim and/or clean verbatim transcriptions made from audio recordings enabled the researcher to access the original source of data repeatedly as she analyzed and interpreted the text. A clean verbatim copy of each transcript was provided to participants for *member checking*, empowering participants themselves to review and cross-check transcripts for accuracy and correct representation of words and passages transcribed. A detailed narrative description of the interview transcription process (and a figurative overview of the coding process that follows) is provided in Appendix D.

### **Analyzing, Reducing, and Coding the Data**

**Thematic versus a priori coding.** Using listening and close readings of each transcript soon after each interview, the researcher adopted a holistic view of each participant's lived experiences before attempting to divide their described experiences into parts (van Manen, 1990). At this early stage of analysis, the researcher kept in mind the plan outlined in Chapter 3, to initially code the transcribed data using a set of a priori categories based on the work of Browne-Ferrigno (2003). Browne-Ferrigno's (2003) research on the transitional stages experienced during the shift from teacher to school administrator, was constructed on a multi-step developmental process which in the order presented, included: (a) role conceptualization, (b) initial socialization, (c) role-identity transformation, and (d) the purposeful engagement of leadership.

As the researcher began to code the transcriptions at the exploratory stage, however, it quickly became clear that participant responses were not predictably in line with the distinct sequence of the Browne-Ferrigno (2003) developmental stages. Early results of the analysis revealed instead, that three of the four leadership identity milestones promoted in this conceptual frame, role conceptualization, initial socialization, and role-identity transformation, did not occur

as a straightforward, predictable, or linear progression of steps. The lived experiences as expressed by the seven participants, rather, were more aligned with Armstrong's (2012) research, illustrating that the transition to a leadership role-identity for administrative aspirants may for some candidates, include a number of continuously evolving cognitive and emotional phases.

A second study by Collay (2014) further recognized that occurrences at all stages of life and career may contribute to the development of a leader identity. The claims by Armstrong (2012) and Collay (2014) were in evidence during the research analysis for individual participants and the group as a whole, raising the question that will be discussed further in Chapter 5 as to whether the interviewees' shared experiences as young musicians and as members of the teacher reference group of music educators is related to their unique path toward the realization of leader identity.

During the initial and subsequent stages of data analysis, the researcher recognized that in all seven instances, the recurring socialization toward leadership, and the conceptualization and practice of leadership competencies was advanced over many years, across a number roles as both teacher and learner, and on a constantly fluctuating journey toward leadership role-identity and the sense of belonging as a leader.

As a result, the researcher made the decision early on in the coding process, that although the Browne-Ferrigno (2003) transitional stages provided a central construct upon which to: (a) understand the multi-step developmental processes involved in the transition from teacher to educational leader, (b) develop and compose interview questions and protocols, and (c) frame a post-coding organizational structure for the main sections and categories of the research analysis, these stages would not be used as a priori categories for coding analysis during the examination

of the data. The Browne-Ferrigno (2003) transitional stages and central concepts used for purposes explained above, are detailed in Table 2.

The researcher opted, instead, to use a more inductive approach to the data analysis, and to apply what Saldaña (2016) described as a “purposeful and compatible combination” of coding and theming methods to process and analyze the raw data and synthesize results into a unified structure that serves the central question of the research (p. 293).

**Thematic analysis.** Using *holistic, exploratory and first cycle* coding processes (Saldaña, 2016), data analysis from the start involved repeated readings of individual participant transcripts in which the researcher selectively organized each transcript by: (a) highlighting and assigning codes or labels to phrases or short sequences of text that reflected key participant experiences, and (b) clustering a number of related coded segments into units of meaning within a named group or category. (Creswell, 2013; Saldaña, 2016; Williamon et al., in press).

Subsequently, the researcher further interpreted and coded data using the *second cycle pattern* and *focused* coding methods to capture emerging patterns, and similarities and differences between participant responses (Saldaña, 2016). A detailed overview of the coding methods utilized and their definitions is provided in Appendix E.

During all stages, the researcher analysis of codes, themes and recurring patterns were based on data generated from direct quotes and transcribed narratives that richly illustrated each participant’s lived phenomenological experiences (Armstrong, 2012; Creswell, 2013). The researcher opted to complete all coding manually, and the process resulted in several hundred original pages of transcriptions being reduced to coded documents representing clustered themes and significant statements and quotations garnered from the lived experiences of individual participants. Next, the researcher assigned higher levels of categorization to further reduce the

documents into composite codes representing the major elements and repeated themes arising from the content as a unified whole, particularly those that had been repeated to saturation levels or by at least 5 of 7 participants. The two main sections, eight categories, and three overarching themes (detailed in Table 4) which eventually emerged as a result of this thematic analysis, provided an organizational framework for the thematic strands, motifs, and keynotes that helped to capture parallels, patterns, and nuanced variances between participant responses. The researcher provided Tables throughout Chapter 4 to clearly and concisely highlight the thematic analysis and the intersections between the sections, categories, themes, and subthemes presented.

As suggested by Seidman (2013), closely linking participant experiences with the phenomenon under investigation to the central ideas of this study required the researcher to confidently exercise informed judgement and “affirm [her] own ability” (p. 121) to “analyze, interpret, and make meaning” (p. 120) of the data. Each analytical stage involved the tangible steps of: (a) probing the data to discern a saturation of information and ideas, and (b) distinguishing text passages and participant quotations of significant interest from those that can be excluded from the data-sets used to formulate findings. Also essential, were the more conceptual, revelatory steps of: (a) interpreting the overall essence of what and how participants experienced the phenomenon, (b) examining interpretations and reflections to ensure representation of the meaning of each participant’s lived experiences as well as the commonalities that establish a relationship between these experiences, and (c) establishing a thematic structure within which to construe and present researcher findings (Ballad & Bawalan, 2012; Creswell, 2013, Groenewald, 2004; van Manen, 1990).

While the familiarity of background and professional work between the researcher and the research participants might be seen as a potential source of bias and a limitation to this study,



the researcher holds the view that the shared experiences enabled, rather than hindered the conversations. Because participants could assume that the researcher possessed a degree of understanding about their music background and experiences and shared a technical understanding of the profession of music and music education, a natural rapport and high level of trust seemed evident from the start of each interview.

Finally, the researcher employed an experienced phenomenological researcher to provide an external audit of the coding process. After providing a brief background of the study, the researcher asked the auditor to code the de-identified data from a full set of three interviews conducted with one individual. This additional coding data was then compared with researcher coding data to cross-check coding consistency and quality to inform the results that are discussed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

### **Theme Development: Structure of Analysis**

#### **Two Main Sections and Eight Major Categories**

After refining and identifying the aggregate data, the researcher organized the data into four discrete sections and eight categories. The four main sections are titled with a set of conceptual actions which mark the phenomenon being studied and represent a chronological time series in which each of the participants: (a) became musicians and made early career choices, (b) developed and expanded their competencies as music educators and life long-learners, (c) reached beyond their classrooms to expand their leadership skills, and (d) ultimately practiced and reflected upon their work as educational leaders. These four interrelated sections are entitled: (a) *Becoming*, (b) *Being*, (c) *Building*, and (d) *Belonging*.

Section one, *becoming*, refers to the experiences of participants as they became and identified as musicians and made the decisions to pursue careers in music education. The section

contains two categories. In the first, the researcher provides individual participant portraits which profile the participants' lived experiences from early childhood through college years, and in the second, the focus is on a broader composite analysis of participant experiences. The categories are: (a) *participant portraits: chromatic motion*, and (b) *from first notes to choosing a career*.

Section two, *being*, analyzes the development and expansion of participant experiences and knowledge gained as music educators and lifelong learners and is expressed through the categories of: (a) *passing it forward: being a music teacher*, and (b) *loving to learn: being a lifelong learner*.

Section three, *building*, marks the transitional stages described by participants in which they reached beyond their classrooms to build upon their competencies as emergent leaders, and embraced their evolving values as they related to transformative change in educational institutions. This section is divided into the categories of: (a) *reaching beyond the classroom: building upon leadership competencies*, and (b) *transitioning from teacher to leader: building upon leadership role-identity*.

Section four, *becoming*, refers to participant experiences with the actual practice of educational leadership, including the expression of their values as change agents, and their often subtle, but clearly articulated self-recognition that they belong at the leadership table. These findings are further examined under the category *orchestrating leadership: belonging to a community of educators*. This is followed by a second category which includes participant portraits focused on their personal reflections on teaching and leadership and belonging at the leadership table. This category is titled, *belonging at the leadership table: aesthetic cadence*.

Both the four central analysis sections, and each of the eight categories developed during the data analysis process, stem from the core of the research, including its central question and subquestions, as well as the phenomenological interview process. They were formulated as a means to clearly organize the data, while also recognizing the overriding interrelationship between all marked sections, categories, and stages associated with the participants lived experiences. As such they do not suggest, nor does the data reflect, exact order or a precise linear trajectory of participant experiences or expression of ideas and values.

### **Three Overarching Themes**

Further review and scrutiny of participant data in relation to each of the eight categories detailed above, revealed three overarching themes that emerged from the data as: (a) of primary significance to participants, (b) representative of common experiences and ideas woven through each of the interviews, and (c) encompassing of all four sections and eight categories into a cohesive trajectory of experiences and gained proficiencies for the participants. These three overarching themes are related to: (a) *competencies*, including the merging of a unique variety of technical, humanistic, and conceptual understandings and competencies; (b) *relationships*, including a high number of meaningful interactions with a variety of educational stakeholders; and (c) *values leading to change action*, including the core values and change actions reflected upon and identified by participants as key to supporting and enabling transformative change in their roles as educators and educational leaders. Table 4 provides the reader with an overview of the four sections, eight categories and three overarching themes revealed from the deep readings and close examination of continuous participant reflections and subsequent data analysis and interpretive discretion by the researcher.

Throughout the Chapter 4 analysis, the researcher placed quotation marks around words or phrases that have similar meanings, are frequently repeated by one or more participants, and represent a composite of their collective expressions and ideas. In cases where the words or sentiments expressed are specific in meaning or intent to one participant, however, the researcher uses quotations with the individual participant name within the text or at the end of a passage.

Table 4

*Overview of Analysis Sections, Categories, and Overarching Themes*

Sections	Categories	Overarching Themes
Section 1: Becoming	Participant portraitures: Chromatic motion	
	Becoming: From first notes to choosing a career.	Learned competencies Shaped by relationships Emerging values
Section 2: Being	Passing it forward: Being a music teacher	Unique competencies Dependent upon relationships Envisioning and implementing change
	Loving to learn: Being a lifelong learner	Evolving competencies Inspired by relationships Reflecting on values
Section 3: Building	Reaching beyond the classroom: Building upon leadership competencies	Amassing competencies Burgeoning relationships Observing change in action
	Transitioning from teacher to leader: Building upon leadership role-identity	Recognizing competencies Boosted by relationships Embracing formative change
Section 4: Belonging	Orchestrating leadership: Belonging to a community of educators	Understanding and executing core competencies Brokering relationships Realizing organizational change
	Belonging at the leadership table: aesthetic cadence	

For the purposes of this research, the discussion of competencies will encompass the three types of leadership competencies commonly described in the literature and defined in Table 5 (Katz, 2009; Northouse, 2001, 2016). While at times the competency areas of technical, humanistic, and conceptual skills will be clearly differentiated with one another, at other times the use of the word competency assumes the merging of all three. Humanistic skills, which require communication and attention to relationships with others, for example, are also incorporated into the overarching theme of relationships and values.

Table 5

*Competencies Defined*

Competency	Defined in relation to essential skills required of effective educational leaders.
Technical skills	Technical skills encompass the knowledge, proficiencies, and capabilities needed to perform specifically designated management and administrative tasks.
Humanistic skills	Humanistic skills focus on the ability to lead people in moral, reasonable, and responsible ways that consider the balance between individuals and groups. They reflect the belief of both human dignity and science in a combination of social, interpersonal, and leadership skills.
Conceptual skills	Conceptual skills represent a leader’s ability to understand an organization as a whole, implement goals that advance both concrete and abstract ideas and actions, and reflect an understanding of the relationships between them.

**Thematic Strands, Motifs, and Keynotes**

While the entirety of the data and the results are organized into the sections, categories, and overarching themes outlined in Table 4, the overarching themes, in fact, act as the gateway to the researchers composite narrative, overall findings, and portrait of the data. It is within these overarching themes that connections between participants are fully established, meaning is made,

and common understandings about the research findings as a whole are formulated and presented to the reader. In order to translate the breadth of the research findings, therefore, and to expand upon the multileveled descriptive elements of the overarching themes, each has been further delineated for clarification in the following sequence:

1. Overarching themes are subdivided into a number of thematic strands.
2. Thematic strands are subdivided into a varied number of related thematic motifs.
3. Thematic motifs are subdivided on a limited basis as the analysis requires, into thematic keynotes.

These representations of participant ideas, linking themes, and shared stories will be clearly outlined under each thematic strand and will serve to enlighten the narrative and accompanying tables that follow (Creswell, 2013). The researcher seeks to provide strong clarity regarding the interrelationship that exists between the participants' deeply considered responses and the sections, categories, overarching themes, thematic strands, thematic motifs, and thematic keynotes that form the informational units established by the analysis development (Armstrong, 2012). As such, throughout the presentation of the data that follows, select thematic strands and/or motifs that have been sounded repeatedly by the participants will be highlighted in tables that will enable the reader to zoom in to significant participant statements and secure a visually supported view of participant experiences as interpreted and charted by the researcher. Significant participant statements that are included in tables are representative statements of composite thematic motifs and keynotes and are not assigned with individual participant names.

### **Individual Participant Portraits**

Because of the uniquely personal nature of each participant's experiences, particularly as children and young adults emerging as musicians, the researcher will introduce these significant

elements of participant stories through individual participant portraits. The individual participant portraits have been written in poetry form and will be presented at the start and end of the presentation of the data and research results in this chapter.

The researcher has elected to use an adaptation of the *pantoum* form of poetry, which is derived from the *pantun berkait*, a Malaysian verse form of interwoven quatrains (Brannon, 2011; Poetry, 2018; Pantoum, n.d.). Each poem is made up of four stanzas. The words and ideas expressed in the second and fourth phrases of each stanza are then repeated as the first and third lines of the next stanza with a “recontextualized meaning” (Pantoum, n.d.).

The use of poetry in the form of the pantoum has afforded the researcher a unique format in which to introduce the reader to each participant in as descriptive and as concise a manner as possible, while capturing the back and forth progression of each participant’s lived experiences and their transitional progression from young musicians to educational leaders.

The pantoum has been referred to as a “dance with words” (Nesdoly, 2010, p. 1), and echoing the transitional progression from music education to leadership described by the seven study participants, the pantoum’s form of “repeated lines and back-and-forth motion” helps to reflect a similar “evocation of time past” and communicate cyclical and transitional patterns and the use of memory to describe lived experiences (Nesdoly, 2010, p. 1). Fittingly, the pantoum is also a form of verse used not only by poets, but by musicians like Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel, who have adapted pantoums to music or developed their thematic composition structures using the poetic form of alternating and repeated themes (Pantoum, n.d.). Appendix F provides further narrative detail and an example of the pattern of the pantoum poetic form.

While the portraits at the beginning and end of the Chapter 4 analysis of the data are not part of the formal research investigation, all of the information, words and phrases contained

within them have been derived from the participants' transcripts, reflecting their individual voice and word choices, and the researcher's interpretation of their meaning as it became revealed during the interview cycle and data analysis (Seidman, 2013). In sum, the portraits in section 1, becoming, introduce each participant as unique individuals, and highlight their early experiences with music and their developing identities as musicians and teachers. Likewise, the portraits at the end of section 4, belonging, offer personalized participant reflections on being educators and leaders, and orchestrating change in educational settings.

## **Presentation of the Data and the Results**

### **Section One: Becoming**

Analysis of the lived experiences leading to becoming and identifying as a musician and choosing a career in music education yielded recollections of childhood and young adult experiences related to becoming a musician that were both admissibly unique to individual participants and remarkably similar in denotation and context. The two analytic categories in this section, therefore, formulated by the researcher to feature both the distinctive and the collective patterns experienced by participants, include seven descriptive portraits in category: (a) *participant portraits: chromatic motion*, and a succinct presentation of the data and results from the composite of participant experiences in category: (b) *becoming: from first notes to choosing a career*.

Seidman (2013) argued strongly for crafting every part of a qualitative research study through the voice of the participants and for creating narratives that are as close to each individual's lived experiences as possible. Researchers should "let the interview breathe and speak for itself," Seidman (2013) urged, allowing the eventual responses to the narrative to be manifested by interactions directly between the reader and the participants (p. 120).



## **Participant Portraits: Chromatic Motion**

The seven individual participant portraits that follow, will serve, through poetic description, to introduce each of the participants to the readers through a summary of their individual experiences from their earliest musical days through their college years. The phrase *chromatic motion* refers to the musical idea of chromaticism. Chromaticism integrates the use of: (a) a musical scale in which every single note in a scale is part of a *home tone* or specific key, and (b) chromatic harmony which enhances a composition by inserting notes and chords that are not part of the home key into the final arrangement (Chromatic, n.d.).

The researcher uses the term chromatic motion as an analogy to the participants' personal home tones shifting, changing, and expanding by the introduction of a variety of life experiences and *tonal keys* that contribute to their transition from young musicians to music educators (Chromatic, n.d.).

## Ashley King

Music was just a natural affiliation for me.  
I enjoyed playing, I was good at it, and it just became something I wanted to do.  
I really can't tell you why.

My first experiences with music go back to being a preschooler, about 4 years old. I remember the culminating activities of summer camp. I remember the music. I remember the flowers. I remember the dancing. I remember the festivity.

I attended a school with great music teachers. I remember first grade, second grade, the vocal music, singing in the chorus in third and fourth grade, my first ensemble experiences. But I had attendance issues. My mother said I would have been the poster child for ADHD. It was music that engaged me, especially when it came to singing, playing percussion instruments, and then the flute.

I cannot for the life of me remember how I wound up with the flute in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. I don't remember. I do remember one thing, that I didn't choose the clarinet because my older sister played it. But I remember playing the instrument. I remember staying with the instrument. I remember, at some point when I was in high school, thinking  
I wanted to be a band director.

~

I remember the music. I remember the flowers. I remember the dancing.  
I remember the festivity.

There were 4 of us children. In eighth grade, I can remember my father talking about saving up for college, my mother saying, "What do you mean the girls are going to go to college? They're not going to go to college. They're going to get married. They're going to have kids." My father said, "No, they're going to want to go to school. We're going to need to prepare for that." I can remember thinking, "Well, if that's what I'm supposed to be doing, I better start figuring out what I want to do."

I remember playing and staying with the flute, and soon deciding I wanted to be a band director.

When I mentioned that I might want to become a music teacher, my band director said "Well, Yes. It's a great idea." Next thing you know I was now doubling on oboe, enrolled in a theory course, taking piano lessons; my local private teacher the major force preparing me for university auditions.

~

My Mom said: “What do you mean the girls are going to go to college?” My Dad said:  
“The girls are going to want to go to school, we need to prepare for that.”

But my Dad was not happy with my choice of music. He wanted me to be an engineer.  
He was an engineer. He talked about me being an engineer so many times that two  
boyfriends that I dated in high school became engineers. I just didn’t want to do it.  
I wanted to be a music teacher.

And so my music teachers became the major force preparing me for university.

What drew me to this University, to tell the truth, was the water. It was right on the  
ocean. A small music school with opportunities to perform in the orchestra, the bands, the  
jazz ensembles, the choirs. I qualified for scholarships, my student loans forgiven.  
I graduated in 1980, when more and more females were going into universities,  
a double major in performance and music education.  
I was lucky. I landed a job right out of college.

~

I just didn’t want to become an engineer.

I was able to come back and do my student teaching in the school district I grew up in. It  
was a phenomenal 16 weeks. Teaching lessons and conducting ensembles in the junior  
high school Monday, Wednesdays, and Fridays; the elementary school Tuesdays and  
Thursdays. It was wild being back in a building, in a district where I had graduated,  
working with the band directors I had had such great experiences with.

I graduated in 1980, when more and more females were going into universities,  
and landed a job right out of college.

And teaching joined music as a natural affiliation for me.

## Charles Carver

I always identified with music, and both my grandparents and my mother were teachers. Music was part of the history of my family. My grandmother loved opera, so she took me to the opera and to the philharmonic, and she always used to talk Puccini with me.

I remember something like a petting zoo, but an instrument zoo in the elementary school cafeteria. My first choice was percussion, and my parents said no because it was too loud. I said, "Okay." My second choice was tuba, and they said no because they thought I could fit into it. So my third choice was the French horn and it was the one I played.

At the instrument zoo, there were older students, like fifth graders, who were demonstrating. And I remember the boy, his name was Jason, who played the French horn. I think this was part of me selecting it. My first introduction to school music, and my first introduction to role modeling and to giving back.

I began to think of myself as a musician in middle school when you started getting dressed up for concerts and you wore your black shoes and white shirt with the black tie. A high school student came down and gave me some lessons and we kind of became friends; bridging the gap to high school through role modeling, giving back

~

My third choice was the French horn and it was the one I played. My bagpipe buddy was also a composer, and in high school he wrote a piece for orchestra, and it featured French horn. We had fun doing that together.

In high school I got into some singing groups, played in the band and wind ensemble, went to NYSSMA, All-County, Area All-States. During the summers, I was still immersed in music at summer camps, the most intense one for six straight weeks.

I continued to think of myself as a musician.

Today, I still remember certain pieces that I played in high school band. In *All Its Glory*, by James Swearingen, I still remember the horn part and the fingerings. And it's just weird.

~

I was immersed in music all year long, so deciding to major in music was an organic process.

I was shaped by a combination of family, friends, peer mentors, private and school music teachers who were very nurturing and caring. They helped spark a passion for teaching I didn't know was there yet and reinforced the idea of continuing music in college.

I still remember it all, and it helped fuel my desire to teach music.

I remember going to music college as a prospective student and spending the night with a trumpet player and going to some of the classes there. Again, the idea of role modeling, giving back, and seeing it from a student perspective. This probably reaffirmed my belief in this is what I enjoy doing.

~

I was shaped by the people who guided and inspired me.

In college, I took courses in both psychology and music. I liked learning how we learn in psychology. I liked music. And liked the group of people I became associated with who like me, eventually came to the music degree. I enjoyed learning the different instruments, taking proficiency exams on them, taking the theory classes, the music history classes, and especially the student teaching. That is where it all connected for me.

Role models, giving back, new perspectives. Reaffirming my identity.

Both my grandparents and my mother were teachers and loved music.  
My work to become part of the history of our family.

## David James

I learned to learn and soon learning was for me.

I had some experiences that were tough, but a supportive family. My natural mom passed away when I was very little. As you can imagine, it disrupts your life significantly.

My dad did his best to never let it affect us, but I was behind academically, there was no doubt about it, and there were no supports back then.

A grandmother born in the late 1800s, a pianist, a family that had a number of musicians, but my Dad was not a musician. I'm not sure what got my brothers and me into music. We had a close family, but we didn't do a lot of music together.

We came through the public-school system. A good middle-class suburb, not really old, not really wealthy. My dad was a teacher, very traditional. We weren't allowed to speak poorly or say anything negative about teachers in our house.

~

I was behind academically, there was no doubt about it,  
but I wanted to play the bass fiddle.

I remember it like it was yesterday, the moment right before I tried out for the orchestra.

I remember it like it was yesterday,  
my third-grade teacher saying to me:

“David James, I give up on you. You'll never amount to anything.  
You're not doing well enough academically. You can't be in the orchestra.”

I'll never forget it.

That one little experience has never gone away.

We came through the public-school system, and the next year,  
I had one of those miraculous teachers.

I called her a lifesaver, my 4th grade teacher. I was so nervous, I remember throwing up the first day of fourth grade. Yes, she had high standards. Yes, she really cared about achievement. And yes, she really cared about me. She knew that I could be successful and insisted that all 4th graders have the experience of playing an instrument.

I picked the trumpet.

~

That one little experience  
has impacted how I think about access to the arts and who I am as an educator.

In middle school, I became a musician. I joined a fire department marching band with new uniforms, cowboy hats. I was part of the school band, the pep band, the orchestra, the jazz band, the regional band, the music field trips, anything I could be a part of.

If I had a period free, I was in the band room. I liked the music, the music teachers, being with kids who liked doing what I did. I wanted all in.

I picked the trumpet.

I remember the band rehearsals, the stage we were on, the case I had, sitting there with my friends, I remember thinking how great it sounded, though I'm sure it was terrible. I remember the positive feelings of "I love this." "I want to do this," "I think I'm good at this."  
I just knew.

My dad took me down to TK Music. We didn't have the money for this, but he bought me a Bach Stradivarius trumpet. Oh my God. I was on top of the world.  
Top of the world. I'll never forget that.

~

I wanted all in.

I was passionate about playing the trumpet.  
It offered a good outlet, a bit of an escape, a place I felt comfortable.

My Dad said: "If you like music, think about becoming a music teacher."

For my dad, if you were going to do something, you would do it through teaching.

The whole world, beyond teaching, didn't even exist for me.

I just showed up to a college audition one day. I didn't tell my teacher I was doing it. I was not prepared. When I got to college, I was like: "Oh, people can play a lot better than me."

But when I started conducting, when I started education classes, when I student taught, I found some things I could do that maybe not everyone else could do.  
I inspired students. I won a conducting contest. I remember that vividly.

I learned to learn in college. I learned how to pass a test.  
I learned I could teach and motivate kids. And I learned that music education was for me.

## Marilyn Nichols

As a result of learning to sing, I knew I wanted to teach singing.

We considered ourselves a musical family.  
On Sundays, we'd sit around and sing as a family, and I sang in the church choir that my mom directed. We all took piano lessons. I started when I was five or six years old.  
We had to practice, that's just what we did.

My mother went to music college, had a beautiful voice, played the piano and the clarinet. At school, I wanted to play the clarinet like my Mom. She inspired me.  
For some reason I wasn't chosen, but I discovered singing, with piano a constant companion.

I can still see myself on the playground in first grade. I remember distinctly, starting in first grade, knowing I wanted to be a teacher. Over time, I wanted to be a physical education teacher and then a French teacher. But I really loved singing, so I just followed my passion.

~

They passed it on. A love of music from my Mom. Determination from my Dad.  
I practiced. That's just what I did.

I really didn't love the math, English, science, social studies side of academic life, so I focused on my affinity for foreign language and on choir, which seemed to work well together.  
Having the opportunity to sing and have the text touch you,  
to look at the text through music, versus sitting in English class,  
It gave me a different opportunity to be able to express myself.

I remember knowing I wanted to be a teacher.

My middle school music teacher often chose me as a vocal soloist, then I sang the eighth grade moving up solo, then my high school choral director told me I could sing.

~

To sing gave me a way to engage in school, to sing gave me a way to express who I was.

I developed this competition within myself rather than competing with others. Maybe because I'm a twin, my disposition and my growth mindset allowed me to make incredible progress and not get defeated by the competition around me.

I can sing solo, but singing in the chorus made me want to become a music teacher even more.

I was the first of four children to go away to a four-year school. When I arrived at college, I was underprepared. It was terrifying, very intimidating. I knew that I needed to hit a practice room.  
But practice singing, "What was that? What did that look like? What did that sound like?" I taught myself an entirely new skillset and became serious about the craft of singing.



~

I was motivated by a competition within myself.

I was always encouraged by professors. Mr. M, my theory teacher noticing my ability and love of conducting. Mrs. C, my voice teacher caring, and nurturing comradery among singers. Our voice class used to get together on Saturdays and listen to the opera. Mrs. C cooked dinner. I would make pasta. We had some fun times that kept me going. I loved these aspects of music school.

The first of four children to go away to a four-year school.  
What did that look like? What did that sound like?

As a result of studying singing, I learned how to teach singing.

## Mitchell Kline

You are part of something as a musician that's much larger than just one individual.

Starting piano at 5 was a short-lived introduction to classical music. It was Uncle Will, the politician, who gave me my first instrument, an army bugle from their basement. He was the first to make me feel like I wanted to be somebody.

In 4th grade, my friends and I took turns circling different instruments on the band forms. It was just luck of the draw that I got the trumpet.

My first band teacher was very supportive, very warm, very welcoming in a group, and treated us each as individuals too. In middle school both sets of music teachers were identical twins. Kind of fun, twin instrumental teachers, twin choral teachers. By high school, I was a soloist on trumpet, and my high school band director and I are in touch to this day.

~

I wanted to be somebody.

I grew up a music student, but with all of the other responsibilities that a child might have. I was often taking care of siblings, doing chores, working a part-time job. Sometimes at 9, 10 o'clock at night I had to go downstairs where nobody could hear me and practice.

I remember the support, the warmth, the welcome in band.

I grew up as an athlete and as a musician, my strengths in those two areas helped get me through school. My teachers, elementary school through college understood me in this regard. Some knew that science and history may not have been strong points for me, but all worked with me in my areas of strength to pull me through to achieving the next level. I can honestly say that teachers showing me this amount of support led me to pursue teaching as a major in college.

~

Sometimes at 9, 10 o'clock at night I had to go downstairs where nobody could hear me and practice.

Identifying as a trumpet player and musician from an early age, I taught music privately in both high school and college, even as the late night performing gigs increased. At 18, 19, 20 years old, floundering in college, but going from gig to gig to gig, getting home late hours, playing weddings, and cocktail hours, and jazz clubs. There was too much instability. Joining the military led to a clearer head on my shoulders. I eventually went back to school for music education, knowing the focus of a routine and having an impact on others would lead to . . .

my areas of strength pulling me to achieve higher levels,  
and toward a steady paycheck.

My college professor, the principal for a well-known ballet company,  
was a superb trumpet player.

I watched him and others taking their talent and passing it on to their students.  
That's when I realized fully that teaching would allow me to take *my* talents and pass them on to  
my students. I completed my bachelors and two master's degrees,  
one in performance, one in music education.

~

Joining the military led to a clearer head on my shoulders.  
I decided to teach, to take my talents and my positive experiences  
and pass them on to my students.

These experiences included live artists, live performances. I remember meeting the greats,  
playing on the Tonight Show, meeting Doc Severinsen back stage at Carnegie Hall. I remember  
hearing Wynton Marsalis, Dizzy Gillespie, Roberta Flack—among the people I tried to emulate  
growing up, who set the bar way above to a place I was always aspiring to.

As a biracial family, my wife and I did not want to raise our girls in a  
predominantly Black community or a predominantly White community.  
The eyes of society are not always what you hope they will be. So we have to raise our daughters  
with the mindset that we live in a very difficult world, where not everybody has the same  
understanding of things. We have to raise our daughters with the mindset that we honor diversity  
and set the bar high to places we can aspire to.

It humbles you. Like realizing how infinitely small you are when you're in the ocean.  
There is such a feeling of respect and love amongst musicians, and when we go out there to  
make music there is no contest.

I have been part of something, as a musician, that's much larger than me,  
setting the cornerstones of what I will build upon for years to come.

## Patricia Charles

I played Mozart's 40th on first violin, second violin, and viola, learning what a neat thing it is to play a major work from three different perspectives.

Music was of significant value in our home, part of the family culture. I remember my father always coming home with music books with folk songs for us to learn. We all learned Lithuanian songs and learned how to dance the Polka to his records. I had two uncles who played the violin.

I never remember not having a piano in our house, ever. It was just an infusion of music.

I started taking piano lessons when I was six years old. I was in first grade. I remember sitting in a chair and learning the lines and spaces. The teacher actually lived across the street. I maintain the lessons cost 50 cents. My cousin says \$1. That was my formal foray into the music world.

Our second piano teacher was a different story. I had a brother who was far more talented at piano. He was gifted. I was talented. He was the teacher's pride and joy, and her star pupil. And we got numerically graded. He always got like 98s, and I got like 78s. And she did a recital every year, and the most advanced student, usually my brother, played last. And I just have this memory of this hugely bosomed woman saying, "John, what a marvelous performance, and Patricia, what a pretty dress you are wearing." Talk about a theme.

I grew up with that theme. Always.

~

I never remember not having a piano in our house, ever. It was just an infusion of music, but I always wanted a little breakaway from my brother. I remember asking to play the violin earlier but was told: "You need to do the piano first."

I was ten years old when I went to a Catholic girl's school and began to learn the violin. It had an amazing orchestra, and a very strong emphasis on singing and choral training.

The annual concert was on Laetare Sunday, the fourth Sunday of Lent and the one Sunday in Lent that you were supposed to do happy joyful things.

They would actually rent the Islamic Temple, and the priest would come and bless it.

It was a huge fundraiser, every year, an awesome experience.

And for those six or seven years this was just the biggest event in my whole life.

But I grew up with that theme. Always.

It was common for some of the orchestra members to become music teachers like others before us, so I never really gave it any other thought except to do that. There were two or three Catholic girl's colleges that you were encouraged to apply to. If I had wanted to go to my brother's secular university it would have been frowned upon as: "not a school for nice Catholic girls to attend." And I was very obedient in those days. I changed a lot later.

~

The annual school concert was just the biggest event in my whole life.  
I began to identify as a musician when I was performing with the school orchestra.

I accept life experiences with an ‘attitude of gratitude,’ but there’s always the first time as an adult that you choose your own path. I hated my first college, so stayed for just 2 years and transferred to a college with a really really good music program and strong string program where I played violin, viola, and piano.

I was very obedient in those days. I changed a lot later. I learned that I would want to work in a setting where I could do for kids the best of what was done for me and more.

I think I came through a really rough childhood in a lot of ways. My father and I did not have a good relationship, there were aspects of my education that were not strong, and my choices of career were limited. At times, the emphasis on excellence and personal discipline in my life bordered on perfection, and the response was pretty swift if you were unprepared for the tasks at hand. I had to develop a lot of grit to survive, and that probably shaped my constitution and my personality.

~

I accepted life experiences with an ‘attitude of gratitude.’

This greatly influenced my foray into the music world and into the vocation of teaching.

Skilfully encouraging an emphasis on excellence and personal discipline helped to shape my music teaching and my passionate commitment to student achievement.

I played Mozart’s 40th on first violin, second violin, and viola,  
a lasting and positive memory, and a glimpse into my approach to leadership.

## Wyant Murray

It was the people who took me under their wings,  
the teachers from 25–60+ who loved playing and teaching, selected great music for us to  
perform, took the whole band to hear nationally and internationally known musicians, and  
opened up the world to me musically.

My earliest musical experience was when I started taking guitar lessons at the age of 11.  
I played a lot of guitar for the first two or three years of my childhood. Only guitar. But my  
guitar teacher, who was a bit of an odd duck, kind of turned off  
this middle school kid.

So when the band teachers came into the junior high general music class looking for a tuba  
player, I volunteered, and stopped playing guitar.

I focused all my time on tuba. As the only tuba player in the band of 100 kids, I kind of  
stood out, and had to admit, I liked that. I was hooked.

I went through a normal public school, with a decent, but unremarkable music program. But  
from my first tuba teacher, to the eighth-grade band teacher—a young hip guy who screamed  
on the trumpet—I was given the necessary tools I needed to take  
music to the next level and was led in the direction that got me where I am today.

~

Entering middle school an 11-year-old guitar player, then recruited to play tuba for the  
school band. I was hooked.

Early on I got that that rush that musicians get when they're in front of a live audience, the  
attention thrust my way when performing. I went on to solo in the band, attend All State Band  
twice on tuba, teach myself bass trombone to play in the jazz ensemble, and gain a little notoriety  
in my school and in my hometown for my playing ability.

Our band was directed by a young hip guy who screamed on the trumpet, I was immediately  
just one of his disciples.

I practiced all the time because I liked to play. An athlete too, many nights after a football  
or basketball game up in my room playing until the wee hours of the morning,  
my parents very supportive. But coming from a family of nurses and doctors, I had always  
planned on going to medical school, from the earliest age wanting to be a surgeon.

~

But I got that that rush that musicians get when they're in front of a live audience.

At 15, I was actually playing some gigs. I found out pretty quickly that I could make money doing this and it was never work for me.

It was fun, I loved doing it, and the fact that I got paid, even better.

But I had always planned on going to medical school,  
from the earliest age wanting to be a surgeon.

I remember the day halfway through my junior year when a teacher had given me some pretty difficult sight reading to do, and I nailed it. He said: "There are very few kids your age who can read like that. I think you have a real gift." And he walked away.

~

I found out pretty quickly that I could make money doing this and it was never work for me.

My head started spinning and thinking about whether I wanted to be in school for half of my natural adult life as a doctor, or if I wanted to pursue what gave me real happiness, which was playing in front of people.

By my senior year, I was set on a career in music.

It was the people who took me under their wings,  
that supported me and led me in the direction that got me where I am today.

## **Becoming: From First Notes to Choosing a Career**

The portraits in the previous category highlight the individuality of each participant's early experiences as musicians and music students as well as how each participant first envisioned and later pursued a career in music education. In the category *becoming: from first notes to choosing a career*, the researcher turns the focus to the formal aggregate analysis of the commonalities within the stories and lived experiences described in the portraits and derived from the overall data analysis.

In writing the composite data analysis of this section, the researcher used very few direct participant quotes, enabling the authentic voice of participants within the portraits to lead the readers into the analysis. The brief narrative analysis that follows, summarizes the commonalities of participant experiences within the three overarching themes of: (a) *learned competencies*, (b) *shaped by relationships*, and (c) *emerging values*. The accompanying thematic structure and overview of the composite analysis is illustrated in Table 6.



Table 6

*Becoming: From First Notes to Choosing a Career—Thematic Overview*

Overarching themes	Thematic strands	Thematic motifs
Learned competencies	First notes: Singing and playing	Choosing an instrument First ensemble experiences
	Growing into musicianship	Developing technical skills Expressing oneself through music Training to teach
Shaped by relationships	The vital importance of school music programs	Ensuring equity and access Having a sense of community Making memories with lasting impact
	The impact of teacher-student relationships	Influences on progress and enjoyment
Emerging values	Identifying as a musician	Realizing personal identity as a musician Accepting both success and limitations as musicians Reflecting on paths taken toward music education

**Learned competencies.** The first overarching theme, *learned competencies*, is further divided into the thematic strands of: (a) *first notes: singing and playing*, and (b) *growing into musicianship*.

**First notes: Singing and playing.** Interestingly, what participants opted to share about their introductory years as musicians included very little about the technical aspects of their training and focused instead on the experiences and memories contained within two thematic motifs that to some might seem to represent the most insignificant of experiences: (a) *choosing an instrument*, and (b) *first ensemble experiences*.

*Choosing an instrument.* The process of choosing their instrument, whether positive or negative, invoked poignant memories for each of the participants. Participant recollections focused on both the process and the people, their excitement and trepidation, what might have drawn them to certain instruments, the common resignation of not getting their first choice of instrument or an instrument at all, and eventually settling into singing and/or playing an instrument they truly enjoyed. Participants could clearly recall the exhilaration of their first lessons, including the tactile moment that their fingers struck their first audible notes.

*First ensemble experiences.* Memories of their first experiences playing and eventually performing in a music ensemble were not only recounted with audible enthusiasm and positivity, but all seven participants noted how these initial forays into ensemble playing, helped to promote feelings of wellbeing about school and their increased confidence as learners in general. It was within the stories of these first ensemble experiences that the conversations with participants about achievement, community, and collaborative efforts began.

*Growing into musicianship.* Conversations about the participants' developing musicianship and formal training in education were explored through the thematic strands of: (a) *developing technical skills*, (b) *expressing oneself through music*, and (c) *training to teach*.

*Developing technical skills.* It almost went without saying in the interviews, that each of the seven participants studied voice and/or an instrument and eventually gained technical competency on their instruments. Participant's self-perception of their own technical abilities and talent levels were typically related to teacher or peer-to-peer comparisons of ability throughout their learning years. While participants all noted the varied talent levels among their peers in the music programs, they also remarked on how they understood from a young age that players of all abilities had important roles to play in music ensembles. Most participants

expressed a high degree of confidence with regard to their place in the hierarchy of musicians in their schools and programs.

*Expressing oneself through music.* This almost intangible idea of feeling at one with their instruments and using music-making as a means to express themselves was a significant conceptual idea shared by all seven participants. Participant's noted often how these expressions of self through music helped to mark them as distinct individuals with something to offer their school communities.

*Training to teach.* There was actually little discussion about the vast array of skills and competencies garnered during the formal period leading to each participant's training in music education and certification as public-school music teachers. Brief mention was given by most participants to the time period in which they amassed a series of specific competencies on their primary instrument and a number of secondary instruments, and explored the current best practices and resources required of the music teaching profession. The more common focus of interview conversations about training to be teachers was on how each participant had "learned to learn" and "how to learn" so that they could "teach others to learn."

**Shaped by relationships.** The overarching importance of relationships, specifically peer relationships and teacher-student relationships, were central to participant reflections about this period in their lives. All participants described "amazing," "influential" teacher and peer relationships and stressed how much these relationships profoundly affected why they became music teachers and who they were to become as educators. These ideas are summarized within the thematic strands of: (a) *the vital importance of school music programs*, and (b) *the impact of teacher-student relationships*.

*The vital importance of school music programs.* The commonalities in participant experiences and their reflections about the critical importance of their school music programs was a theme repeated over and over by the seven participants. The researcher captured the essence of these ideas within the thematic motifs of: (a) *ensuring equity and access*, (b) *having a sense of community*, and (c) *making memories with lasting impact*.

*Ensuring equity and access.* All participants stressed that having music programs in all schools, particularly in public schools, was the best way to ensure access to and maximum participation in music and the arts programs for children of all ages, regardless of their socio-economic levels. Six of the seven participants attended public schools, and all seven were teachers in public schools, so the importance of “coming through the public-school programs,” and “starting your primary instrument in public-school programs,” was made clear. “Even mediocre programs make a difference,” Wyant shared, “because individual teachers can truly inspire.”

*Having a sense of community.* For all seven participants, having a sense of community was the most commonly expressed positive result of being part of school music programs. The very act of joining a community of students who also play an instrument, of participating in one or more ensembles with other students, and of travelling in groups to attend lessons, rehearsals, competitions and extra-curricular music activities, helped to develop strong connections and a communal identity within their school music programs. For several participants, these communities of musicians served as a positive outlet and at times an escape from other personal or academic struggles experienced during their overall schooling.

This sense of an intimate, supportive community within the overall school community, participants explained, was initiated by: (a) positive music programs and experiences that

continued in an ongoing vertical configuration from grade school through high school, (b) highly influential music teachers that often taught the same students across several grade levels, and (c) the circle of like-minded peers and friends that were as fully immersed in music during their school years as they were, or quite simply, as David put it: “being with kids who liked to do what I did.”

*Making memories with lasting impact.* All seven participants had vivid memories of their experiences with music during their school and college years, and many expressed surprise about the detail with which they were able to recount specific conversations, music performances, and other music related activities, and the degree to which these experiences have impacted both their decision to become educators and their approach to teaching and leadership.

*The impact of teacher-student relationships.* Teacher relationships were consistently named as highly significant by participants and are discussed within the thematic motif of *influences on progress and enjoyment*.

*Influences on progress and enjoyment.* Maintaining good, open, and productive relationships with teachers at school and college was described in terms of their high value to each of the participants. Sentiments focused on how positive relationships effected both their rate of progress and enjoyment of music programs. In all cases there were a combination of influential teachers, often in different disciplines of music, who offered individual attention and support to participants as they progressed through their studies. Whether described as brilliant mentors or inspired performers, music teachers at all levels were credited by participants for “opening up the world” to them musically and scholastically and for playing significant roles in the advance of their personal values and career ambitions.

Not all relationships with music teachers were described as positive by participants, however, and for some participants the negative experiences had a major impact on their developing sense of identity and confidence as young musicians. Most participants described either observing or directly experiencing music teachers who “taught by fear,” or “by promoting competition,” or music teachers who were simply “weak,” “unremarkable,” or “mediocre,” who resorted to “yelling,” or “doing worksheets,” and did not teach music as an “experiential-based” program. The negative influence of teachers that participants described in this manner, however, commonly had the long-term effect of participants deciding to “teach differently” than they had been taught and to focus on a combination of achievement and enjoyment in the music programs they eventually directed.

**Emerging values.** Composite participant understandings related to their emerging values as developing musicians and music teachers, are examined under the thematic strands of:

(a) *identifying as a musician*, and (b) *reflecting on the path toward music education*.

***Identifying as a musician.*** When asked by the researcher, most participants were able to identify a moment in time or a sequence of events that led to them self-identifying as a musician. Participant ideas are summarized under the thematic motifs of: (a) *realizing personal identity as a musician*, and (b) *accepting both success and limitations as musicians*.

***Realizing personal identity as a musician.*** Key experiences that were described as leading to the realization of each participant’s personal identity as a musician, commonly included moments associated with performing in school, district, county and state ensembles, earning money to teach and/or perform on your primary instrument, or participant self-identification as part of a community of musicians. Identifying as a musician was also related to individual participant realizations that they were “really pretty good at this,” “had a gift,” found

themselves “always looking forward to going to music class,” or “felt that rush that musicians get when performing.”

*Accepting both success and limitations as musicians.* Part of being fully able to identify as a musician, most participants stressed, requires the fortitude to accept both success and failure, and to recognize personal limitations in terms of music ability and commitment to the craft. A few participants described being at times overshadowed by other more talented musicians as both school aged children and college students, and how their acceptance of this reality did not deter them from becoming music teachers but forced the development of their growth mindsets as musicians. In all cases, though, the overall successes they experienced as musicians (soloists, ensemble players, student conductors, student teachers, etc.) easily outweighed what may have been perceived as a personal limitation in any one of these areas.

*Reflecting on the path taken toward music education.* While all seven participants participated in school music programs that heavily influenced their early schooling, descriptions of their emergent identification as musicians and eventual decision to become music educators varied tremendously.

Ashley, Charles, David, and Marilyn, for instance, all participated in what they described as good, solid music programs and were recognized for their music ability early on and repeatedly through their K–12 schooling. Their interest in music teaching grew in what Charles labelled as an “organic process” initiated by early positive music experiences, regular interactions with outstanding music teachers and role models, and the influence of friends and peer mentors who were also passionate about music. While Charles and David shared how their love of music and its accompanying experiences preceded their desire to become teachers, Ashley and Marilyn recalled wanting to be teachers from a very young age and discovering later

that as music teachers they could combine their dual passions for music and teaching into one career.

Patricia, who described her participation in an equal number of positive music related experiences, never-the-less shared a lingering sense that because she showed talent in music and as an orchestral violin player, she was simply expected to follow others from her private school who were targeted early on in their school years as likely music educators. While Patricia often expressed how much she loved music, she also shared: “I felt like I didn’t have some choices. Maybe I would have picked something else. . . . My father was a lawyer, and I do think I would have made a really good lawyer.”

Mitchell and Wyant, recalled being identified as “gifted” musicians early on in their school careers, and repeatedly standing out musically throughout middle and high school years. Both explained how they worked as full-time performing musicians for several years before deciding to become music educators based on factors related to their personal/professional life balance, active mentoring from a number of performers and music teachers, and a desire to use their talents in a teaching capacity.

The next section, *being*, is included an examination of the time period in which participants were actively involved in their music teaching careers. In this section, the researcher focused the data analysis on the development and expansion of both participant experiences and self-identified knowledge and values accrued while they served as music educators. The researcher examined the data within the categories: (a) *passing it forward: being a music teacher*, and (b) *loving to learn: being a lifelong learner*.



## Section Two: Being

### Passing it Forward: Being a Music Teacher

The overarching themes in the category passing it forward: being a music teacher, include: (a) *unique competencies*, (b) *dependent upon relationships*, and (c) *envisioning and implementing change*. Each of the participants expressed strongly that to succeed in their jobs, music teachers gained a multitude of diverse competencies, and developed and nurtured a high number of obligatory (those required to carry out their jobs) relationships and interactions, as well as the less intentional, but inevitable relationships resulting from their high level of visibility and exposure beyond the four walls of their classrooms, school, and district. Further, it became clear in speaking with each participant that these competencies and relationships could only be confidently sustained by envisioning and implementing change action that supported their program growth and a positive reception from a large number of educational stakeholders.

Each of the seven participants, without exception, described their work as music teachers as a “wonderful learning experience,” with a “strong thread between administrative and music teaching roles:”

I think when you’re a music teacher, you have unique experiences. You have that exposure to a bunch of different classroom settings. You have that exposure to large groups of students. You have that exposure to a bunch of different instruments and how to play them or how to keep up with them. You’re exposed to a bunch of ability levels, a bunch of different personalities. So I think that might be part [of] peeling it back to the ground layer . . . [and] from that, moving forward. (Charles)

“Peeling it back to the ground layer,” it was revealed that the success of a music teachers’ daily work, and the very survival of both teacher and program depended on a unique

combination of competencies, relationships, and actions toward transformative change. Table 7 provides an overview of the overarching themes and related thematic strands and motifs that accompany them and are explored in depth throughout the narrative that follows.

Table 7

*Passing it Forward: Being a Music Teacher—Thematic Overview*

Overarching theme	Thematic strands	Thematic motifs
Unique competencies	Technical and humanistic competencies	Managing instructional programs Managing students and classrooms Understanding and executing continuous assessment
	Conceptual competencies	Problem-solving Practicing Performing and public speaking Identifying discipline-specific realities Overcoming discipline-specific realities
Dependent upon relationships	Building relationships . . .	with students with music teaching peers with other staff with administrators with parents and guardians with community partners
	Nurturing and sustaining relationships	The essence of relationships People finance programs.
Envisioning and implementing change	Envisioning change	The creative impulse Core values that support change Recognition of self as a change agent
	Implementing change	Initiating, growing, and transforming programs.
	Sustaining positive change	Accept change as inevitable Embrace change as a positive force Reflect upon and evaluate change initiatives

**Unique competencies.** The discussion of music teacher competencies with study participants began from a vantage point well beyond the basic skills required of the job, such as the technical skills needed to play and teach one or more instruments, and the general education aptitudes and proficiencies. Conversations were focused instead on the unique set of competencies acquired by teachers working in the discipline of music education. All seven participants pointed out that while they may not have consciously set out acquire this particular set of competencies, they came to realize that certain specific competencies: (a) were inherent to their jobs as music teachers, (b) set them apart in a number of ways from their counterparts in other disciplines, and (c) were more closely related to the known skills of leadership than to the known skills required of teachers.

Based on this understanding, the overarching theme of *unique competencies* focuses on a saturation of data describing what participants considered to be unique to their jobs as music educators and includes the thematic strands of: (a) the unique *technical and humanistic competencies* gained by on the job practice, and (b) the unique *conceptual competencies* gained as a result of fully embracing and understanding the realities of their jobs. Further, although these learned competencies were not intentionally related to leadership training or the desire to become educational leaders, participant reflections at this time in their careers, point to how these unique competencies helped to prepare them for their future leadership roles in education.

As Wyant expressed: “Although I didn’t know it at the time, being a high school band director encompasses a lot of the skills you need to be a school leader . . . [yet] when I became a music teacher, I had no interest in becoming an administrator at all. None.”

***Technical and humanistic competencies.*** The thematic strand of technical and humanistic competencies includes the thematic motifs of: (a) *managing instructional programs*, (b) *managing students and classrooms*, and (c) *understanding and executing continuous assessment*.

*Managing instructional programs.* The first of the thematic motifs identified in this strand, was expressed by the participants' named ability to: (a) organize and design their own curriculum, (b) develop their own ideas about delivering instruction, and (c) differentiate learning in multi-ability and/or multiage classes. Participants stressed how all three of these competencies are interrelated.

"Being a music teacher makes you organized," was an oft repeated sentiment by the participants interviewed. Wyant, for instance, described the level of organization it took to lead a band of 125 students:

It was a very large band. I had to manage 125 lessons every week. Of course, I had to do all the grading and stuff for those. We had a booster club, so I had to manage the budget for the band. We travelled pretty extensively . . . so I had to create and manage all those trips. . . . [It] has served me really well, being really adaptive to unforeseen situations . . . [and] being able to think on my feet pretty well. . . . Organization was essential . . . [and] communication, because you're working with 250 parents. . . . [and] time management because you are putting your product on stage three or four times a year for general public approval.

Working with students at multiple grade levels, gaining experience with students of all abilities, and the integration of the special needs populations, also came into play here. At its

most basic level, it simply meant, as David said, “[You] knew a lot of the kids. [You] knew kids in every grade level. Not everyone could say that.”

Mitchell explained how he had to design his own curriculum as a band and choral director in his first general music position, and fellow participants described this as a typical practice for music teachers, but not for teachers of other disciplines: “Being a math teacher,” Ashley contributed, “you have your curriculum that’s already set in that line. You have your standards.” As a band director, she continued, “it is more organic, because your students and the literature you are selecting will change every year.” Ashley reflected on how the ability to design curriculum and develop her own style of teaching, helped to “set the foundation for all [of] the . . . things that have to happen in order for you to have that ultimate performance . . . [with] new students year after year.”

Marilyn recalled thinking about how to deliver instruction as a college student:

We used to do those observation hours . . . we used to go out to the campus school . . . [and] during student teaching] I remember saying to myself, “This is probably not the way it’s supposed to go”. . . . and having my own ideas about how to deliver instruction that wasn’t necessarily in alignment with what was happening.’

Marilyn connected this early understanding to how she has continued to maintain her “own standard of a program,” and what it should be throughout her career, saying, “I hold myself to a standard nobody else will.”

*Managing students and classrooms.* This second thematic motif was focused on: (a) the varied size, length, type, and location of classes that music teachers confronted each year; (b) scheduling; and (c) multi-tasking. From managing large groups of students and behavioral issues, to having what Marilyn described as the “scheduling gene,” or being an expert

multitasker, the participants interviewed shared a variety of unique experiences and challenges on their road to becoming effective classroom managers. Several participants described how even the basics, like being guaranteed a classroom or office, or knowing your job assignment for the year, could not be taken for granted by music educators.

The sheer number of students who the participants instructed as music teachers in a given year was high, with daily management of large groups of students a norm. All participants described the variety of classroom sizes ranging from one-to-one instruction, to small groups, and to both chamber and large ensembles as well as classes that varied in length. They noted how this supported their ability to manage classrooms and student instruction and behavior successfully. They also remarked on the degree of variation in instructional competencies required for the average music teacher (i.e., general music, band, orchestra, chorus programs).

Job responsibilities, the number of changing school assignments, and grade levels also typically shifted (particularly at the start of a music teaching career), and at times within the course of the same year. Patricia described the reality of one of her first jobs as a music teacher:

This is the truth. I had four schools in five buildings a week. I had 1,100 children that I saw every week. . . . The only grade I didn't ever teach, was kindergarten. So I taught one through five. . . . First graders were back-to-back 20 minutes. 20 minutes, 20 minutes. Second grade, 20 minutes, 20 minutes. Third grade, 25 minutes, 25 minutes. I think I had 10 classes a day with 28 kids in each.

David similarly described his reality:

I ended up having both bands when they cut a position, so I had 120 kids or so in a class in seventh and eighth grade, and 60 kids in sixth-grade band another day. . . . I think when you have 120–140 students in one classroom, you do learn a few things about

behavioral management and what to do and what not to do. . . . You do learn something about classroom management [laughter], and organization. . . . You learn about working with kids, [and] I think they [administrators] see you in action [more often].

“Not everyone has the skillset [of a music teacher],” Marilyn explained:

I can go into the gym with all 551 kids, and all I have to do is walk to the front and . . . they know, I don’t even have to ask them to be quiet. I’m not intimidated by that. . . . It’s my choral background. If I can teach a hundred eighth graders in a room by myself, while I’m playing the piano, I can manage a building. It’s that simple.

The ability to schedule just about anything was another frequently mentioned skill.

Charles attributed it to the way his brain works: “As a music person, I think that I’m [also] a math person. . . . I think music is like geometric shapes. There’s a connection with math and counting. And I think I like the idea of master scheduling, it was a puzzle, it was pieces, and it was the people.” Charles also noted the music teacher’s ability to multitask:

I just remember in band, too, everybody wanting something now. The clarinets, “Oh, my reed’s broken,’ or a saxophone, ‘My patch is gone.’ [laughter]. . . . Whatever it might be. . . . And in a good way, I think that gave me some experience with this . . . in relation to being an administrator. I think my brain is [able to] process a lot of different things . . . because there are people that want your attention right away for everything. And you can’t do everything at once, so it’s that triage. Okay. Those time sheets can wait. This student’s crying here. Or I saw that email. Let me go see this person.

Charles expanded on the cerebral manner in which a musician learns to multitask:

From a very young age when you are a musician, you're doing multiple things at once [using] your executive function. . . . If you're playing an instrument, the air needs to line up with the creation of an embouchure at a certain frequency, but then at the same time, you're focusing on your fingers going down . . . you're looking at geometric shapes and value and also where they are on a staff. It's like a language. Whatever it might be, your brain is processing multiple things.

*Understanding and executing continuous assessment.* One of the most frequently cited thematic motifs in this research analysis—one that cuts across all 4 sections, most categories, and a number of thematic strands—is that of considering outcomes and assessments as they relate to learning. This motif is listed among the technical and humanistic competencies but was also described in terms of understanding the value of thinking about desired outcomes and using multiple measures of assessment to determine attainment. David articulated this clearly and often, and his words reflected the similar sentiment of his six fellow interviewees:

I think that being a music teacher; it was just natural for me to focus on student outcomes and learning. I mean that's what a performance is. A performance is kids demonstrating what they learned to do that year and how all that knowledge comes together and helps them plan an ensemble to create great music. . . . You have all the mechanical stuff that needs to happen. But at the end of the day, all of this has to translate into something that's going to increase student learning. . . . And I think of what I do now . . . doing observations ... looking at state assessment results and seeing [if] that somehow demonstrates the learning that went on this year . . . looking at regent scores, universal



screenings . . . the formative assessments, the PD (professional development), that's provided to teachers. It's all done to increase student learning . . . that's what I focus on.

***Conceptual competencies.*** The thematic motifs within the thematic strand of conceptual competencies include less concrete, more abstract competencies that speak to the essence of the conversations with interviewees. These include: (a) *problem-solving*, (b) *practicing*, (c) *performing and public speaking*, (d) *identifying discipline-specific realities*, and (e) *overcoming discipline-specific realities*.

***Problem-solving.*** This overriding thematic motif represents the participants' repeated suggestion that music teachers are "problem solvers by nature." Citing the critical importance of creative, strategic problem-solving, participants described a number of learned skills they acquired as music teachers that they believe now enable them to negotiate successful problem-solving within the organizations they lead. Some noteworthy thematic keynotes expressed by the participants in this thematic motif included: (a) *expecting continuous challenges*, (b) *seeking input and support from others*, (c) *fixing problems*, (d) *welcoming mistakes*, (e) *accepting the constant chaos*, and (f) *excellence versus perfection*. Each of the problem-solving keynotes is represented with a significant participant statement in Table 8.

Table 8

*Problem-Solving: Related Thematic Keynotes and Significant Participant Statements*

Thematic motif	Thematic keynote	Example of significant statements
Problem-Solving	Expecting continuous challenges	<p>“I expected to have challenges, which I did. , I expected to make mistakes, which I did. I expected to be able to clean them up with help, which I did.”</p> <p>“Being a music teacher really helped. . . . I was not afraid of taking [things] on. And that was a real bonus for me. I never realized it at the time.”</p>
	Seeking input and support from others	<p>“I was always looking for input and advice from somebody, or [asking] how do I fix this problem that I created because I didn’t have enough experience.”</p>
	Fixing problems	<p>“Not that problem-solving is always easy, but we [music teachers] tend to . . . always think, ‘Okay. Identify the problem. What are the solutions we have, and which is the best one to do? . . . And how are we going to make that work, and how are we going to communicate [it]. . . how are we going to fix it?’</p>
	Welcoming mistakes	<p>“Failure is a part of being successful. I’ve always had that philosophy musically. I’ve had that philosophy personally.”</p>
	Accepting constant chaos	<p>“I always had kids all over the place with their instruments, practicing their solos. And they would just cycle into my office, come in, sit down, and we’d go over what they were concerned about. They get up. Somebody else comes back in. I mean, you’re just used to that constant chaos.”</p>

(Continued)

Thematic motif	Thematic keynote	Example of significant statements
	Excellence versus perfection	“[There is] no perfection, or there is rare perfection. It’s always fleeting. But you have to execute whatever you’re doing in as excellent a manner as possible.”

*Practicing.* Several participants highlighted the value of practice as critical, and closely related to the problem-solving keynotes of *fixing problems*, *welcoming mistakes*, and *excellence versus perfection*. Intrinsic to being a vocalist or an instrumentalist, I commonly heard, is the continuous practice of identifying mistakes, and repeatedly practicing a skillset until the musician can fix or improve upon their technique and competency. Mitchell spoke about practicing in relationship to the competencies of being a music educator and leader:

As you know, [there is] discipline [in] practicing every day and running your scales and arpeggios every day. I mean, once you learn your scales up and down, front and back, you know them. . . . Yet you have people (musicians) that are 90-plus years old that still run their scales every day. . . . Why? Why do you think they do that? It’s so that you don’t lose it. . . . So, keeping up on certain things, making sure that they don’t fall to the wayside. These are the fundamentals . . . the A, B, Cs of music. . . . You work on your repertoire, work on your technique. But then work on the fundamentals that [you] will not let dissipate . . . over time.

Practice appeared to play a key role in participant development as young musicians, teachers, and eventual leaders. Wyant described his practice habits as a young musician:

As a kid, I practiced all the time because I liked to play. And I was an athlete too, so there were many nights when I got home after a football game or a basketball game . . . and I was up in my room, and I was playing until the wee hours of the morning and my parents were supportive of it.

Mitchell described how he communicated the value of practice to the music students he taught:

Look at all the work that you've put into that. The hours of practice and preparation that you've done on a daily basis, and the sacrifice of not going out with your friends and doing these things. Staying home and practicing, getting the rhythm down, getting the intonation down, which doesn't come overnight. It takes time . . . you have to really nurture it to grow properly.

In an expansion of these ideas, Marilyn drew from both her job as a music teacher and her professional work with *Habits of Mind*. She had this to say:

I [believe] in the *spirit of continuous improvement*. . . . In *Habits of Mind*, it's never over. . . . There is always something to be done. And as a musician, we know that, right? . . . [No matter how many times] you pick up your instrument, you are never perfect at it. . . . So philosophically and vision-wise, we are always reflecting on where we are. . . . We are never finished.

*Performing and public speaking: Performing.* All seven participants stressed that music teachers are at once educators and performers, the first requiring long hours on the job, multiple evening concerts, and a high degree of volunteerism, and the latter resulting in the development of skills typically consigned to school leaders.

Acknowledging that long hours and volunteerism were the price you paid for being a music teacher, most participants genuinely expressed this more positively than negatively. "There are always nights, when you're coming out of music, there are always nights," Patricia simply noted. And David spoke for what seemed to be true across the board: "I was teaching [during] my prep periods, my lunch period. If there were three late buses after school, there were

three days a week I had something going on after school, period.” Marilyn similarly recalled volunteering to take on writing a portfolio assessment piece: “For five years I dedicated my life [to this assessment], like leaving school, working weekends.”

Music teachers do this because “presence creates unity,” Mitchell conjectured, and lamented that this is not an expectation or the norm for teachers in other disciplines: “When it comes to not seeing the teachers there to support . . . and seeing only a salt and pepper few . . . that’s not unifying to me.”

Several participants also recalled how the complexities and multitude of performances helped to advance their leadership skills: “As soon as you step on the podium and you’re a conductor, it’s different,”

Ashley noted:

Music teachers’ classrooms are more transparent because [what they do] ends in a culminating performance. And as a conductor, you are a leader. . . . [That] doesn’t look the same even though teachers are in charge of their classrooms and they lead their classrooms.

Mitchell talked of the complexities of organizing a performance:

Having to deal with who’s going to be recording it. Is it going to be on a local TV station? Is it going to be in the newspaper? Working with other outside agencies and authorities that are going to be part of that event . . . And there are many other moving factors in it. When you have other pieces of it that you have to manage, that’s when I realized, yeah, this definitely takes a different type of individual.

Marilyn concurred that just having to put on concerts requires music teachers to become adept at typical administrative tasks:

I think you do a lot more of those administrative tasks . . . You're thinking of specifics. . . . We had to take care of the development of the program, ordering of music. . . . You're thinking of instrumentations. You're thinking of literature you want to play. You're thinking of the type of pedagogy, all of that, [and] it does change.

Charles linked the exercise of being prepared (which he described as the daily work of musicians) with his growing comfort in highly visible public performance situations:

I'm going back to music, conducting a piece of music in front of a crowd, you can feel very vulnerable, because it's not up to you. You can conduct, but . . . they [the musicians], are the show . . . I look at when I first started teaching, my scores were highlighted in every color of pencil that you could find. . . . Hopefully that vulnerability . . . the anxiety level is eased a little bit when you're prepared.

*Performing and public speaking: Public speaking.* Patricia noted that in addition to performances, music teachers find themselves constantly speaking in public in support of their programs: "Speaking at board meetings, speaking in public, writing communications, preparing programs, getting the message out, keeping the message on track, and keeping it focused."

David, who described himself as "very shy," said that nevertheless, as a music teacher:

I found this other personality that I still have. . . . I don't mind getting up in front of 400 people and talking, it doesn't bother me. But if you put me in a cocktail hour, I hate every single second of it. . . . I'm very shy like that, but getting up in front of band, I found I had this talent . . . I could do this. . . . And so, I did.

Unlike David, Wyant revealed that he has "never been afraid of crowds," and that speaking in public as an administrator comes naturally to him. He attributed that, however, to his early and continued experiences as a performing musician.

An overview of the thematic motifs of *identifying discipline-specific realities* and *overcoming discipline specific realities* relevant to music teaching, are central to the narrative that follows and are highlighted with related thematic keynotes in Table 9.

Table 9

*Identifying and Overcoming Discipline-Specific Realities: Thematic Keynotes*

Thematic Motifs	Thematic Keynotes
Identifying the realities	Your kids can quit Your program can be cut Your job can be eliminated You confront constantly shifting administrators You face a hierarchy of content areas
Overcoming the realities	Defend your program Grow your program Focus on positive outcomes

*Identifying discipline-specific realities.* Participants labeled a number of inherent realities and challenges in the job of a music teacher as a type of intrinsic preparation for leadership not characteristic of other school teaching jobs. Further, several participants expressed their certainty that these experiences, and challenges, once overcome, provided a type of leadership training that many potential administrators do not receive. Patricia noted that: “there are factors as a music educator . . . and things that a music teacher does, that the majority of other kinds of teachers from which leaders are usually pulled, or culled, do not experience.”

*Identifying discipline-specific realities: Your kids can quit.* Virtually all 7 participants pointed to the fact that unlike the required subjects of math and English, for instance, vocal and instrumental music classes are typically optional for students from an early age. “Your kids can quit,” Patricia stated: “They can just walk in some day and say, ‘My mother says I can quit. I can drop out. I don’t have to stay.’”

“Your kids can quit,” David emphasized, echoing the same point: “They had to want to be with me. I think that affected [me] every time I walk[ed] into a classroom.” Charles commented on this reality as well, and suggested that music teachers, by necessity, learn to instruct students by being highly inspirational and motivational, and must teach in such a way that each student is “intrinsically motivated” to attend their classes.

David and others expressed their belief that skills related to motivation are often not understood by teachers of other disciplines: “When you are a music teacher, no one comes to you just because they are sent. They come because they want to be a part of it. They feel the need to be a part of it.” Today, as an administrator, David shared, he regularly asks the same questions he had to ask himself as a music teacher, to teachers in every discipline: “Do the kids want to be in this classroom?” and “Do you understand what you are doing with them [the students] and why?”

David further explored the connection between motivation and high expectations for both self and students, noting that both were important to the success of a music program: “I wanted to be motivational. I was very structured in how we did lessons, [and both] my expectations, [and my] belief that they could do it [were clear].”

Wyant believed that his high expectations actually helped him retain students in his high school classes: “Every decision I made was about the music. They (students) enrolled themselves [and] they wanted to be there. I told them if you don’t share my passion, you shouldn’t be here. There are other places for you, but here’s what we’re going to do. And they kind of bought into that.”

*Identifying discipline-specific realities: Your program can be cut.* For the majority of participants, the reality of program cuts often resulted in even the most successful programs



being knocked down through cuts and eliminations and a general feeling of being out of the control. “I remember being so discouraged,” Patricia shared, “They were just cutting so many [music] teachers and so many programs of which I had no control.” Patricia gave an example of the cavalier way the news was often delivered to music teachers and how this was a reality that teachers in most other disciplines did not face: “‘There’s not enough money this year so we’re cutting your program by 40%.’ You don’t say that to a third-grade teacher, or to a ninth-grade teacher.”

Marilyn described the day her school “got a new elementary principal and he wanted to cut the program. . . . He just didn’t like music. He didn’t think it was important. He didn’t see the value of it.”

*Identifying discipline-specific realities: Your job can be eliminated.* For music teachers, I heard often, the reality is that if programs are cut, jobs can be eliminated, and at times at the whim of school and district administrators, regardless of the number of years the teacher has been employed by a district. “When you are a music educator,” Patricia suggested, “there is no such thing as entitlement. You have to earn everything. You have to work for everything. You can make no assumptions.” For other teachers, Patricia stated, this is different: “If they are the last ones in, that is tough. But guess what? If you’re in the middle of the pack, [and a program is cut], you still get to keep your job.”

*Identifying discipline-specific realities: You confront constantly shifting administrators.* One participant after another shared personal stories about constantly transitioning administrators and leadership teams in their school districts. The specific problem that this created for music teachers, they lamented, was that exiting or transitioning administrators who had fully promoted their music programs were often replaced by administrators who either did not offer strong

support for music and arts programs, or had clear intentions to cut these programs. In her role as music supervisor, Marilyn restructured the K– 12 music program and hired two new teachers: “Then the superintendent left. And they hired an interim [superintendent]. . . . He came in and just undid everything. He let go two music teachers.” Mitchell similarly noted the disarray that the instability of upper administration, in particular, can cause, noting that often, “the left-hand doesn’t know what the right one’s doing.”

Wyant provided perhaps the most extreme example of this reality, one that has been felt collectively by teachers in all disciplines, but participants believe has had a more profound, often negative, impact on music and arts teachers, who teach subjects that are typically not mandatory:

I was the band director [for two decades], and in that span between APs, principals, and superintendents, I think I counted 37. Most, I would say 75% of them were principals or APs and then the other 10% were superintendents. We went through [administrators] like water. I mean, bing, bing, bing, bing, bing.

David provided one positive spin with regard to the ongoing trend of constantly shifting leadership in school districts: “More transition created a little bit of a vacuum. . . . They needed people to do [administrative] stuff.” David and several other participants, in fact, described instances where they were able to fill those administrative voids, gaining hands on experience as educational leaders.

*Identifying discipline-specific realities: You face a hierarchy of content areas.* Marilyn named the *hierarchy of content areas*, and other participants cited the perception that music programs are non-essential as key challenges for music teachers. Music teachers must at once “stand out and speak out,” Marilyn explained, in order to deal with their content area being continually marginalized by others: “Us choral folk didn’t get the same attention or support [or]

financial resources that we needed.” This reality was manifested by all of the challenges specified above, as well as by budgeting, scheduling, and classroom coverage decisions. David remembered that when he was pulled into other roles, that “to some degree they were saying “Hey, it’s a music teacher. . . . [It’s OK] if they miss a day.”

Marilyn talked about wanting to write an article called “*The Hierarchy of Content Areas and the Impact on Morale in Your Building*”:

If you have a hierarchy of content areas and you treat teachers in that way . . . the kids already get it, by the way, by the schedule. They know that music isn’t as important as every other subject because they don’t go there every day. I mean, hello! It’s like Dr. Obvious. We value what we teach. We schedule what we value, right? We test what is valued.

Mitchell told the story of how his program and job were slated for elimination before he even had a chance to begin:

I took a program that just won a grant . . . we were going to start a new band program, which was amazing because we had brand new instruments, all wrapped in plastic and I said, “This is perfect. It’s just what I wanted to do, is to start my own program.” And the instruments were received that summer and went into a closet. And then in September, when all of us teachers came in, there was a change in administration. The [new] principal came in and said, “Yeah, we can’t do the band program. We have to change what’s going to roll with the music.” I said, “Are you kidding me? There’s \$30,000 worth of brand new instruments wrapped up. Do you guys not get that?” And that’s exactly it. They were not musicians. They were just strict educational administrators with zero arts background, so they didn’t understand. These instruments were stored in

the boiler room. I said, “Are you kidding me? It’s not even funny.” So I at least got them out of that room and into another closet, but then they sat there. . . . [They changed my job in that instant] to serve as a disciplinary dean, instead of a music teacher.

The reality of program and job cuts and the perception of music programs as non-essential, seemed to be an initial prompt for several participants, including Mitchell, to consider leaving a job or pursue other career options: “Once I saw that they were not going to support a program the way a program needs to be supported. . . . yeah, there’s no reason for me [to stay].”

David recalled his reaction to similar stories:

In the early 90s, they had a lot of those state aid cuts [that effected music programs and teachers] . . . that people still talk about today, and so I decided I wanted to go back to school. And I remember thinking, ‘You know, maybe if this music thing doesn’t work out, I’ll go into psychology.

Marilyn also revealed that she “felt trapped by having only one certification [area],” and Patricia likewise noted how the political issues related to the continuous threat of music programs and music jobs being cut, led her to become “disillusioned with public schools,” and consider new career pathways.

*Overcoming discipline-specific realities.* The most typical responses garnered from participants about how they overcame the realities explored above, were for them to exercise a combination of being extra hard-working, motivating, and inspiring, and to doggedly pursue excellence, envision and grow programs, and remain highly visible (and at times outspoken) to stakeholders.

Patricia openly shared her certainty that, if you don't pursue excellence and know what that means and how to get it, chances are you're not going to be successful [as a music teacher] in one way or another. Whereas we've all seen in education that again, if you [a classroom teacher] end up in the middle of the pack, and you teach third grade . . . you can try really hard for a while and then you can just lay back. Well, try and lay back if you're a string teacher. Just try.

Understanding that both their success and failure were highly visible, participants spoke over and over again about how they set out to align their programs with their districts' vision and instructional mission. They did this by: (a) defending their programs, (b) envisioning and growing programs and ensuring high student participation, and (c) highlighting the positive outcomes of their students in both music and other academic areas.

*Overcoming discipline-specific realities: Defend your program.* Several participants lamented the need to constantly defend their programs and advocate for funding as both individuals and music departments. They described the critical necessity of: (a) being individually responsible for motivating students, teachers, parents, and community, (b) ensuring constant positive communication and visibility to all district stakeholders (students, parents, classroom teachers, building principals, district administrators, and community members) and (c) engaging stakeholders and bringing them on board to financially support and defend programs:

I had to convince principals that this was a worthy program, and that I could build it and lead it effectively. I also had to build relationships with teachers in more than a typical way, because if the teachers were not on board with what I was doing, I couldn't be successful. (Patricia)

*Overcoming discipline-specific realities: Grow your program.* Growing programs and ensuring successful outcomes for students were other repeated themes among participants who were quick to point out, however, that the ability to achieve either one did not guarantee program or job security:

There is always that constant threat . . . [so] you have to build the program yourself.

There's no structure that you walk into. . . . I started with six kids, and I culled them from my chorus kids. I remember the number six. A cello, a bass, a viola, and three violins . . . and over the next number of years, we actually had two orchestras. (Patricia)

Later on, Patricia recalled being recruited to begin a program in a new district: "She asked me to stay on and work full-time as a string teacher. I said, 'There are no kids here.' She said, 'You'll grow it. They'll be here.'" Marilyn similarly described having nine students in her first Chorus and going on to build a comprehensive grade 4–12 choral program.

Mitchell recalled the reaction to the first public performance of a program he created: "It was pretty adorable watching the little ones perform because there was no program in existence at that point. . . . The parents were extremely appreciative."

*Overcoming the discipline-specific realities: Focus on positive outcomes.* The "proof is in the pudding," Patricia summarized. "We have to have outcomes that make a difference,"

David likewise asserted:

You want people to fight for you, not because of who you are, but for what you do for something. . . . Kids came because they thought there was some value. Parents thought there was some value. I still feel the same way [as an administrator].

**Dependent upon relationships.** Participant responses strongly emphasized how music teachers are dependent on their relationships both to achieve success and to survive. Participants described these relationships as paramount, obligatory, and compulsory, but never optional.

Highlighting both the number and the nature of relationships that music teachers are dependent upon, participants repeatedly described the importance of relationships with students, music teaching peers, school and district staff, administrators, parents/guardians, and community members. Mitchell spoke of the need to reach out to a wide variety of stakeholders:

I reached out for their opinions, their advice . . . more sets of eyes on something, get different perspectives. [I spoke] with upper administration, assistant superintendents, superintendents . . . [I spoke] with community members, they're key. . . . And the kids are stakeholders too . . . getting their opinions really matters. They have a very inside perspective looking out.

Patricia also emphasized the centrality of the relationships she established:

I had to build those relationships, well probably from central, up and down, but mostly at the principal level and teacher level. . . . You have to be motivating, motivating, motivating all the time. You have to be motivating adults, motivating kids, motivating parents, starting a boosters group. There is nothing automatic about making these programs successful. Nothing except knowing your business and knowing how to sell your business to other constituent groups from kids to parents to teachers. . . . You also have to learn a lot of ways of engaging people and bringing them onboard.

Relationships, interviewees repeatedly explained, were not established simply to enhance experiences and promote best practices, but in order to fulfill both the minute details of their jobs and their broader mission and goals. The number and nature of the relationships music teachers

are dependent upon were analyzed within the thematic strands of: (a) *building relationships*, and (b) *nurturing and sustaining relationships*.

***Building relationships.*** The thematic strand, *building relationships*, includes the thematic motifs of: (a) *building relationships with students*, (b) *building relationships with music teaching peers*, (c) *building relationships with other staff*, (c) *building relationships with administrators*, (d) *building relationships with parents and guardians*, and (d) *building relationships with community partners*.

*Building relationships with students.* From modelling the values espoused through high expectations and belief in students, to modelling through actively participating in your craft as a performer outside of school, each of these once music teachers sought to inspire their students and to act as role models who provided opportunities for students to exercise leadership and supported their current and future endeavors.

Charles recalled the importance of peer–peer, and teacher–student mentoring in “sparkling a passion” for music that he was able to pass on. He has never forgotten his elementary school’s instrumental petting zoo, and the profound effect that mentoring had on “bridging the gap” between his skills and his confidence levels, as well as his desire to “give back:”

When you’re a middle schooler, to interact with a high schooler is pretty cool . . . some of the older students . . . in music college or in high school . . . kind of took you under their wings and talked to you about things, and you had that shared experience.

Mitchell, who remains an avid performer, talked about how music students often take on leadership roles from handling internal tasks like music distribution, music libraries, and wardrobes, and how he still serves as a role model for his students:



I love showing our kids now all of my accomplishments, musically . . . to show them what they can do after high school with their music. Not even to make money or a living with, just for the pure enjoyment of it. Because when you are able to harmonize and get through a good work, regardless of the genre of music, you've accomplished something that is not really comparable to anything else.

Nurturing relationships with their students over the course of many years was expressed by participants as a primary joy of their jobs. A key point was the depth of the relationships and the difference between music teachers and teachers in other disciplines marked by long-term relationships with students over several years.

Wyant articulated well what he and other participants voiced about their personalized relationships with students and the type of relationship building skills that Wyant said he “started to develop as a music teacher and then probably finished developing as an administrator:”

They were my kids. . . . You actually get to see them grow . . . I tried to be personal with kids. . . . I tried to find what kids like . . . I knew things about those kids their parents didn't know. They felt more comfortable talking to me. . . . Every year at the end of the year, I had a barbecue for the band kids. I'd have 100 kids on my front lawn, and we'd cook hamburgers and hot dogs, and go in the pool, but they also knew when it was business, it was business. Let's go. There was no wasted time in my rehearsals. I use humor in everything. But when I need to be firm, I can be firm. And the kids knew that too.

Marilyn similarly described the closeness of her interactions with students:

I used to have the kids over [to my house]. . . . I [started with] nine kids, and we ended up doing Gilbert and Sullivan. They would come to my house once we cast the show, and I would have rehearsals in my house. My husband would feed them lunch . . . the memories that I have.

David contributed: “I really used to talk to them. Probably, I was really, truly passionate about it . . . I mean, there was no kid I didn’t want to succeed, almost to my detriment.”

Stories about past music students that participants are still in touch with brought a sense of nostalgia to several of the participants. One of Wyant’s students, now a professional musician, did a university thesis on Wyant, and sent him a copy:

He opened it with: “Everybody knew that Mr. Murray was the best teacher in the building, not because he was kind to us, [but] because he wanted us to be better than we knew we could be,” which spoke a lot to me, and really meant a lot to me. . . . Those kids got it. . . . I still get invited to baptisms and weddings from kids who I haven’t seen for 15 years. . . . They still call me with musical questions, which I love. That’s a lifelong relationship. I have three former music students working as teachers in the elementary school. And I have one working here for me right now.

Mitchell described how watching his students express themselves through music made him want to try and to mirror these types of experiences for even larger numbers of students as an administrator: “I had the feeling that I wanted to work with larger numbers and have more of an impact.”

*Building relationships with music teaching peers.* The everyday job of most music teachers was described by participants as uniquely “tailored by team work” with music teaching

peers, resulting in a high impact on skill and confidence-building during their formative years as teachers.

Marilyn recalled four teachers who she worked with:

I was the choral director, there was a general music teacher, there was a band director, and then there was [one music teacher who] also served as our department chair. . . .

We'd have lunch together. They would be like "What are you doing in there Marilyn?"

. . . I said "You've got to check this out . . . you have got to see this ensemble critique form . . . You've got to see this portfolio reflection I'm sending home to parents." . . .

They [fellow teachers] were so excited about it.

David also celebrated the importance of this repeated experience:

We used to watch each other teach. We used to critique each other . . . our little department there. Four of us. I had a lot of instructional mentoring and I was able to do the same for some others, although I think I learned more from them than they would have ever from me. There were some really fine teachers and their product really, really showed.

Ashley similarly described the often-intense level of support music teachers had for one-another:

We had 40-some-odd performing groups [laughter]. It was crazy. Twenty-some-odd teachers. I mean it was big, but we didn't care. We went to each other's concerts. And every once in a while, you'd be back there playing bass drum or playing the tuba part because the only tuba player in the fifth-grade band was sick. And then afterwards, we got together, so we all supported each other. We did combined bands. . . . We'd go play [in the community].

*Building relationships with other staff.* Patricia articulated the oft repeated conversation among participants about the level to which music teachers depend upon their relationships with classroom teachers to ensure successful programs:

I also had to build relationships with [classroom] teachers in more than a typical way, because if the teachers were not on board with what I was doing, I couldn't be successful . . . I needed to take kids out for lessons. I needed to take kids out for rehearsal. . . . I had to build those relationships so that there was the willingness on the part of those who did have built-in structures, to willingly, and as a rule, pleasantly, allow me to instruct their children [during] what would be their instructional time. . . . You have to take these kids out of English class in third grade, fourth grade, to give them a small group lesson. You've got to build those relationships, or it's like, "Slam the door. . . . I'll tell the principal. Never come down to my class. I've got standardized testing."

*Building relationships with administrators.* Participant relationships with building and district administrators were marked by: (a) high exposure and proximity to administrators, (b) viewing administrators as role models and at times, active mentors, and (c) being recognized by administrators for their work and/or potential as well as value-added to the school's mission.

Whether due to close physical proximity of their offices and classrooms, the sound of a large music rehearsal drawing administrators to their classrooms, or planning for major and highly visible performances, all the participants described their exposure to school and district administrators as recurrent and unique to their discipline.

David noted his close proximity to the administrators in his building:

All the arts were in the center of the building, which was right across from the office. So it wasn't unusual for lots of reasons, for the administrators to wonder into the room. And of course, you got to know them.

Mitchell's take on this could be summarized by saying simply that music teachers need administrators, and administrators need them—the first for administrative support including frequent logistical, scheduling, and promotion needs, and the latter for the value-added by music programs to help meet school and district goals.

As the band director, Wyant explained:

I always needed access to the buildings on the weekends and nights, so we would get to know each other. I liked them personally. . . . I got to know the secretaries very well. I got to know the principals and APs very well. . . . I had pretty good access.

This regular contact had the result of exposing each of these teachers regularly to other administrators, who they have described at times as both effective and ineffective, but in both cases, as influential role models, and at best, people they might aspire to be themselves.

*Building relationships with parents and guardians.* Interrelated with the larger conversation about *brokering community resources* (Hitt & Tucker, 2015), is the issue of building positive relationships with the parents and guardians of students taught, often for as many as 6–8 years in a row. Participants noted that music student parent/guardians are paying money as a rule and want to see the product of their students' learning progression at performances and recitals throughout the year. If you have 125 students in your band, Wyant observed, “you're working with 250 parents . . . it's essential.”

Participants talked about the critical need to gain the support of parent/guardians and in turn the broader community in order to: (a) promote broad volunteerism, and (b) gain vocal advocates for their programs.

Mitchell explained how he asked for support to fulfill a variety of needs as a music teacher: “whether it be for the boosters club, whether it be for volunteers, chaperones, financial support such as fundraisers, things [of] that nature.”

Patricia talked about how her personal and oft-repeated mission of “getting people out of the world of talk and into the world of do,” began with parent volunteers. She, like Marilyn and Wyant often invited people to her own home, getting people out of the school surroundings in order to get the ball rolling: “Then you take the lead . . . you listen to what [they have to say] . . . you come up with some tools, some resources, and you summarize it . . . until others have joined you in the world of do.”

Several participants explained that once parents/guardians realized that their children were benefiting from the music programs, they were more likely to advocate for them.

Patricia observed:

They [parent/guardians] could often describe it better, they could retell it . . . they became advocates for the program, for the growth of the program, and for music programs in general in the district. [Parent/guardians acted] as a major contributing force if there was talk about cuts or budget defeats . . . they would speak at a board meeting. It was always the big one. Budget defeat, your program is done . . . all that’s very different from teaching traditional subjects.

*Building relationships with community partners.* A common theme for participants was their realization as music teachers that reaching above and beyond the four walls of your

classroom or school building in order to build relationships with community members was essential to their programs success and sustainability. From providing numerous extra-curricular experiences for students and participating in community festivals and competitions, to collaborating with other schools and districts, and/or inviting local politicians to speak at performances, each participant believed that these community networks and partnerships were vital. Participants reported that they had taken part as both student and teacher in county, regional, and state competitions and performances, and that they had observed and experienced the high degree of human and logistical choreography that was required for such events to run smoothly.

Participants often described these experiences with enthusiasm. Mitchell, for example, recalled the day one professional musician visited his high school:

I was a pretty good horn player in high school, but all I knew was a B-flat horn. . . . So she [the guest], brought in this piccolo trumpet and she actually let a friend of mine and myself play. . . . Piccolo trumpets start at \$1000. . . . And \$1000 may not seem like much to some people, but to other people it is like \$1 million dollars. I think that experiences [like this] let me see. . . I could grow as a trumpet player and as a musician . . . so now, as an educator here, when I'm able to sit in with the band. . . . I bring in the piccolo trumpet, and the flugelhorn, and the bass trumpet, and the trumpets in other keys, so that they [my current students], too, can broaden their horizons like I had the opportunity to do.

David connected his participation in these community solo and ensemble competitions to his later understanding of the value of assessments, particularly assessments from outside the school and classroom:

I would send generally 40, 50 kids to NYSSMA every year, a lot of kids [to] All County . . . to All-State, All-Eastern . . . I have such an affinity [for] sending kids to programs where they were judged from outside. . . . [Now], whether we send 150 kids to Skills USA . . . [or] have our Early College Computer kids get judged in certain competitions, they all get credentials. I think that every program is linked . . . [and] everyone is assessed by an outside entity. I think, as a musician, I learned the value of [this].

*Nurturing and sustaining relationships.* Because it is common for music teachers to work in multiple schools in the course of any given year, it was emphasized by participants, that music teachers learn: (a) to quickly adjust to a number of different cultural norms and social climates, and (b) to establish and nurture a multitude of meaningful relationships in each new environment. Marilyn spoke to the reality that with each new transition from job to job or to a different school, one often “loses their established identity,” and has to regularly establish new relationships, and regain identity in relation to these relationships. The personal and the practical aspects of nurturing and sustaining relationships as described by the seven participants are explored under the two thematic motifs of: (a) *the essence of relationships*, and (b) *people finance programs*.

*The essence of relationships.* Participant descriptions of the essence of their relationships can be summed up by connections built on: (a) mutual trust, (b) earned respect, (c) giving and receiving recognition, and (d) love. The word love was interspersed with frequency, in fact, throughout the interviews. Wyant’s interviews represented this well, with the word love mentioned repeatedly to describe his relationships and his work: “I loved my band kids. I loved them. . . . I do it because I love to do it. . . . I loved [this] school district. I would have stayed there forever. . . . They still call me . . . which I love. That’s a lifelong relationship.”



*People finance programs.* While the issue of securing resources and funding for programs came up in a number of areas throughout the interviews, it came up most often in regard to the importance and necessity of establishing and sustaining good relationships with your stakeholders. A music teacher's survival depends on securing resources and understanding budgets, Patricia avowed:

[To] get people to finance your programs. . . . You have to convince them of your vision and goal, and then when they see the product or the outcome, they have to buy into it as a positive value for their school.

**Envisioning and implementing change.** The capacity of music teachers to envision and implement change, and why and how this relates to leadership and their current work as administrators, was a common thread for participants throughout the category *passing it forward: being a music teacher*, as well as in subsequent sections and compilations of the research findings related to sustained positive change in educational organizations. The ideas expressed by participants were both competency and value laden and are summarized in thematic strands that focus on: (a) *envisioning change*, (b) *implementing change*, and (c) *sustaining positive change*.

**Envisioning change.** Envisioning change, it was surmised repeatedly by the interviewees (and noted in the three thematic motifs) was made possible by the development of the music educators': (a) *creative impulse*, (b) *core values that support change*, and (c) *recognition of self as a change agent*.

People who are creative, people who come out of the arts, can envision—not just have vision, but envision what things could be, and that's big. . . . With that creativity also comes the ability not just to see how things could be better, how they could grow, but also

you . . . can see deep into something and what the underlying problems are. You have an insight, an insight kind of thing. . . . Right now, I think there is a seismic shift going on at all levels of our [educational communities]. . . . In my jobs as an administrator, I could often sense where those shifts were happening, where the mini-explosions . . . or spurts of growth [needed to happen]. And I think that comes out of the creativity piece that we have as music educators. (Patricia)

Recognizing themselves as the purveyors of vision and the agents of change, was not a sentiment indicated explicitly by participants during our conversations, yet each declared relationships, building capacity, and distributed discernment as central to their approach as teachers and leaders. While all participants shared their strong working knowledge of what an excellent educational program can be and reflected consciously about what they personally offered the field as educators, each participant wondered out loud more than once whether their fellow music educators “know the relevance of their skills and experiences,” and re-focused any discussion of their own effectiveness to their own “immense growth” as teachers and leaders.

***Implementing change.*** Earlier sections of this analysis provided participant descriptions of some of the actions and creative energy it takes to implement change. Several participants asserted that being low on the hierarchy of content areas had taught them to do more with less resources, while ensuring high numbers of participating students, and implementing an unusual number of highly visible programmatic changes. It became clear to the researcher that participants not only championed specific competencies and values related to implementing change, but often felt the excitement generated by positive change actions in their schools. A brief summary of their ideas follows and are represented by the thematic motif of: *initiating, growing, and transforming programs.*

Successful change initiatives in participant schools and districts were frequently attributed to personal values and commitment to others. Participants shared that they “cared deeply,” and “worked hard” to achieve success, and pointed to their “strong desire for [music] programs to flourish.” David described the key ingredients as being “really really passionate,” and wanting students “to succeed.” Ashley described her programs and other music educator initiatives as often being “the first . . . setting the bar . . . bringing it to another level,” and noted how these music initiatives reached kids who are often excluded from other educational arenas.

Marilyn expressed the growing excitement that was felt when programs were being transformed and positive change was implemented in her dual-role as music teacher and music and arts supervisor:

We were able to really make a lot of progress within the music, and the art, and the theater program . . . so much so, that I was able to bring a full-time general music teacher in, and actually add two staff members and a band director . . . within three years.

Actually, by the second year, we had moved into a new facility . . . I was in charge of the design of the theater and working with the people, the architects and things, so it was pretty exciting.

All seven participants implied that having independently taken the lead to create, adapt, and transform programs as music teachers ultimately meant that their understanding of organizational change in schools and school districts did not have to be re-learned as educational administrators, but that their mindsets simply had to shift into “the context of a much bigger program.”

***Sustaining positive change.*** Sentiments expressed by participants about change can be summed up in thematic motifs that represent their oft repeated assertions that to sustain positive

change and maintain excellent programming, educators must: (a) *accept that change is inevitable*, (b) *embrace change as a positive force*, and (c) *continuously reflect upon and evaluate change initiatives*. Participants themselves, in fact, rarely made overt declarations of success, but rather, often used their own reflective questions as a means of answering the researcher's questions about all aspects of change.

During the interview conversations, for instance, Marilyn posed over 100 such questions. Her self-described process of “reflecting, reviewing, and refining” began in her days as a music student and continued through her work as a teacher and administrator. She explained how she asked questions of both herself and others and reflected collaboratively at all stages of change development to ensure that positive initiatives could indeed be sustained. The few questions shared below, all related to reflecting on change initiatives, offer a sound representation of similar questioning and reflective techniques employed by each of the other six participants:

What would you like to see changed and why? . . . What would you like to see preserved?  
. . . Can you imagine this? . . . What is the right thing to do? . . . When is the right time to do it? . . . What are you afraid of? . . . Was that hard? . . . What did that look like? . . .  
How did you do this work? . . . What does that mean? . . . What does that [the assessment plan] look like? . . . This isn't mystical . . . right? . . . Did it have an impact?

Marilyn described this process as “doing the present work and planning the future work at the same time, seeing the overlaps, the connections.”

David's comparison of these ideas to the annual migration of music students was unassuming, but representative of the common idea among participants, that if the reflective work was done, programs and changes could be effectively sustained year after year for student after student:

Every year, [as a music teacher], you have a new cadre of kids . . . [but] you never worry . . . when the next group moves on to the next grade level or graduates, there is another group to come in behind them. That's not a fluke. [The important thing is knowing] that the people who come before you and the people who come after you will do the work necessary to make it right for the kids.

**Summary.** Throughout the category *passing it forward: being a music educator*, the researcher analyzed a period in the participants' trajectory toward leadership in which they developed unique competencies as music teachers, embraced their dependency upon building and sustaining relationships with a variety of educational stakeholders, and incorporated new values and understandings about the capacity of music teachers to envision and implement change in their schools and districts. Notably, the overarching skills and acquired knowledge incorporated into their work fostered a commitment to passing these technical, humanistic, and conceptual competencies forward to other students, colleagues, and school districts. The stories shared of being a music teacher transitioning to educational leadership, did not begin or end here, however. The volume of participant data analyzed, revealed instead, that part of each participant's journey from teacher to educational leader included some form of further education and/or intellectual exploration that led to their self-recognized "love of learning." This will be examined under the next category, *loving to learn: being a lifelong learner*.

### **Loving to Learn: Being a Lifelong Learner**

Participants talked often about learning from numerous angles, including the overriding position of being committed to student learning in whatever position they held. This category, however, while specifically devoted to the participants' self-driven desire to learn and grow themselves, seemed connected to their pledge to students by the oft heard phrase, "I loved

learning about learning.” In all cases, these varied learning opportunities were not required for certification in music education in New York State, and in most cases the desire to continue learning stemmed from the experiences, positive and negative, that participants had as music educators.

While it would be imprecise to write about all of the various timelines, learning opportunities, subject matters explored, and the paths taken by each of the participants without noting the substantial differences between participant stories and motivations, there were a number of significant commonalities that seemed to lead to a prevailing belief among participants that learning itself, was a manifestation of change, and thus an important element in their practice as educators. The overarching themes that emerged in the category *loving to learn: being a lifelong learner* were (a) *evolving competencies*, (b) *inspired by relationships* and (c) *reflecting on values: learning as a manifestation of change*.

Aside from formal bachelor, masters, and doctoral degrees pursued in complementary fields, many district, state and/or national training programs led to participants earning formal credentials related to theory-based practices such as *Intellectual Habits* (Ted Seizer), *Habits of Mind* (Art Costa), or *Entry* (Barry Jentz), or gaining intense training with national experts in the educational domains of *shared decision making* (Bill Rauhauser), curriculum and assessment, teacher evaluation, and more. For other participants, it was their professional work experiences before becoming a music teacher that were lifechanging. Wyant, for instance spoke of his 10 years on the road as a professional musician as being among the key learning experiences in his life. Mitchell shared his experiences as a professional musicians and service in the military, where he gained an important set of skills that prepared him well as performer, teacher, and leader. As Mitchell began to apply for jobs in administration, for example, he realized that: “For

the non-musicians . . . seeing my military background [led to] . . . ‘Oh, he will be a very strong disciplinarian.’”

In the category *loving to learn: being a lifelong learner*, each overarching theme is accompanied by one overriding thematic strand including: (a) *learning to learn*, (b) *gaining knowledge*, and (c) *developing a growth mindset*. Within each of these strands, the researcher offers a short, concise narrative sketch of individual and composite participant ideas. Table 10 highlights a number of significant participant statements on the ideas explored.

**Evolving competencies.** While participants detailed a number of competencies that evolved during their participation in learning a variety of technical, humanistic, and/or conceptual skills before, during, and after their career as music educators, the overarching theme of *evolving competencies* is focused on the thematic strand of *learning to learn*. This strand represents a commonly stated realization by participants that to teach others to learn, they needed to know how to learn and have the desire to learn themselves. Thematic motifs revealed within this strand included: (a) *exploring new content*, (b) *challenging oneself intellectually*, (c) *becoming a different type of student*, and (d) *discovering a love of learning*.

**Inspired by relationships.** Participants shared many examples of inspirations they garnered from relationships established while participating in learning opportunities outside of the workplace. The thematic strand, *gaining knowledge*, contains two thematic motifs: (a) *being inspired by adult learners*, and (b) *being influenced and mentored by adult professors and trainers*. Several participants recalled professors who had in some way planted the “seed of an idea” regarding the connection between their background in music education and leadership, and had pointed out to them that music teacher experiences like differentiating learning and managing large groups of students made them a “good fit” for leading others.

David recounted feeling a bit flabbergasted when a college professor said to him: "I think you'll be a superintendent by age 40 . . . I had no idea I would ever be a superintendent, or that I even knew what the superintendent really ever did."

**Reflecting on values: Learning as a manifestation of change.** This overarching theme represents the participant generated idea that by developing a growth mindset, one also learns that change can be manifested in a number of positive ways. The ideas most noted in conversations with participants were reflected in the thematic strand *developing a growth mindset* and the accompanying thematic motifs: (a) *discovering new passions*, (b) *learning the practice of reflection*, and (c) *opening new doors*.

Table 10

*Loving to Learn: Being a Lifelong Learner—Overarching Themes, Strands, and Motifs With Significant Participant Statements*

Overarching theme and thematic strand	Thematic motif	Example of significant statements
Evolving competencies: Learning to learn	Exploring new content	<p>"I received training from a national expert on shared decision making . . . he and I got to be kind of family."</p> <p>"When I went to graduate school, I got a master's degree in political science. . . . I was going to go into politics."</p>
	Challenging oneself intellectually	"I intellectually wanted to grow. . . . I really liked challenging myself. . . . Once I started teaching and integrating [new strategies] into my work, then everything changed."

(Continued)



Overarching theme and thematic strand	Thematic motif	Example of significant statements
		I took a course and I ended up going back, doing my master’s degree in educational psychology. . . . And I really, for the first time in my life, found something I was really good at, academically. I had a 3.9 GPA. I had never had a 3.9 GPA in my entire life.”
	Discovering a love of learning	“I just kept going and discovered a passion for learning. . . . I loved learning about learning.”
Inspired by relationships: Gaining knowledge	Being inspired by adult learners	“I loved being around other adult students . . . spending time with a cohort of peers. . . . [So] I just kept going . . . I just kept taking classes and getting credits.”
	Being influenced and mentored by adult professors and trainers	“I remember [a professor] writing on one paper, (I think I still have it), that I really should get it published.”  “She said ‘Music teachers make great administrators’ . . . she was convinced of it.”
Reflecting on values: Developing a growth mindset	Discovering a new passion	“I’m going to follow an interest and passion that I have [in political science].”  “When we got into this whole assessment piece, I gave up the performance [and] studio teaching, and that whole piece. This became my passion, writing rubrics, designing curriculum tasks, aligning curriculum.”
	Opening new doors	“I just kept taking classes and getting credits. . . . Keeping doors open . . . [and]investing in education.”
	Learning the practice of reflection	I certainly started to develop interests much broader than just band and I felt that that really helped my teaching. . . . I became reflective about my instruction . . . . What did you see and how do you reflect, versus how do you just react?

*Summary.* While all but one participant voiced that they had little concrete realization at this stage in their educator journeys that they might become school administrators, it became clear that once they touched upon learning opportunities beyond music, they wanted to keep learning and expanding their professional opportunities. For most, opening one new door just kept leading to another. David, for instance, explained how once he began to think bigger than music, he just kept going:

Like a lot of things that just seemed to happen in my life, it just seemed like it was the logical thing to do. But [while doing] the work in educational psychology . . . I wouldn't have thought of probably becoming an administrator.

Charles had diverged from the typical path early on, combining his undergraduate study of music performance with a dual degree in psychology. He described how he eventually certified as a music educator and did not stop earning degrees until his doctorate was complete:

I went into [administration] just looking to keep doors open and to, instead of getting 30 remaining credits, [continue] to MA60. . . . And I think probably during that time, the coursework and speaking with people about the internship, [I] was developing relationships with the administrators in my building.

What made his situation unique, Charles added, was a strong cohort of peers who met as undergraduates and continued on to achieve their teacher certifications, master's degrees, doctorates, and school and district-level certifications together. While Charles stated frequently that they had no particular end in mind, he noted the significant value of their peer-mentoring relationship and joint exposure to educational administrators as influential.

For Marilyn and Patricia, their path to leadership was less direct and both experienced new doors opening before them, only to be pulled back through the old. Just as Patricia had

completed a degree in political science and was considering how to move forward in a new career, for example, she was persuaded to return to music teaching. She recalled this conversation with a supervisor:

I said, “JM, I don’t want to do this.” She said, “Just two days a week.” So I said, “Okay.” Then she asked me to stay on and work full-time as a string teacher. I said, “There are no kids here.” She said, “You’ll grow it. They’ll be here.” So I did grow the program. At first, I really didn’t like starting all over . . . you know exactly how to do it, but you’re tired of starting from scratch.

Marilyn had also moved on: “I’m done, I sold my piano,” she remembered telling herself and others: “I’m done being a choral director. I don’t want to have anything to do with music.” But before she knew it a district had created a dual administrator/teacher position for her and she found herself back at the piano:

They said “Please come over for an interview, please please please,” so I went. I went with it . . . I taught part-time [as a music teacher] . . . [and was] a fine arts program chair K-12 for music, art, and theater.

Mitchell stressed that just 5 or 10 years ago, he would not have thought about become a superintendent of a district, but since he has become a school administrator, that is now a clear goal of his. He shared that his desire to lead, however, initially grew out of his experiences as a music performer and teacher, and explained how he intentionally surrounded himself with people in positions of leadership:

I started to realize, that if I surround myself with superintendents, assistant superintendents, and superintendents, and other key stakeholders, then hopefully that will pull me up to that level and help draw me toward a goal that I’m trying to achieve. .

. . If I align myself with the types of individuals that I want to aspire to become later on, that's only going to positively benefit me.

However varied their learning trajectories, the experiences described in previous passages point to the pivotal role that continued learning and growing self-awareness of competencies played in each participant's transition from teacher to administrator. The following section analysis, *building*, explores participant experiences as they build more directly upon leadership specific competencies and continue to develop their personal identities as leaders.

The section begins with a close look at the leadership practices and competencies participants gained while still performing in their roles as music educators and segues into an examination of each participant's growing consciousness of their individual leader personas and intentional and active pursuit of careers as educational leaders.

### **Section Three: Building**

#### **Reaching Beyond the Classroom: Building Upon Leadership Competencies**

As participant competencies and relationships were expanded as music educators, so too were the number of opportunities for ongoing leadership development, including:

(a) participation in both informal and formal leadership roles, and (b) participation in the planning and implementation of change initiatives in classrooms, schools, districts, and state and national associations. These experiences, unlike experiences described in previous sections, were intentionally oriented toward leadership, but still occurred well before most participants had consciously considered administration as a career choice, received formal training in educational leadership and/or began their first formal administrative post.

Participants characterized their mindsets about taking on these initial leadership roles with analogous phrases like: "It was the first time I began to think bigger than music," "I began

to see that whole piece of building [a program] instead of just building my program,” and “I was learning some essential skills of administration without realizing it.”

As a music teacher, Charles noted: “my focus was [on] what’s best for my music program. . . . Respectfully, I didn’t care what the science department wanted, or what [other departments] wanted. I just took it from the band perspective or the music perspective.”

In this category, *reaching beyond the classroom: building upon leadership competencies*, results of the data analysis will be presented within the overarching themes of: (a) *amassing competencies*, (b) *burgeoning relationships*, and (c) *observing change in action*. An overview of each overarching theme and its accompanying thematic strands and thematic motifs is detailed in Table 11.

Table 11

*Building Upon Leadership Competencies—Thematic Overview*

Overarching theme	Thematic strands	Thematic motifs
Amassing competencies	First forays into educational leadership	Stepping into leadership Opportunities abound Be careful what you are good at
	Pursuing leadership training and administrative roles	Walking in both worlds Training for the job you are going to do
Burgeoning relationships	Relationships in flux	Serving a larger audience Being tapped for leadership
	Crossing paths with role models and mentors	Connecting their leadership to your own Distinguishing between mentors and role models
Observing change in action	Administrators as role models	I’ll never do that There’s got to be a better way She’s bright, she has vision, she gets it

**Amassing competencies.** The following passages build upon the lived experiences during the participants' tenure as music teachers, that supported their early socialization into leadership. While reflecting on this transitional period, participants commented on the intensity of the experiences and the large number of cumulative leadership competencies they were amassing. These participant experiences are highlighted under the thematic strands of: (a) *first forays into educational leadership*, and (b) *pursuing formal leadership training and administrative roles*.

***First forays into educational leadership.*** Participant experiences analyzed within the thematic strand *first forays into educational leadership*, were underscored within the thematic motifs of: (a) *stepping into leadership*, (b) *opportunities abound*, and (c) *be careful what you are good at*.

***Stepping into leadership.*** Participants described how they willingly stepped into both paid and unpaid positions of leadership in roles like teacher in charge, team leader, department chair, and coach, and became members of shared leadership teams and a variety of school or district wide committees. These experiences involved working beyond their content area of music and across a number of grade levels and school buildings to tackle school and district challenges and initiatives in collaboration with school and district teachers, staff, administrators, parent/guardians, and/or community members. In all cases, experiences were marked specifically by: (a) increased access and exposure to administrators at school and district-levels, and (b) committee work and/or informal shared decision making beyond their classrooms (including department, district, and/or state levels).

***Opportunities abound.*** From leading instructional planning meetings to conducting interviews, participants noted the sheer number of opportunities to become involved with

committees and boards that were charged with creating and implementing school, district, and state education policies and guidelines related to: (a) curriculum and instruction, (b) culture and climate, (c) budget and facility, and/or (d) employment and human resources.

To varying degrees, all participants also had the opportunity to take on leadership roles outside of their districts, in state associations like the New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) or the New York State Department of Education (NYSED). Early leadership roles filled by participants for county and state music associations included being an on-site host, committee chair, coordinator, director, adjudicator, and/or workshop facilitator. Several participants noted how most, if not all music teachers, unlike their classroom teacher counterparts, become involved early and often in their careers in some level of organizational leadership during annual music festivals and conferences, and that responsibility levels and the impact of these leadership tasks generally grew over time. Ashley recalled coordinating one of the festivals and “recruiting [other music teachers] . . . I mean we ran big festivals. We’re not talking about hundreds of students. . . . I think the last [district] festival that we ran . . . had 5,000 students coming to it. So it was massive.”

*Be careful what you are good at.* “Be careful what you are good at,” David noted with laughter:

If they had duty, I always had cafeteria duty . . . and at some point they said, “Would you be interested in being a teacher-in-charge?”. . . So I became a team leader or something of that sort. I had no idea what I was doing, but in one way or another it’s like church. Once you get involved in one thing, there is always something else to do . . . . I probably could have used a little mentoring when I did the team leader piece, although part of me says being naive was a really good thing.

Wyant found himself in an impromptu, unrehearsed leadership position when a guest presenter was caught in a snowstorm and was unable to attend a shared decision-making conference at his school:

I had been on the shared decision-making team at that time. . . . [but] I had never done anything like that before. So I built a day's training [on the spot] and I did training for a day . . . with my fellow teachers . . . and it went pretty well. I got a lot of good feedback from friends that they enjoyed it and they thought I was made for that kind of work. I just took it as an extension of being a musician, you are just performing in a different venue.

***Pursuing formal leadership training and administrative roles.*** While the variety and scope of each participant's involvement in leadership related activities during their music teaching years differed tremendously, in each case their divergent paths eventually led to their pursuit of more formal training and experiences with leadership. These experiences are explored under the thematic motifs of: (a) *walking in both worlds*, and (b) *training for the job you are going to do*.

*Walking in both worlds.* Data analysis revealed that at times, working within the discipline of music education uniquely offered participants the chance to take on formal dual teaching/administrative roles. These roles positioned them among higher level school and district administrators at early stages of their transitional process as a segue into deciding to pursue a certification/training in educational administration. Five of seven participants took on music and/or arts supervisory positions, or roles of dean (i.e., dean of discipline) before, during, or after their formal internships. They explained that these roles: (a) often did not require their



administrative certification to be completed, and (b) offered a gradual release from music teaching responsibilities.

A few of the participants reported that the amount of work and learning involved with walking in both worlds as arts supervisors and music teachers was often equivalent to working two full-time jobs. They also noted, however, how this enabled them to rapidly amass new leadership competencies:

[Being an] administrator working with teachers or as a district director of performing arts, that's a skillset, that's a curriculum all of its own that most people don't think about. It allowed me to hone some skills on the K–12 perspective. I [had done] it at the state level, but [not] in a school district like that. So I was able to do [both] the vertical and the horizontal . . . I was able to make some changes. I moved one teacher to the middle school, made him a band director, and hired a new choral director. I restructured the whole K–12 program. (Marilyn)

I was learning processes of dealing with staff and observing them, and going to concerts, and learning where their [the music teachers] strengths and their weaknesses are, and who were the really good teachers, and some that were challenging. . . . I learned everything about budgets in my position. . . . In three years I learned so much. I learned about the hiring process, how to run interviews, conduct interviews, and I still use the same process today that I learned there. (Patricia)

When deciding whether or not to take on the dual role of music teacher and dean of discipline, Charles recalled considering what administrative skills he felt he was lacking:

[I thought] if I want to see myself as an administrator, the dean of discipline job would be a good idea. . . . [During] my internship, I did a lot of scheduling and database stuff, and

computers, [but] I didn't have the experience doing discipline. And that's what the dean primarily was. . . . It was a gradual release of music [teaching responsibilities] and at first, I probably wouldn't have been comfortable just dropping music. Because I enjoy teaching, I still do. It wasn't something I disliked. It was just [that] an opportunity presented itself.

Wyant described a very gradual decision-making process during his transition from teaching to leadership, but he also recalled one experience, which although in the end he felt was quite positive, was not gradual at all:

Two weeks into my internship, one of the assistant principals in my building was injured trying to break up a student fight. She went out on medical leave, and never came back. They asked me as part of the internship if I would pick up some of the AP [assistant principal] roles. So [during] my preps, I would go to the office, and started processing referrals. And there were piles of referrals. And I got positive comments from kids who said, "Mr. Murray, we understand it's business. You never make it personal. It's business. It's reaction, but you still talk to us in the hallway. You joke around with us. You know our name." And a teacher said: "Wyant, you are firm, but you are fair. You support us."

Wyant expressed how he felt like he was "kind of walking both worlds there for a while," and how he came to realize: "This isn't that difficult, as long as you are honest with everybody and everybody knows where you are coming from."

*Training for the job you are going to do.* One after another, the participants recalled comprehensive internship experiences in which their administrative supervisors and mentors helped them by ensuring a variety of authentic leadership experiences.

Charles described his varied internship tasks including scheduling, programming, and student management as the experiences that “probably propelled me into administration.”

David recalled his internship supervisor saying to him,

“I’m more than happy to have you be an intern, but if you’re going to be an intern . . . you’re going to do the things that a principal is going to do. You’re not doing the things that an assistant superintendent or superintendent is going to do because that’s not what your entry level job is going to be. . . . You name it, I did it. . . . I did a heck of a lot of cafeteria duty that year. . . . I had to do staff meetings, evaluations, student discipline, parent conferences, open houses. . . . There was nothing I wanted to do that I wasn’t allowed to do, and there were certainly things that I wasn’t sure I wanted to do, that she made sure I did . . . to stretch me a little bit. . . . And I admired that, because when I got further in my career and people wanted to do internships, I [also] said, “You’re going to train for the job you’re going to do.”

Patricia remembered her initial uncertainty:

I said “I don’t know how to do budget. I don’t know how to do any of that stuff.” “You can learn it,” [my supervisor responded]. “It’s not that big a deal, that kind of stuff. You have what it takes.” When I was her intern, I did a lot for her and I learned a lot. She was always giving me stuff to read and to do and to learn about things that were not about music.

Several participants explained how their initial indecision about becoming an administrator, gradually began to shift during their internships. “I was never going to practice as a principal,” Wyant reiterated:

I had no interest in jumping right into the principal pool. I was going to take the courses.

I was going to do my internship, see how my internship turned out, and go from there.

And then things kind of took a turn during my internship. . . . Things really clicked.

**Burgeoning relationships.** In addition to the high number and quality of relationships the participants were dependent upon to effectively teach, their initial forays into leadership saw a significant burgeoning of relationships. This stage of their transition was marked by stories of expected and unexpected, rapidly increasing, and expanding relationships at every turn, at the school, district, and community levels, and are explored under the thematic motifs of:

(a) *relationships in flux*, and (b) *crossing paths with role models and mentors*.

***Relationships in flux.*** As participant involvement in school leadership increased, participants reported that this also led to changing professional relationships, with many of their relationships now being viewed by self and others through a lens of leadership potential.

Thematic motifs that speak to participant experiences within this strand are: (a) *servicing a larger audience*, and (b) *being tapped to lead*.

***Servicing a large audience.*** At some point in each of the interviews, our conversations would center on the larger number of students, teachers, administrators, and community members that participants were serving in their new leadership roles, even if at times their new roles were described as less visible and more behind the scenes than that of an ensemble conductor. And their experiences working with a large number of stakeholders was being noticed. Mitchell, in fact, recalled several district administrators stating their belief that his background had prepared him to “serve a larger audience . . . [beyond] the students in your room within your four walls . . . at the building [and] at the district-level.” When Mitchell suddenly found his job title had shifted from music teacher to dean of discipline, he opted to

view this as an opportunity to showcase his experience “working with the entire student body, and in addition . . . all of the faculty members.”

*Being tapped for leadership.* As a means of communicating how other positional leaders began to encourage their leadership development, several interviewees used the word “tapped” to represent being enlisted to lead others and take on increasingly significant leadership roles.

At one of Marilyn’s first NYSSMA meetings, in fact, a local superintendent joined others in watching a video of Marilyn teaching music and using assessment tools in a kindergarten classroom. Following this experience, which Marilyn viewed as pivotal, her stories began to reveal a pattern in which she was repeatedly tapped for leadership:

[The same superintendent] tapped me again to serve on [a state-wide] assessment committee . . . because remember, I made the video . . . he knew I was doing authentic assessment work, and the [state] was developing assessments in the arts along with all the other assignments. It was really invaluable experience . . . then they tapped me to be the classroom music chair of the state. . . . I was in charge of the professional development for the state, for classroom music teachers . . . getting stuff out in advance, getting feedback from people. . . . That’s when I discovered that I had a lot of leadership qualities that I still had to hone. Then I got asked to talk about assessments at [a national conference]. And that was to [several educational leaders], which was a little intimidating, but you know, because I’m a musician, I was prepared. I had my talk well-rehearsed.

Wyant recalled how his district superintendent literally “tapped him on the shoulder” following his impromptu opportunity to run the shared decision-making workshop described in an earlier passage:

I kind of jumped up in front of the crowd and ran the session. My superintendent saw that, and after the event he literally tapped me on the shoulder. . . . He literally came up and put his arm around me, put his hand on my shoulder, and said “I think you should really consider this. Based on what I’ve seen from you in the last couple of years, I think you’d be a great administrator.”. . . And that really got me to start considering that and to take a harder look at what that transition would be like . . . what I would have to give up and what I would gain.

***Crossing paths with role models and mentors.*** The researcher heard story after story from participants about their influential relationships and strong connections with role models and mentors. The thematic motifs presented in this segment are: (a) *connecting their leadership to your own*, and (b) *distinguishing between mentors and role models*.

*Connecting their leadership to your own.* Charles articulated a strong positive sentiment about his connection to administrative role models and mentors throughout the interviews, and his short quote below serves as an overarching entry to the discussion of how role models and mentors served distinct purposes for the participants:

If I didn’t make a connection . . . or didn’t agree with them philosophically, or managerially, whatever it might have been, I might have had a different path. I don’t know that as a fact. It’s not a provable thing. But I think you are a product of your environment.

*Distinguishing between mentors and role models.* Throughout participant interviews, the title of mentor was typically assigned to a trusted individual who was willing to share his or her experience, advice, technical expertise, and/or wisdom. A representative composite of participant benefits gained by establishing these relationships can be summed up in the mentors’

ability to: (a) impart knowledge regarding leadership competencies, (b) help guide participants through this transitional event, and (c) support participants in thinking about and meeting their goals with regard to leadership. Mentoring, according to Abouelnaga (2013) implies an intentional two-way relationship and mutual benefit. Because of the strong emphasis on relationship and the potential impact on supporting leadership role-identity in the mentored individuals, the researcher has included the full discussion of this topic in the next category, *reaching beyond the classroom: building upon leadership role-identity*, and under the overarching theme of *guided by relationships*.

The term *role model*, in contrast, for the purposes of this analysis and as shaped by participant responses, describes the individuals whose example of leadership behaviors, practices, and approaches have been closely observed, reflected upon, and deemed influential by participants. From the view point of the interviewees, the frequently exhibited practices and the examples set by their role models, were both good and bad, positive and negative, and sometimes both. Further, as is highlighted in the next overarching theme, *observing change in action*, participants pointed out how the behaviors modelled by other administrators directly influenced the degree of transformative change within their organizations.

**Observing change in action.** The overarching theme, *observing change in action*, refers to participant observations of administrative practices and change actions initiated by other administrators in their schools and districts, and is focused solely on one thematic strand: *administrators as role models*.

**Administrators as role models.** Since role models were often observed by participants as straddling both the best and the worst of educational practices, their experiences and sentiments

are captured in the thematic keynotes: (a) *I'll never do that*, (b) *there's got to be a better way*, and (c) *she's bright, she has vision, she gets it*. As Charles shared:

There have been people I felt of as that once in a lifetime type of effective leader that you wish you had, and others that might not be the way I want to be as an effective leader, but I'm learning anyway. [They also] reinforce what I want to do.

Noting the critical importance of understanding both effective and ineffective leadership, Wyant stated with emphasis that “administrator effectiveness, including principals, [can be] derailed by ineffective [leaders with a higher degree of positional power].”

*I'll never do that*. Patricia's words “I'll never do that,” led the data analysis into a thematic motif in which participant experiences are manifested by their recurrently articulated desire to recognize and avoid a number of common pitfalls of leadership:

I learned a lot from bad administrators along the way. “I'll never do that, I will never do that, I'll never do that”. . . . If you are listening and paying attention, and you're making decisions about what works and what doesn't work, you're going to have your basket of “That doesn't work.” (Patricia)

The following thematic keynotes express a composite of the participants' resounding determination that they will never: (a) *sidestep relationships*, (b) *exercise positional authority*, (c) *lead with ego*, (d) *act only as a manager*, (e) *avoid making difficult decisions*, (f) *lack commitment*, or (g) *overlook the arts*.

*I'll never do that: Sidestep relationships*. Several participants recalled administrators who based relationships on “whether they like you or not,” “acted solely on emotion,” and/or “were not willing to confront people or their problems.” Ashley remembered strongly asserting the viewpoint that relationships cannot simply be avoided: “Confront them, people. . . . Use your



words, put it in writing, be articulate.” Wyant had strong words to say about administrators he had encountered who he felt were not able to relate to others:

They were all socially retarded. Every one of them. And I know retarded is a bad word, but they were socially retarded. That piece was missing. . . . [They] were never present, so I didn’t consider them to be instructional leaders in the building. They were really not effective as disciplinarians in the building. . . . They had several run-ins with the union . . . . Interpersonal skills were lacking.

*I’ll never do that: Exercise positional authority.* Wyant described educational leaders who exercise positional authority as “my way or the highway leaders.” He recounted working with a superintendent that “didn’t ask you, he told you what you were going to do. . . . [This] burns bridges.” “Just because you can do something, doesn’t mean you should do it,” Ashley also reinforced:

You may have the power to tell a teacher that she’s got to pack up her room because she’s moving in 2 weeks, and you don’t have to tell that person what their room assignment is until July 1st, [but that] doesn’t mean you should do that.

Your position of authority, Ashley continued, does not give you “the right to behave badly,”

especially to parents, to kids, to their peers, colleagues. You don’t have the right to do that, and . . . allow it to continue and continue and continue. I met a building principal in my office last Thursday, sobbing, sobbing. And there was nothing I could say to make her feel better because there was nothing I can do, because at the end of the day, it doesn’t matter that I’m the assistant superintendent, [the] superintendent rules. . . . You have to remember those things, especially when you feel like you’ve had the skin ripped

off your back. . . . There are so many dynamics there. But to me that's where I draw the line. You don't get to treat people badly, and I hate bullies. I hate bullies.

"Let me be clear about this," Marilyn strongly voiced:

I'm not a top-down leader. I also think positional authority . . . is the worst. If you have to use your power, as any leader, you are not effective. You'll get compliance. You will not get commitment, definitely, without a doubt.

*I'll never do that: Lead with ego.* Ineffective positional leadership seemed to go hand-in-hand for most participants with their dismay that some administrators have the habit of "letting their ego cloud their decision making," and "making every decision their own idea." Charles described the way some administrators he has worked with "assume their way is a better way . . . and do not show everybody value along the way." Charismatic leadership can also be driven by ego and sense of entitlement, Ashley suggested:

I find that charismatic leadership has a shelf life. I find that there are some leaders who want to please the people who are in front of them, him or her, because they have a hard time making those tough decisions.

*I'll never do that: Act only as a manager.* Marilyn expressed the passion she felt regarding this frequently discussed issue among participants: "I say if you can go to the Holiday Inn and do the same thing, manage people and time, you don't belong in this business. It's more than that. It's got to be more than that."

Patricia also lamented the lack of creativity and fear of change she has observed among administrators who act solely as managers:

I have seen a lot of administrators . . . [who] don't know any creativity at all. They don't see anything past what is the status quo, the norm, keeping the lid tight. Change is an

anathema to them and if they are forced to think about change, they get spooked. But people that come out of the arts can envision what things could be, and that's big.

*I'll never do that: Avoid making difficult decisions.* David suggested that some administrators fulfill at best "satisfactory" managerial achievements, because they have a hard time making those tough decisions . . . . Not thinking about it strategically or what should be the right answer. Just saying to people, "Yes, that's fine. Do it. Yes. Go ahead and do it. Yes, that's fine." . . . Not thinking strategically when a problem comes up.

Ashley shared a recent scenario that demonstrates what she believes is often a typical consequence of administrators being "paralyzed" by decision making:

It's a very difficult situation, because I'm encouraging him [a senior administrator] to make the decisions that he needs to make, and he doesn't want to do it. And just because he doesn't want to make people unhappy or he doesn't want to cause strife, or he doesn't want the board to know. And it's like he's paralyzed half the time. And so then things become very muddy. People get angry at each other. The building principals fight with each other, they gang up on each other. The building principals gang up with some of the teachers . . . . Enough is enough sometimes. You have to move on. You have to make a decision.

*I'll never do that: Lack commitment.* Participants likened a lack of commitment to a number of issues like laziness, lack of planning, short attention spans, and giving up on their plan of action before making a decision or meeting a goal. "Nothing exasperates me more [then] when people don't plan or they're just disrespectful of your time . . . and are unresponsive," Marilyn stated. Patricia used the words "procrastination, denial, [and] lazy," and

continued: “That’s not a popular word these days. Let me phrase it another way . . . putting off doing your homework.” Ashley likewise, described a supervisor who “had a hard time staying on task:”

He couldn’t run administrative meetings. He just would lose his focus. He just didn’t like the details kind of thing. He just wanted to come up with the ideas and push it out to people and get it done. And sometimes that wasn’t the best plan, because if we couldn’t figure out how to do it he would get frustrated with us. Like, “What do you mean you can’t figure this out?” Well of course my response would be, “Can you? We can’t figure it out. Can you help us? Can you tell us?”

“You have to have commitment,” Wyant firmly stated, and you have to stay the course. You’re going to take some bullets. It’s not always going to be a straight line, but you have to stay the course. If you start wishy-washy stuff, you’ll never get anything done. And then people don’t respect you anyway, right or wrong.

*I’ll never do that: Overlook the arts.* A common sentiment expressed, was the regret participants felt about the number of administrators they had worked with or for, who did not support the music programs, as Mitchell stated, “the way a program needs to be supported.” Marilyn experienced what several participants considered a “troubling pattern” more than once in her career. She recalled that while she was working as a dual teacher and arts supervisor, both the superintendent and the assistant superintendent who hired her retired. When she met and began to work with the new superintendent she soon understood that the superintendent didn’t value music and thought: “Oh no, this is not going to work, I’ve got to get out . . . . We got the sense [jobs would be threatened].”

About half of the participants went as far as saying that a central motivation in pursuing administration was to ensure that the arts continued to be valued in schools. As Ashley explained:

I loved being a band director. As far as I was concerned, that was like the best job in the world . . . . [But] I started to go down the path [that] was more about making sure that [those] who came after me, students and teachers, had the ability to do what was needed to be able to teach music and to do it to the degree that we were doing it. And I was more into protection mode. It's my responsibility now to make sure that future students and future music teachers had the same opportunities as I did. . . . It was like passing the torch.

*There's got to be a better way.* "There's got to be a better way to do this," Wyant recalled thinking to himself and saying aloud to others as he was growing closer to "cementing" his decision to become an administrator:

There have got to be people out there who have the ability to manage, have the interpersonal skills . . . there's got to be packages out there. We can't be seeing all these misfits running through that are missing one or more of those cogs . . . . Where are these people? . . . People are getting jobs as principals and they're clearly ineffective or unprepared, there's got to be a better way to do this.

Marilyn concluded that: "If these people (who are my supervisors, my principals, my assistant principals, my superintendents) can do this, I can do a better job." "[For example], throughout my entire career not one administrator really wrote an observation of me that was helpful. Not one. And my vow was never to treat teachers the way I was treated."

Patricia surmised that “when you get dispirited with the way things are going . . . you just know that they could be different, or better, or something like that.”

*She’s bright, she has vision, and she gets it.* Transitioning to a more positive refrain among participants, this thematic motif speaks briefly to the gratitude all participants expressed toward their positive role models and the ability they had to broker positive change in the schools and districts that they served. Although in general, most participants did not give specific examples of transformative changes they witnessed, their memories and reflections centered on a number of role models that they clearly admired and felt “lucky” to have observed on the job. Ashley’s description of one such role model captured the overarching participant sentiment well: “She’s very efficient, and she’s bright, and she has vision, and she gets it, and she sees it.”

Wyant recounted a specific example of a role model demonstrating his strong “compassion for others:”

We had a staff member up there who lost her certification mid-year. We literally had to walk her out the door . . . . Her husband had just had a heart attack. They had nothing. They had no money at all . . . . And she was going to lose her health insurance. He [her superintendent] went into the school board and said, “I want the district to cover her health insurance for the next year,” even though she was no longer an employee. And they said yes. How many superintendents would you see ever do that?

Wyant also recalled how the same leader was “at everything. At every event, every community event, every school [event]. He was there.” Wyant described him as “[a] tireless worker [with a] good sense of humor [and a] temper at times, who paid attention to detail [and made sure] everything was done right.”

Charles recalled how both he and his colleagues, had administrators who we looked up to, valued, and respected. . . . I think it was [one] administrator that really kind of motivated us, and we wanted to be like him. He was very influential. He was somebody who led by example. Level-headed, calm, rational, willing to give back.

### **Transitioning From Teacher to Leader: Building Upon Leadership Role Identity**

This category marks yet another important stage in each participant's transition toward taking on a formal educational leadership role. It explores several ideas that surfaced in conversations with the participants including the concepts of: (a) linking participant competencies to leadership through recognition by self and others, (b) receiving active mentoring and advice geared toward leadership from others, (c) facing self-doubt and other impediments to assuming leadership roles, and (d) reflecting on the identification of self as an educational leader. These experiences and the meaning that participants have attributed to them, however, are not marked by conscious timelines and experiential trajectories, but rather by the feeling states associated with the stories told and voices captured in the analytic narrative contained within the overarching themes of: (a) *recognizing competencies*, (b) *guided by relationships*, and (c) *embracing formative change*. An overview of each overarching theme in this category, and its accompanying thematic strands and thematic motifs, is detailed in Table 12

Table 12

*Building Upon Leadership Role Identity—Thematic Overview*

Overarching theme	Thematic Strands	Thematic motifs
Recognizing competencies	Insights on leadership recognition	You have what it takes
	Self-awareness and gratification as leader	Having an impact Enjoying leadership
Boosted by relationships	Active mentoring by positional leaders	Time to teach: Time to talk Embracing the human resources Pushing you out of the nest Shaping values The perfect transition
	Seeking advice: Facing doubt	Reluctant supporters Maintaining connections with kids Feeling readiness to leave: Taking the risk
Embracing formative change	Bias: An impediment to assuming leadership	Confronting discipline related bias Channeling discipline related bias A conversation about gender
	Answering the “why me?” question	
	Making the shift to the leadership table.	

**Recognizing competencies.** The acknowledgement by participants that their leadership competencies were increasingly recognized and nurtured by others, went hand-in-hand with their ability to recognize and embrace their own gratification with leading on a larger stage. This continuing process was analyzed within the thematic strands of: (a) *insights on leadership recognition*, and (b) *self-awareness and gratification as a leader*.

***Insights on leadership recognition.*** At times tangible, and in other moments a vague impression, participants talked about their own awareness of being recognized by others



specifically for skills related to leadership. The thematic motif *you have what it takes*, briefly brings this important idea to the forefront of the analysis.

*You have what it takes.* Charles reflected generally on his skills being observed and linked to leadership: “I think people began to view me as somebody who has the capacity to be a building leader.” Marilyn likewise, supposed that people noticed her “disposition . . . the organizational skills, and [that] I was a hard worker. So that combination . . . served me well.” Patricia remembered more specific leadership qualities being “reeled off” by those who had observed her at work in her dual role as teacher and music and arts supervisor:

“You have what it takes. . . . Ability to assess program, to be able to tell the difference between a good band and a bad band . . . the ability to work with teachers to get them what they need. to lobby for what they need, to lobby for instruments, for procurement, for the materials, for space.” I think lobbying is a big one.

Charles described the comments of others as more of an “organic” occurrence: “It was never a formal report like, ‘We think you’re good.’ It was more the informal, anecdotal, like, ‘Thanks. . . . Hey, yes, run with that.’ And that word maybe spreads . . . I probably think that’s the root of it.”

***Self-awareness and gratification as leader.*** This thematic strand, equally focused on an often-intangible topic, briefly explores the thoughts participants shared about their leadership impact and gratification within the thematic motifs of: (a) *having an impact*, and (b) *leading and enjoying it*.

*Having an impact.* Mitchell talked about having a positive impact on schools several times during the interviews. “Having more of an impact on an administrative level, [and being able] to work with . . . both students and teachers . . . gave me the drive.” As a first-time

administrator, what continues to stand out for Mitchell, is the important bearing his work has on a larger body of students:

[My work affects] every student, every day. So I don't just have the 30 or 40 kids in that classroom or in the band. I don't work with just that 100 kids in the band room. [In a sense] I'm working with all 450 of my kids and all 50 of my teachers. Every day.

Marilyn and Patricia, reflecting on their first formal leadership roles, also recalled moments of realization that their work as leaders had a significant impact on programs and people. Marilyn celebrated that "in three short years [as fine arts coordinator] we created a curriculum in every content area: art, music, and theater. I don't know how I did it, but I did it."

Patricia considered the impact of her leadership on staff:

It was a learning process of dealing with staff, and observing them, and going to concerts, and learning where their strengths and their weaknesses are, and who were the really good teachers, and some that were challenging. . . . I had to fire a few teachers. It was a big deal. It was a new experience, and I learned what the repercussions of that can be. I also got to hire some stars.

*Leading and enjoying it.* During our conversations about the participants informal and formal forays into leadership, many shared that they were initially surprised by how much they enjoyed leadership related experiences, and how gratifying this work became for them.

"I liked the stuff that the APs and principals were doing," Charles acknowledged: "I wanted to learn that. It was of interest to me." Charles added that every time he heard a staff member say, 'Thank you that helped,' he thought 'Wow, okay, I helped somebody out.' . . . That's a good feeling. I like that feeling."

Marilyn also shared that she “began to like some of the roles that were required [of her] as an administrator.” She talked freely about her enjoyment of curriculum writing and the positive feelings she had as she became more involved with district-level issues like budgeting processes and working directly with the district administrative team: “The district was just then getting into the formal supervision of staff . . . and I was allowed to be part of all of that.”

Patricia conceded that despite the intensity of the work, she was enjoying it:

I was doing my internship while I was still getting my certification, while I was still doing the coordinator’s job, while I was still teaching part-time strings. I was doing all these things. It was kind of hard, [but] I got to really liking the administrative part of it in those years.

Finally, David recalled both the enjoyment and the confidence he gained: “I really enjoyed those experiences. I remember spending hours and hours and hours and hours and hours and hours and hours on the master schedule [laughter]. I was like, ‘I can do this.’”

**Boosted by relationships.** Participants described the multitude of people who provided positive encouragement, advice, support, and active mentoring as critical to their transition toward full-time administrative work. From assisting them to learn new skills and build confidence, to helping shape their core values and push them to think beyond teaching, every participant had a great deal to say about the people that boosted them up as they gradually, and at times reluctantly, embraced the shift of both role and identity from teacher to leader. Analysis of participant conversations on this topic was detailed within the thematic strands of: (a) *active mentoring toward leadership*, (b) *seeking advice: facing doubt*.

**Active mentoring toward leadership.** Wyant explained that just as his middle school band director had ignited a spark in him when he came looking for a tuba player one random

afternoon, one key administrative mentor had done the same: “He kind of lit the fire and showed me there were possibilities for success, and that I could make a really positive change as an administrator.” Like Wyant, most participants listed a long line of administrators who they had learned from including both men and women, from supervisors to superintendents, who actively mentored them along their paths to leadership.

David stressed the importance of being backed by someone intentionally teaching you what you need to know, believing in you, and being prepared to promote you. Mitchell listed the benefits of a mentors input and experience and noted how learning from and aligning oneself with competent and inspiring mentors “supports your progression of moving forward.” Other participants likewise described mentors who pushed them forward in their careers, provided strong encouragement to move on, gave advice on job interviews, and groomed them for future roles in leadership.

This type of active mentoring, particularly by positional leaders, required a mutual agreement of sorts in which both mentor and participant demonstrated their willingness to give time, share knowledge, reconnoiter values, and go the distance for one another. Participant experiences with their mentors were underscored within the thematic motifs of: (a) *time to teach*; *time to talk*, (b) *embracing the human resources*, (c) *pushing you out of the nest*, (c) *shaping values*, and (d) *the perfect transition*.

*Time to teach: Time to talk.* Charles recalled having hours of conversations with a key mentor who “was a great sounding board for talking things out . . . like an uncle, brother, or best friend:”

I always looked forward to the end of the day, even if we didn’t have bus duty, we always went out there, a few of us, just to talk to him. And he was very generous of his time.

Our brains were very similar. It's like when you make, I guess, a connection with somebody where there wasn't [the need for] a lot of explanation. We had the same thought patterns with things. He was willing to show me things that I grasped, that I took a hold of.

Charles concluded that "if [I] didn't have caring people wanting to give back and show me, and I didn't enjoy it, it might not have happened this way. That's why I didn't have a script."

Patricia gave an all-in-one description of years of mentoring by people with expertise in a variety of leadership domains that she called "essential and critical to any administrative job." Her words were a good representation of the commonalities participant experiences:

Things that were specific to music supervision, I would go to A. When I wanted to learn things that were not about music supervision, like being an elementary principal, B was right on my tail, and I was right in her face, in her office. When I wanted to learn more about the personnel aspect of hiring and supervising, I would go to C . . . the assistant superintendent for human resources. . . . And if I wanted to understand and do more with curriculum and other kinds of supervision and things I didn't know, well, I would go to D. He was the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction. He would make time for me. . . . And then, if I was struggling with this or that. I'd go to E, as the superintendent. . . . So as I moved along, [they] would give me all kinds of advice about what do and what not to do and they all wrote references for me. . . . [My mentors] were always pushing me . . . When I reflect, I was really very lucky.

*Embracing human resources.* Ashley also remembered the profound influence and in particular, the humanity of several mentors. She described one mentor as a "wonderful man:"

He was brilliant. He understood curriculum and instruction, but he understood learning. He understood kids. . . . He would say to me . . . and I also heard him say it to others, ‘We’ll consult the blame sergeant later.’ Kind of like, ‘I really don’t care whose [at] fault . . . I’m not here to identify the fault. I just want to know how we’re going to fix it.’”

Ashley recalled how a second mentor “just understood the human resource aspect:” He understood people. He understood organization. He understood how he needed to modify his demeanor when he was working with [the state education department] versus working with administrators, versus working with teachers. . . . He understood there were layers and there were different ways that he needed to approach people effectively, and he got all of that. I learned a lot from him.

*Pushing you out of the nest.* When Ashley eventually decided to pursue an administrative job outside of the music supervisor realm, she recounted a third mentor telling her “I’m pushing you out of the nest, Ashley. Got to push you out of the nest. . . . Then, when I got the job he kept pinching my cheeks. These were great leaders, they were great models.”

Similarly, Wyant recalled the day he contacted his superintendent when he pursued a job in a new district: “I called my superintendent and said, ‘What should I do?’ He said, ‘You’ve got to go.’ And when I was offered the job, he said, ‘you’ve got to take the job’. . . . He was very giving. A very giving guy.”

*Shaping values.* Each participant repeated the sentiment expressed by Charles, that “the experience of watching and learning [from mentors] was invaluable. . . . [They] shaped who I am as a person, educator, administrator . . . tremendously. . . . I think their values were similar, and they instilled that in me.” Patricia likewise, commenting on her already strong values, shared

that her mentors “chiseled and refined [these values] until they became core values [for her] as an administrator.”

*The perfect transition.* This segment concludes with Wyant’s commentary on a mentoring experience that he called “perfect.”

It was a high school principal job. So they hired me, and [the superintendent] said to me, “You don’t make any hot button decisions until July 1.” He said, “They’re all mine.” He said, “I want you to get to know your people. I want you to get to know the kids. I want you to get to know the community.” It was the perfect . . . I mean how often do you ever hear of that happening? Never. They usually throw you into the pool and say, “Good luck.” He said, “You’re not doing anything that’s going to come back to bite you.

You’re not taking any bullets. I want you to do this. I’m here to support you. I’m going to take all the hot buttons, and then [on] July 1 it’s your building.” It was the perfect, perfect situation.

***Seeking advice: Facing doubt.*** This thematic strand focused on the advice participants sought from people outside of the mentor pool, as well as some of the doubts and apprehensions that they shared with others on their journeys toward leadership. Their voices are expressed through the thematic motifs of: (a) *reluctant supporters*, (b) *maintaining connections with kids*, (c) *feeling readiness to leave: taking the risk*.

*Reluctant supporters.* Participants faced a variety of reactions to their decision to pursue leadership from their music teaching cohorts, other teaching colleagues, friends, and families. Most described the reaction of others as “kind of neutral,” with “no one actively trying to dissuade them,” but with the feeling that to a certain degree their “colleagues wanted them to stay.” The similarities in participant responses were notable, as most described having built

sound, successful music programs, and recalled how upset parents, students, and district personnel were that they were leaving. Yet as Wyant articulated: “not to the point where they didn’t want me to succeed. They understood why I was going, but they were upset that I was leaving.”

Some participants described how their families were surprised by aspects of their transitional realities, from the extra schooling and training required, to the realization that participants would be leaving music teaching behind. “It was interesting,” Marilyn recalled:

My parents were not real supportive of it because they were like, “This [teaching music] is what you wanted to do your whole life, and . . . you gave up other opportunities where you probably would have made more money to do this. Now, you’re stepping out?”. . . My family was a little confused by that move.

Three of the seven candidates named increased financial security and achieving higher paying positions as major motivating factors in pursuing administration, but all seven expressed at least momentary concern during this transition about the impact of time and on work-home balance that the increased responsibility and long hours might have on their families. Now in his first administrative job, Mitchell admits, “one of the challenges that I still grapple with, is home and family.”

*Maintaining connections with kids.* “I loved being a music teacher. . . . I loved my kids. . . I loved the connections,” were sentiments that were frequently expressed by participants, and seemed to contribute to some degree of apprehension about leaving teaching behind. “I loved my band kids,” Wyant repeated several times: “I loved them. I had them for six years, and they were like my own kids when they graduated. And I never wanted to lose that feeling.”



Marilyn also shared that: “the struggle for me was giving up kids.” So she asked herself, “How can I create a way to still stay connected with kids?” In answer, she came up with a philosophy that has guided her programs ever since: “The school is my classroom and the teachers are my students.”

*Feeling readiness to leave: Taking the risk.* Readiness came at different times and for different reasons for each of the participants, but most expressed that as much as they loved their jobs, they felt like they had achieved all they needed to as music teachers, were starting to get restless in their jobs, and were ready for a change. Perhaps most importantly, participants shared that they felt ready to lead and were highly motivated to continue on the path to leadership they had now begun. “There’s always a risk when you leave something you like, and it has worked out,” Charles voiced: “And I think it’s not a quantifiable feeling whether you want to do something. It’s a gut feeling. And my gut felt good about this.”

**Embracing formative change.** During the data analysis, it became clear to the researcher that the essence of the feelings and viewpoints participants shared regarding leadership identity could not be confined to any one developmental model, theory, or time line. As such, the overarching theme, *embracing formative change*, provides a broad unit of analyzation within which to capture each participant’s: (a) unique determinative voice, (b) distinct seminal experiences leading to self-change, and (c) constantly evolving progression toward their identity as leaders.

The researcher discovered in the data that what participants had in common was less the act of building a leadership identity, and more an act of defining and recognizing the leadership facets within their journeys. As members of the same teacher reference group of music teachers, the commonalties that emerged from the data exposed a mix of actions and understandings

regarding leadership identity formation that were at once: (a) inherent to their experiences as musicians and music educators, and (b) intentionally pursued as unique educators and individuals. Either way, the very act of building competencies and relationships related to leadership over an undetermined span of time and through a multitude of experiences, contributed to the formation of leadership identities that have been assuredly, if not directly, described by all seven participants as at once fully formed and ever changing.

The thematic ideas in the overarching theme *embracing formative change* that most frequently emerged from the participant data, were marked recurrently by the continued questioning of self and others. In addition, the experience of bias emerged at times as an interference to participants' confidently claiming their identity as educational leaders. These ideas have been explored within the thematic strands of: (a) *bias: an impediment to assuming leadership*, (b) *answering the "why me?" question*, and, as a segue into the next section, *belonging*, (c) *making the shift to the leadership table*.

***Bias: An impediment to assuming leadership.*** Some participants described their experiences related to bias as a small hindrance, others as a significant interference, but in each case these experiences were described as: (a) related to their background as music educators, and (b) reflected in negative bias toward their level of competency to assume leadership roles beyond music and the arts. Like every other part of their journey as educators, the impediments or identifiable biases imposed by others, came at different times during their careers, often unannounced, but not always unexpected, and surfaced more frequently during their final transition from teacher to leader. The thematic motifs within which participant reflections on this topic were revealed and analyzed include: (a) *confronting discipline related bias*, (b) *channeling discipline related bias*, and (c) *a conversation about gender*.

It should be noted that the small segue into a conversation about gender is not directly related to this study's research question and was not a topic included in the interview questions. However, since the topic surfaced through data analysis, was of significance to some of the participants in this study, and is connected to the thematic strand of impediments to leadership, the researcher felt it was appropriate to include in the Chapter 4 analysis.

*Confronting discipline related bias.* Discipline related bias refers to negative or uninformed actions taken (and/or words spoken) related to the participants' backgrounds as musicians and music educators. These are actions that have been reported and perceived by participants as impediments to their transition from teacher to educational leader.

In order to condense the data on this issue into a form that is easily understood and accessible to the reader, Table 13 highlights a number of detailed and significant participant statements drawn from the raw data and related to bias. This data is represented within the thematic motifs of: (a) *bias related to ignorance*, (b) *bias related to competency*, (c) *bias as self-perceived*, (d) *bias when searching for jobs*, (e) *bias at the start of each new administrative role*, (f) *bias eventually forgotten*, and (g) *shifting bias from negative to positive*.

In addition to the sentiments expressed in the statements in Table 13, participants overwhelmingly expressed their belief that similar experiences related to bias (and/or biased reactions from educational stakeholders) would not be experienced in a comparable manner for teachers of other disciplines seeking to transition to leadership roles (i.e., for a HS Math teacher or ES classroom teacher). In defending their stories with regard to negative discipline related bias, several participants inferred that "enough was said or questioned," to presume bias even when it was subtle. A few participants also made mention of how their resumes were adjusted to deflect potential bias related to being music educators.

Only one participant, Wyant, stated that he “never thought [his] background in music was a disadvantage when pursuing leadership,” but he did recall experiencing initial but minimal reluctance from teachers about his competence beyond music teaching at the start of each new job as an administrator.

Table 13

*Confronting Discipline Related Bias: Thematic Keynotes and Significant Participant*

*Statements*

Thematic motif	Significant participant statements
Bias related to ignorance	<p>“I do not think they knew what a band teacher does.”</p> <p>“Coming out of the music field, that . . . was a very strong bias. . . . How can you understand reading? How can you be. . . . Music, oh my goodness, what can you know about teaching and learning? And there is just a level of ignorance out there. It’s still out there a lot, quite frankly.”</p>
Bias related to perceived competency	<p>“‘How could you be an administrator if you’re a music teacher? You should be a math teacher,’ or pick a topic. . . . I just think it was an attitude. An attitude of, if you’re not an academic teacher, how can you possibly know anything about academics? How could you know what’s going on in classrooms?”</p> <p>“I was asked to help with . . . overseeing the reading specialists, all the intervention specialists . . . K–12 English, K–12 Social Studies, K–12 AIS [Academic Intervention Services], and EL [English Language Learners]. . . . People questioned it: ‘Why are you taking [a] music teacher and giving her all this? She can’t do this. . . . Why do you think you have insight into how we teach reading?’ And the answer is because I did teach children how to read, it was just notes, it was music instead of the written word.”</p> <p>“[He was] reticent in allowing me to do [teacher evaluations]. But I was confident. . . . And so, I did just a couple my first year, and then I think he saw what I was able to write, and the feedback I was able to give out of my content area. It might have been my music background. He never articulated it. It was a little odd.”</p>

(Continued)

Thematic motif	Significant participant statements
Bias as a self-perception	<p>“I remember talking to people about it [my being a music teacher] . . . I do remember those feelings, and maybe some of it was just myself reflecting on what I thought people were thinking too.”</p> <p>“I think it’s more probably in my head. . . . I wasn’t an ELA teacher, I wasn’t a social studies teacher. I didn’t teach the New York State Learning Standards. . . . So, at first, in my mind, I probably felt more of a disadvantage than people might have thought on paper.”</p>
Bias when searching for jobs	<p>“I probably felt that I might be at a disadvantage when interviewing . . . not having the academic coursework. . . . I remember those being questions I got in interviews, in terms of your knowledge of the Common Core . . . How would you help move forward in the department of math?”</p> <p>“‘You have to bury my music experience. It’s preventing me from getting a job.’ Because I can interview. I’m a performer. Interviewing was not a problem. I was well prepared. . . . I would practice and rehearse my response, so it didn’t seem canned, [but was] natural. . . . But I wasn’t getting jobs, and. . . . knowing my level of competence . . . what [I have] accomplished. . . . I was like ‘It’s got to be my music background.’”</p> <p>"You seem very bright and, blah, blah, blah, but we have a hard time understanding how you could be an effective supervisor of reading teachers.”</p> <p>“When I followed up for feedback as to why I did not get the position, the assistant superintendent . . . actually said, ‘Well you’ve only been a music teacher’ . . . . It really stuck out. . . . And some people, the non-musicians, look at music as an extra class; it’s outside of the four core contents. . . . I wanted to slap him over the phone [laughter], but . . . I respectfully thanked him for his response, and I did explain to him that the arts obviously provide the opportunity for an individual to graduate as a well-rounded individual, and that music and the arts are an important factor of students getting a full education.”</p> <p>“I was very proud of what I had done [as a music teacher], but I think I tried to stay away from it more than anything else because I don’t think it felt relevant to the people who were interviewing me. And I do remember it came up . . . kind of the same sentiment. You’re not an academic teacher, you’re a music teacher. . . . And I do kind of remember . . . somebody gave me that advice.”</p>

(Continued)

Thematic motif	Significant participant statements
Bias at the start of each new administrative role	<p>"It's weird. I could not get a job." I can only think that part of it had to do with my music [background], even though I was well-prepared and well-versed in a lot of areas and knew the scope of the job."</p> <p>"I probably heard a couple snickers. . . . You're a music teacher. You don't do anything. You teach band. . . . That's the perception. I said, 'How many of you are going to put your kids on stage every three months and take a test in front of the general public? How many of you guys want to do that?'"</p> <p>"[Returning as superintendent after many years of administrative experience to a district once employed in as a music teacher, was] a time in my career that it [bias], really did raise its head. . . . When I was announced, I remember people saying, 'You're a band teacher, why are you coming back here?'. . . . And I remember the secretary calling me, 'There are a lot of questions because you're a band teacher whether you can do this.'"</p>
Bias eventually forgotten	<p>"I earned the respect of . . . the teachers in the building [through] the work I did with kids. They saw the effectiveness and change in the culture of the school as a result of my leadership as the assistant principal. . . . I earned the teachers respect [through] my classroom observations. . . . I would have pre and post observation conferences and people were like 'Wow, she kind of knows what she's doing. . . . And they sort of forgot in some ways that I was the music teacher.'"</p> <p>"And it's funny. After several months, it never came up again. But [during] the transition it was prevalent."</p>
Shifting bias from negative to positive	<p>"He didn't ever seem to have trouble with the fact that I had been a music educator. As a matter of fact, . . . he seemed to understand that people from less common backgrounds had more creativity, more vision, and he was less inclined to hire someone with an elementary classroom background. . . . There was a whole bunch of us that had been hired at that time, and we all had a little bit different backgrounds."</p>

(Continued)

Thematic motif	Significant participant statements
	<p>“Music was, is a part of my life, so I wouldn’t be portraying myself accurately if I didn’t say that [at interviews]. . . . I think who I am as an administrator is who I was or parts of who I was as a music teacher. So, I wanted to make that connection. . . . [There] might have been some questions [about my background in music], I don’t know how much it was elaborated on. But I think I did try to acknowledge it. It was something I was proud of and I thought it added value to people understanding who I was and what I brought to the table.”</p>
	<p>“[I reminded myself that] having a musical administrator only enhances . . . they have a very different perspective on the support that’s needed to run the music program.”</p>
	<p>“I think during the interview process what I spent a whole lot of time talking about was how I would [use the skills I learned as a music teacher], bring others into the fold. . . . Essentially, if you’re conducting a group of adults, you’re conducting a group of children; there is . . . input and collaboration that goes on.”</p>

*Channeling discipline related bias.* Participant strategies for positively channeling any bias they experienced or perceived, ranged from simply deciding, as David did, that random comments from colleagues would never be an issue for him, and/or by focusing on the following responses outlined in the thematic keynotes of: (a) *the relevancy of experience*, (b) *using analogies*, (c) *motivating drive*, and (d) *returning to your core values*.

*Channeling discipline related bias: The relevancy of experience.* David recalled keeping the focus at interviews on the relevancy of his experiences during his teaching years, early leadership work, and administrative internship:

The relevant piece is what I’ve done in my internship. And yes, I’ve been a teacher.

Yes, I know how to work with kids. And I think I have a decent understanding of what instruction should be. . . . I had an internship like any other person.

*Channeling discipline related bias: Using music analogies.* Rather than shying away from her background in Music, Ashley recalled how she frequently used analogies to help non-music teachers understand how her work in music connected to the work she was doing as an administrator:

I was asking them to do things a little differently in order to improve literacy and math fluency. And in their mind, they just didn't believe that I should be the one leading that. . . . My answer to them was, "Music is automaticity." It is mastering some . . . major skills where when you look at a note, your fingers know what to do. Your mouth knows what to do. Your diaphragm knows what to do. Your brain knows what to do. So it's very similar to how you teach kids how to read.

*Channeling discipline related bias: Motivating drive.* Mitchell expressed that the bias he experienced gave him more drive to pursue administration:

It definitely gave me more ammunition and drive to secure a position as an administrator because you have laypeople like that, that have that certain, I won't say innocent naiveness. . . . I won't say that they're close-minded, they just don't fully understand what it takes to be successful in the artistic frame of mind.

*Channeling discipline related bias: Returning to your core values:* Charles articulated his belief that "if there was a hurdle I overcame, it [was] probably more internally with me, [and the question of] how do I bring that value added:"

People wondered. . . . [But] I think it came down to what you valued and who you were in your core. And there wasn't anything . . . that I wouldn't want somebody to know about. So, I think the potential existed for obstacles, but . . . what you value guides you . . . . It relates back to if you're doing something for your students in the end. Then



everything should line up, in some way, shape, or form. . . . And what it comes down to, in my head, is [before] being a music teacher, I'm an educator.

*A conversation about gender.* Although only one of the participants named gender specifically as an ongoing and deeply significant bias, some statements made by other participants, as well as trends noted by the researcher, were related to gender. These comments stood out in relation to the timing, attitudes, and access to mentoring associated with the transitional period. Patricia experienced gender bias strongly:

I mean the gender bias was so stark. . . . When I went on the interview circuit, you could really, really see, that women in administration . . . was just still not a common thing.

The bias ended when I became elementary principal for the music part. The gender bias never ended. It just got better as I proved myself.

When the board of education appointed Patricia superintendent, she explained, "the top administration were four women. . . . I was the first woman superintendent in the district since [it] had been configured as a district [over 70 years ago]:"

You cannot believe the crap we got from the community about the fact that the top group were all women. Unsigned letters, [negative] comments, it was just unbelievable. . . .

The community was not going to accept [my salary]. . . . and reacted in force . . . to the fact that I was a woman superintendent.

Further, upon analysis of the data, it was revealed that: (a) the transitional timeframe between receiving administrative certification and securing a full-time non-music administrative position was significantly longer (4–8 years) for the three women, (b) all three women, and only the women interviewed for this study, took on joint music teaching and music and arts supervision roles before getting a non-music related administrative job, and (c) leadership roles,

particularly non music related administrative jobs, were often indirectly supported, rather than actively promoted, by their mentors.

At least one of the women, Marilyn, had clearly expressed her desire to others to leave music completely and go into general education administration. Although searching actively for administrative positions, Marilyn explained, she was not able to secure an administrative job until she accepted an arts and music supervisory position that also required some music teaching.

Conversely, almost directly upon receipt of their administrative certification, or even before they were fully certified administrators, three of the four men interviewed were quickly recruited and/or selected for building administrator roles without having been in a joint teaching/administrative role first. Wyant, for example, completed his administration internship while on the job after being recruited into a job as a principal. He recounted how he had conducted the final show of Sound of Music “on a Sunday afternoon, and on Monday started as the principal” in a new district. David similarly told a story of conducting an All County festival one day and leaving the area to take on his first administrative job in another county the next.

Ashley, taking a positive spin on the issue of gender, talked about the importance of having women role models and mentors. She recalled two female administrators who had been music supervisors, and another female school principal who had made the transition from teacher to leader before her, being the first to say, “You know, you really have to step out of the classroom.” With regard to gender differences and role models in general, Ashley told the story of a female relative who was the controller for one of the largest companies in a prominent business district in the 1980s:

I mean she ran the whole accounting department for them . . . she was a woman in a leadership position. And you didn't really see a whole lot of females in positions like that at that time in the 80s. So she understood [my] desire to go into administration.

Patricia reflected on the fact that although "there were generations before us that planted many seeds for women . . . in terms of women coming into roles that were traditionally held by men . . . we were on the cutting edge."

*Answering the "why me?" question.* Each of the candidates shared that they had grappled with "why me? why leadership? why now?" questions throughout our discussions. Nevertheless, participants found themselves drawn toward leadership roles, taking full advantage of the many leadership opportunities that came their way. Some of the most common reasons for eventually leaning toward administration included: (a) being intrigued by how many aspects of leadership connected to their previous work, (b) really starting to like leadership roles, (c) recognizing their ability to help teachers and students meet their needs and goals, (d) stepping up the career ladder, and (e) responding to a personal need to change direction. For some participants, it was all of the above.

Both Patricia and Wyant described their need for a personal change of direction as having "started to get itchy:"

I had been a teacher for 13 years and that was in two different schools. At the end of my 9th year, I started to get itchy. I started to believe that I'd taken the band as far as I could take them. (Wyant)

I was just ready for that kind of change. . . . I did it enough, and it was successful enough . . . . When I think about it, I could divide my whole 40-plus years into roughly a 7-year-itch. When I get to a certain point of something being the way I think it could be, or I

think I can't improve it anymore . . . [if] I'm losing enthusiasm from the repetition of it, then I always want to look to the next thing. (Patricia)

Charles, among the most recently certified administrators, summarized his reflections about the process:

I was a full-time music teacher for six or seven years, I did the music-teacher-and-dean thing for six or seven years, and then this is my second year here as an AP, so I didn't feel rushed in the process. . . . The AP was the next logical progression, I thought, in my mind, from dean. I think the main difference between an AP and the dean is, I'm supervising the staff now. I had the discipline experience, the scheduling experience, and I was always looking to help, and I continued to learn. Where life takes you, I don't know. I've never looked at anything as a stepping stone. I enjoy this. If this ends up being this for the next 15 years, great. If something [new] presents itself, and I feel it would be in the best interests of myself and my family, I would pursue it. I felt I was ready to take that next step. . . . It was a natural progression.

***Making the shift to the leadership table.*** In sum, participant component stories sounded many analogous notes, but two things became clear during the data analysis: (a) both self-possession of leadership identity and self-recognition of leadership competency were in place for all seven participants well before they began their first jobs as educational administrators, and (b) their leader identities needed to be expressed with a high degree of self-confidence in order to overcome the impediments and uncertainties that could have stood in their way as they pursued administrative roles.

In the end, however, each participant's transitional journey did culminate in an educational leadership role, and the effort of becoming an educational leader was redirected

toward the purposeful practice of leadership and to demonstrating to themselves and to other educational stakeholders that they belonged at the leadership table.

Interestingly, first days on the job as administrators seemed to have elevated significance, including a perceptible shift in participants' frame of mind which indicated their continued role-identity transformation from teacher to leader. David shared that he never truly thought of himself as an administrator until his first day on the job, and Wyant professed that when he stepped into his first principalship, "the teaching part was gone. . . . That's it. I was the principal. That's just the way it was."

"Yes. . . . I do remember," Mitchell shared: "One of my teachers needed help on [making] a decision . . . and I said to myself, "Yeah, I'm no longer a teacher. I'm the administrator that they're coming to for an answer. . . . It felt good actually . . . that moment."

#### **Section Four: Belonging**

Section four, *belonging*, offers an in-depth exploration of the transitional stage from teacher to leader that Browne-Ferrigno (2003) called *the purposeful engagement* in leadership. It is in this transitional stage that Browne-Ferrigno (2003) espoused the connection between learning to be a leader and purposefully practicing leadership as being realized. Armstrong (2012) also recognized that it was the eventual long-term, ongoing practice of a wide array of leadership competencies that were key to educational leaders becoming able to embrace their leadership role identities and their positions within the hierarchy of educational leaders.

Before beginning the data analysis within the two major categories in this section, (a) *orchestrating leadership: belonging to a community of educators*, and (b) *belonging at the leadership table: aesthetic cadence*, the researcher turned to the participants to help frame the conversation about educational leadership in the sub-section *framing educational leadership*.

Because the subject of what constitutes effective educational leadership is so vast, the sub-section framing educational leadership is immediately followed by an additional sub-section entitled *mapping the conversation*, which guides the readers through the researcher's approach to analyzing the data within the context of effective educational leadership.

### **Framing Educational Leadership**

The researcher engaged the participants throughout the cycle of interviews to help frame the conversation about educational leadership within the context of the broader field of leadership. Most participants expressed their belief that there were more commonalities than differences between all branches of leadership, but the composite data revealed three key aspects of leadership that participants' felt were unique to educational leadership: (a) the cultural norms and rules, (b) people as the core product, and (c) the high levels accountability.

Using the terms macro and micro leadership, Charles described leadership at the macro level to be comparable in any organization. The micro level, he suggested, relates to the specific "rules, the culture, [and] the expectations" of educational institutions. When you put an "educational lens" on leadership, Charles continued, it means your focus is on "providing whatever resources and infrastructures you have [for] staff [and] students."

Patricia shared a similar idea about macro leadership in general:

Leadership itself. . . . It has to be the same. I don't see how it can be different. Because they [the leaders] still have to develop and grow their organizations, and bring constituencies in . . . and meet the goals of the organization. . . . I think a leader is a leader. Either you have it, and you do it, you exercise it, and it's in evidence, or. . . . you bring down the business, or the industry, or the school.

Patricia also pointed to the high level of accountability in education as being a unique challenge for educational leaders:

I think accountability in public education is much more demanding and much stricter [than in a corporate environment], and much more rules-oriented. . . . It's much higher levels of accountability. Much higher levels of public scrutiny. I mean, who publicly scrutinizes those [business leaders]? Who cares, compared to a public [school]?

Ashley likewise noted the number of contractual obligations that can constrain educational leaders:

In corporate, you don't have to spend a whole lot of time convincing people of things that they need to do, because they have to do it, and they want a job, and they want the raises. So here, when you're dealing with lots of labor contracts . . . you have to rely more on: "How do you get people to value what you want to do . . . and move forward?" Because you have people who [can] just shut their doors and do whatever they want to do.

David likened his experiences as the superintendent of a large conglomerate of schools, to working in a part-business, part-educational environment:

Obviously, how you practice it is specific to what you do. In a large regional cooperative, we kind of operate under rules of this educational world, but we have to be innovative. We have to produce product [in a similar manner to the business world]. If not, we don't exist.

Wyant's thoughts reiterate a similar point that "a school is also a corporation, but with a much less top down structure," and with people at the core:

The product is human beings. And every human being is different, kids and adults alike . . . You're dealing with personalities and you're dealing with people individually and

personally. And that's sometimes a much more difficult task, to bring [a group] together to cohesion than it would be if I walked into a boardroom and just said "Here's how we are going to do things today."

### **Mapping the Conversation**

During each participant's final interview, questions were focused on their individual leadership style and purposeful practice of leadership. Participants were initially asked to respond to general questions and prompts related to leadership that could be broadly interpreted, such as: "What does the term leadership mean to you? . . . How would you characterize your leadership style? . . . How would you describe your approach to the practice of educational administration?" Next, participants were asked to respond to prompts related specifically to the five domains of effective leadership practices outlined by Hitt and Tucker (2015), (see Appendix F).

Following a close comparison of the answers to the two sets of questions, the data analysis revealed that in most cases participants had already touched upon all five of the Hitt and Tucker (2015) domains, and most of 28 effective leadership practices, before they were formally asked to do so. The prompts therefore, rather than eliciting completely new responses about leadership, enabled participants to expand upon or clarify original answers regarding their views on specific aspects of the practice of educational leadership.

For the purposes of this final section of the data analysis, therefore, the researcher made the decision to merge questions answered with regard to the specific leadership benchmarks established by Hitt and Tucker (2015), into the researcher-generated category of *orchestrating leadership: belonging to a community of educators*, and specifically into the overarching theme



of *brokering relationships*. The researcher’s decision was driven by her detailed coding of participant responses and analysis and the totality of the composite data.

Table 14 provides a brief description of the 5 domains of effective leadership practice outlined by Hitt and Tucker (2015) and compares them to the thematic strands used by the researcher to represent participant descriptions of practices and qualities that they themselves expressed as effective leader practices.

Table 14

*Effective Leadership Practices: A Comparison of Hitt and Tucker (2015) Domains and Researcher Established Thematic Strands*

Hitt and Tucker (2015) unified model	Related thematic strands
Establishing and conveying the mission or vision	Shaping vision: Launching mission
Building professional capacity	Building capacity: Inspiring growth
Creating a supportive organization of learning	Cultivating leadership: Confirming shared purpose
Facilitating a high-quality learning experience for students	Ensuring high quality student learning: Focusing on outcomes
Connecting with external partners	Fostering partnerships: Embracing community

**Orchestrating Leadership: Belonging to a Community of Educators**

In this category, *orchestrating leadership: belonging to a community of educators*, the participant ideas and responses concerning their own approach to the practice of leadership as well as what they believe constitutes effective leadership, will be analyzed within the overarching themes of: (a) *understanding and executing core competencies*, (b) *brokering relationships*, and (c) *realizing organizational change*. An overview of the thematic strands and thematic motifs associated with this overarching theme is provided in Table 15.

Table 15

*Orchestrating Leadership: Belonging to a Community of Educators—Thematic Overview*

Overarching theme	Thematic strands	Thematic motifs
Understanding and executing core competencies	Competencies at the heart of leadership	Conducting Collaborating Striving for excellence
	Embracing the realities of leadership	Decision-making Prioritizing Rarely being in a safe space
Brokering relationships	Shaping vision: Launching mission	Vision: developing a philosophy Mission: operationalizing the vision
	Building capacity: Inspiring growth	Value human resources Treat teachers and staff as experts Promote a growth mindset Safely navigate change Reach beyond satisfactory Step aside and watch what happens
	Cultivating leadership: Confirming shared purpose	Never go it alone Giving co-leaders what they need Recognizing the relationship between shared leadership and change
	Ensuring high quality student learning: Focusing on outcomes	Create safe spaces to learn Meet students where they are Think about outcomes Evaluate programs and staff
	Fostering partnerships: Embracing community	Open your doors Think creatively Show up Be the change the community needs to see.

(Continued)

Overarching theme	Thematic strands	Thematic motifs
Realizing organizational change	Be both visionary and actionary	Plan for change with a systems approach Move from the world of talk to the world of do Initiate change thoughtfully Innovate and inspire
	Value human resources	It's OK to be personal Be approachable and visible Be an active listener Act as role model and mentor Celebrate process, growth, and success
	Hire great people	Hire people who can offer something you can't offer Hire people whose competencies match the role they will fill Hire people with fresh ideas Hire people who communicate effectively Hire people who get the most out of others Hire people who are passionate about achieving and understand outcomes Hire people you can trust Hire people who will make hard decisions when needed Hire people who value relationships Hire a diverse group of people Hire people who will push their leaders to think in different ways Avoid common hiring mistakes.
	Ensure positive outcomes	Staying on course toward outcomes
	Support the arts	The other academics
	Recruit new leaders	Whose responsibility is it? Who wants the job? Recognizing the potential in others

**Understanding and executing core competencies.** As conversations with participants became more focused on their actual practice of leadership, competency—as both a technical and a conceptual prerequisite—was high on the participants’ collective mindsets. From having the instructional knowledge and competencies, to developing the necessary skillsets, to moving beyond satisfactory to competence and excellence, there was a strongly expressed belief that: “You’ve got to have the right competencies for the job.” As Patricia asserted:

You can’t just get a job, get a title. You can’t just get an advanced degree. You have to have the basic requisite talents and temperaments, and recognize that you have the competencies, or at least the roots of them and . . . the ability to develop them. If you’re not competent, you’re going to fail. . . . I knew I would have to grow and that there’d be a lot that I [would] have to learn. But I actually never pursued a job that I didn’t think I had the basic competencies for.

Within this theme, participant responses focused not only on the core technical competencies needed to lead, but on the conceptual competencies needed to face challenges.

The thematic strands within this category express participant viewpoints regarding:

(a) *competencies at the heart of leadership*, and (b) *embracing the realities of leadership*.

***Competencies at the heart of leadership.*** Patricia, the only retired member of this cohort of seven participants, spoke often about the time she now has to reflect on the very essence of the competencies and related understandings she amassed as a musician and throughout her career as music teacher, music and arts supervisor, principal, assistant superintendent, and superintendent of schools. Very early-on in our conversations, she identified three main pillars of educational leadership that she believed stemmed directly from her lived experiences with a cohort of musicians and music educators and set the stage for her ability to orchestrate each of her future

leadership roles effectively. The three leadership pillars named by Patricia, and expressed in multiple ways by all seven participants, reflect the competencies that most participants identified to be at the heart of leadership and resonate in the thematic motifs of: (a) *conducting*, (b) *collaborating*, and (c) *striving for excellence*.

*Conducting.* “If you are the conductor,” Patricia surmised, “you are the leader,” and if you are the leader of that orchestra you have to know what you want. You have to have [a] goal . . . [You have to know] what the outcome is that you want. And you also have to have all the players know what they have to do to meet that goal.

At times all seven participants used similar analogies from their performing and conducting backgrounds to articulate their understanding of leadership. Charles, for instance, also pointed out his conviction that to lead, you must understand what it means to be both conductor and instrumentalist in an ensemble: “[It is] an analogy that I’ve had in my mind a lot. . . I didn’t think this at the time [I was transitioning from music teacher to leader],” Charles shared, “I think your glossary evolves, and you realize where it comes from:”

I view myself as a leader, [and] as a conductor of an orchestra [and] I look at effective leadership as being an effective conductor. It’s not [being] an expert in everything. It is somebody who can oversee everything and create the most melodious sounds that one could make. . . . Sometimes, trumpets are too loud . . . or it’s always saxophones [laughter]. . . . In that sense that, okay, maybe you need less of a certain thing here, or the parts aren’t lined up. You’re not reading the rhythms at the same time or you’re not playing [together]. . . . How do we do that [in educational administration]? That could mean that the teaching style of this team might be different than that team . . . and both are value-added for the whole organization.

*Collaborating.* While the idea of collaboration is examined in greater depth in other thematic strands, all seven participants stated that collaboration as a well-practiced competency, and the related understanding that “you can never go it alone,” is key to effective leadership. “You can’t have an orchestra, or an outcome, without collaboration of all the players,” Patricia continued from her earlier statement, “If you’re a player in that orchestra you have to know how your specific job fits into everybody else’s job.”

“What being an instrumentalist in an ensemble made me realize,” Charles also reiterated, [is] that you’re part of a whole, that you’re a piece of a puzzle. That you could be the best player of the French horn, but you’re never going to sound like a band by yourself. . . . I can be the best conductor in the world, but to have a good sound, I need people. . . . It’s not about me or I [when] conducting. It’s about helping the group to make the sound you want. . . . I don’t view the baton as the be-all and end-all.

*Striving for excellence.* Patricia named the third pillar as “always hav[ing] the goal be executed with excellence.” David also spoke passionately about striving for excellence and offered a band analogy to emphasize the distinction between basic competence and excellence, effective and outstanding, when leading educational programs:

When you’re [leading] a band. . . effective [means] you put on a decent concert. Outstanding is not only do you put on a decent concert, but those kids are growing and learning tremendously in their skills. That it’s not just a small handful of kids. It’s large groups of kids who are hungry to learn more, become better, who want more performance opportunities, who have to make time because they don’t want to lose this priority in life and . . . truly can become musicians in their own right, that they are driving you just as much as you are driving them, and there is an energy [and] desire to do that.

*Embracing the realities of leadership.* Ultimately, David affirmed, “all the things I have done [before] have played into who I am today as a leader, but you pay for the decision to be a leader.” Although all seven participants found their roles as educational leaders to be enjoyable and fulfilling, they were quick to point out that the job comes with a number of distinct challenges that must be embraced and overcome if one is to succeed as an educational leader. Participant expressions of these realities are analyzed within the thematic motifs of: (a) *decision-making*, (b) *prioritizing*, and (c) *rarely being in a safe space*.

*Decision-making.* The seven participants had a great deal to contribute on the topic of decision-making, including the unique responsibility and difficulties inherent in this process for educational leaders. The saturation of data on this topic was so abundant, that the researcher delineated participant expressions within this thematic strand into eight composite thematic keynotes including: (a) *it’s hard*, (b) *doing things for the right reasons*, (c) *standing up and standing out*, (d) *learning to live in the world of eventually*, (e) *basing decisions on evidence*, and (f) *there is often no time to rehearse*.

*Decision-making: It’s hard.* “Consider all decisions fully, live on the edge of your confidence, and take responsible risks,” Marilyn urged. She did not suggest, however, that this was easy. Not one of the seven participants, in fact, failed to mention how hard, and how complicated it was to make many of the critical decisions required of an educational leader. Significant participant statements like, “It’s a lot harder than you think it’s going to be,” “You never really ever feel comfortable with it,” “You must own the outcomes of your decisions,” “Realizing what you can live with is a reality,” “Ultimately, the rationale and the decision belong to you,” and “Almost all the big ones come back to you,” just begin to tell their stories.

No matter how collaborative their approach to leadership, participant after participant described situations in which unilateral decisions had to be made in an instant, or simply in the interest of time and energy expended. Although people are quick to give advice like “I think you should do this. I think you should do this,” David lamented, “the implications [often] come your way [alone].” Wyant similarly described how colleagues and stakeholders “like being part of the process up to the point where they have to make the hard decisions.”

“You are never always going to make the right decision,” Ashley stressed, “It just doesn’t happen. . . . because something always happens three or four days later, and it says, ‘If I had held off.’ But you can’t do that . . . as a leader it’s your job to solve the problem.”

Ashley warned leaders not to “put decisions off [or] try to distance yourself from the problem.” “Make your decision,” she urged, then “pick people up, dust them off, send them on their way.”

*Decision-making: Standing up and standing out.* In a similar vein, Patricia spoke of the reality that “when you’re a leader, you’re out in front,” and “you do not know if [your decision] is right or wrong until time passes, or till things quiet down or settle down:”

You take . . . advice and you listen. You try to make the best decisions possible . . . in the best interest of kids and your commitment to the district that you’re working in, and in the best interest of staff as well. Sometimes those interests are the same. Sometimes they’re competing. And so leadership is being able to stand up and stand out, and take what comes. It’s yours. You own it.



*Decision-making: Doing things for the right reasons.* “I find if you make decisions too quickly,” Marilyn similarly expressed, “you don’t consider all perspectives . . . [or make] decisions on what’s best for kids.”

“What’s right is a hard measurement to determine,” David stressed, “but usually, you can get there if you think about it enough.”

You try not to rush into it, and then, ultimately, you try to do what’s right. [It’s] hard . . . I try to think of every available outcome for almost every decision. Not just on a policy level, but [on a] what’s a right level. . . . You have to really kind of [think] “Okay, what if I do it that way? What if I do it another way? What if I do this? What if I do that? And how have I treated people before?”. . . . I try to make sure that . . . I can sleep at night. It’s a very hard decision, but I know it’s the right decision. And in the end, I always go back to that mission and that vision.

*Decision-making: Basing decisions on evidence.* The idea of doing the necessary research and making decisions based on evidence was common among participants. Marilyn stressed this point often: “You are embedded in decisions that can keep you up at night . . . taking care of things under your watch, pursuing situations doggedly; don’t accuse without evidence; know the facts.”

Charles also described his evidence-based attempt to make “fair and accurate decisions along the way.” “I try not to bring emotion [into a situation],” he stressed. “When you’re giving somebody news they don’t want to hear, [for example], it might be emotional for them. My counter is to be factual . . . compassionate, but factual.”

Wyant summed up why he believed in the importance of doing the research in order to earn the trust of his constituents on major decisions or initiatives:

When I get up in front of them and say “Hey, we’re going to try this, this year,” they know I have done the research and I’m coming at them from the heart. It’s not just something I made a flippant decision on, but I believed in it, and I think it would be better for all of us. And then they’re encouraged to give it a shot.

*Decision-making: Adopting a system.* The approach of adopting systems to tackle some of the challenges of decision-making were typical among interviewees who explained that having sound systems in place helps them to make decisions at every level of their jobs. Charles outlined one such decision-making system based on a five-question scenario. His system shared many similarities with decision-making systems described by other participants. Charles keeps the following questions posted by his phone: (a) What are the net consequences of all my options? (b) What are my core obligations? (c) What will work in the world as it is? (d) Who are we? and (e) What can I live with? “That’s kind of like the filter [for]some of my decision-making.” Charles continued:

Is it better that we have 15 Chromebooks in the room right now, as opposed to zero that we had? Or is it better to just wait till you get 30, which is years down the road? What can I live with now? Who are we as a building? What is our core obligation to students? Am I moving this teacher from here to there? I [can] understand the resistance, but is this better for students? . . . What are the consequences? Realizing what I can live with is a reality. . . . It is about “weighing the options . . . there is a yin and yang with everything. . . . It’s kind of the foundation. . . . It’s a reflective tool. . . . [This type of] thinking is slow, it’s not overnight, but I hope it gets permeated to people

as I continue to develop a reputation here [as a leader]. . . . I try to be informative with people so they understand why a decision is made.

*Decision-making: There is no time to rehearse.* Mitchell and Marilyn likened the constant decision-making on the job to music-making: “I don’t always have time to rehearse anymore . . . I don’t have time to even think sometimes. . . . I don’t even have time to prepare [at] the standard I hold myself to.” (Marilyn)

*Prioritizing.* Prioritizing, knowing your deadlines, creating time lines, keeping checklists, writing reminders on sticky notes, filling your desk with things that have to be done, knowing what needs more time, what must not fall on the back burner, writing on calendars, sending email reminders to self, making sure that everything’s covered, and finally “let’s see what the day brings,” were all aspects of leadership that were declared as “the name of the game” for the seven school administrators interviewed. Each also admitted that “the demands . . . almost seemed impossible to meet sometimes.”

“It’s just the different hats that you wear,” Mitchell summarized:

Some of them, you’re able to hang up on the hat rack at the end of the day, and some of them stay in your hands waiting for it to be fully answered and addressed before you can hang it. . . . I know my deadlines.

Marilyn emphasized that when you choose to practice leadership collaboratively, prioritizing becomes even more essential:

It’s a challenge, especially with as many meetings as I choose to have, because that’s kind of who I am. . . . The lists, they never go away. . . . The commitment is huge . . . and there’s a lot of work that happens outside of the school day.

David explained that he keeps a daily list and tries to focus on the long-term picture: “Every day, I look at it [the list]. On the good days, I rewrite it and re-prioritize.” Ashley likewise determined that the decision-making process is always about “balance,” and “it’s always rethinking.”

The practice of effective leaders planning both short-term and long-term goals was also commonly stressed. In terms of long-term goals, both Patricia and David spoke about the importance of planning for “progress [to] be sustained even if you are not there” (Patricia). Michell emphasized the importance of “making your long-term commitment known to others,” and Charles underscored the connection between others observing the hard work of school administrators and the resulting constituent buy-in.

In the short-term, however, student and parent needs were the priority for all participants; “They always take priority no matter what I’m doing. . . . If [parents] come in, and I can make time for them, I will make time for them . . . even if it means three hours of my day gone” (Wyant).

*Rarely being in a safe place.* Marilyn reflected on the resiliency she thought was needed to lead an educational organization: “This is burnout city. This is total burnout city. I mean, up until this year, I was working seven days a week. And I’ve sacrificed a lot.” Patricia similarly articulated how tough, and how hard the job of a school or district leader can be:

I think that leadership is rarely a safe place . . . you have to have a lot of courage and solicit a lot of input, so that you can be as wise as possible in that not-so-safe place. You have to have a spine of steel. . . . [You] have to be able to walk through the fire. You have to get to the other side. And you have to be kind of, indomitable and in control of your own emotions, and your own understanding of what’s going on. . . . I’m talking

about situations where it's not your fault . . . We had terrible things happen in my first year [as a superintendent]. . . . We had [several district, student, and staff crises and some bad press], but I will tell you, I did not think about leaving.

Wyant's story is another of many shared by participants that illustrates this common reality:

They had had a couple of really bad principals before I got there. [and there had been two student deaths]. . . . That community was just heartbroken. . . . There was just a pallor over the entire school. . . . I had to deal with that. And I just made the decision [to have an assembly] because there were a lot of kids who needed counselling . . . and I said, "Look. Let's talk about this, because I know people are upset. I know people are depressed." I said, "I'm pissed off . . . Here's a kid who had everything, everything he needed, and he made a stupid freaking decision, and now he's dead." . . . A lot of the kids shook their heads at me, and I think at that point we kind of made a connection with a lot of them. And there were community members, and there was clergy in there. . . . I said to those kids, "We will remember . . . but this is not going to define this district while I'm here. . . . And then every day I made an effort to lighten it. To just lighten the mood. . . . [to] have fun with kids, joke with kids, joke with teachers, [and move forward with an attitude of] let's go, let's go, let's go.

**Brokering relationships.** As outlined above, each of the unified models of leadership specified by Hitt and Tucker (2015) as well as their accompanying list of effective leadership practices, have been addressed in this research analysis and merged into five comparative thematic strands. Overwhelmingly, and increasingly, as the conversations centered around the participants active practice of leadership in their educational communities, components of both

the Hitt and Tucker (2015) models and the researcher assigned thematic strands were expressed in association with relationships. The number and diversity of relationships participants were able to broker in order to lead successfully were key, and critical importance was placed on building trusting relationships and valuing different perspectives.

Accordingly, while the thematic strands highlighted in Table 14 overlap with the other two overarching themes based on executing core competencies and realizing organizational change, they have been analyzed within the overarching theme that participants stressed as most important: *brokering relationships*. As illustrated in Table 14, this major theme has been organized into the thematic strands of: (a) *shaping vision: launching mission*, (b) *building capacity: inspiring growth*, (c) *cultivating leadership: confirming shared purpose*, (d) *ensuring high quality student learning: focusing on outcomes*, and (e) *fostering partnerships: embracing community*, which closely align with the Hitt and Tucker (2015) domains of effective leadership.

***Shaping vision: Launching mission.*** According to Hitt and Tucker (2015), effective educational leaders must create, articulate and steward their school/district's shared mission and vision. Among the participants interviewed, however, there were as many instances in which they inherited a district vision or mission as there were times they had to create new ones. Often their jobs were about inspiring and communicating, rather than creating these anew.

What all seven participants had in common was the premise that visions and/or missions required: (a) establishing a focus on setting goals: "there has got to be a goal to get the best out of kids." (Wyant); (b) following up with the work needed to achieve those goals: "You must have a vision, but the mission must be to serve." (David); and (c) communicating the vision and mission to all stakeholders: "For a mission or vision to be sustained over time, everybody needs

to understand it. It needs to be more than just something you can read or that's on the front cover of your agenda book.” (Charles).

Mitchell agreed that the vision and mission should be “very goal oriented, with an end-goal in mind,” but shared his opinion that “you could line up 20 different schools’ mission statements and visions. . . . [and there] might be a different verb or adjective here or there but they’re all pretty similar.” He also described a scenario in which a visiting professional consultant asked teachers and administrators if they would like to share what the vision or mission for their school was, and “all of a sudden, you hear crickets because people don’t remember every word of their mission or vision statements.”

Marilyn might have said this is because the vision has not been internalized. Marilyn clearly distinguished vision from mission, viewing the act of creating a vision as comparable to “generating a philosophy,” and the need to “operationalize that vision or philosophy with a mission, while keeping the vision present in your mind.”

While the terms *vision* and *mission* were often linked together in the literatures reviewed and were likewise used interchangeably by about half of the participants, others asserted that creating vision and mission statements had distinctly unique purposes. In fact, Marilyn’s well-articulated reflections on vision and mission, helped the researcher in establishing the thematic motifs that best represent participant ideas within this strand, including: (a) *vision: developing a philosophy*, and (b) *mission: operationalizing the vision*.

*Vision: Developing a philosophy.* Marilyn credited her intuitive understanding of the differences and overlap between vision and mission to both her days as a K–12 music teacher and the influences of some “pretty effective leaders.” She recalled the time that she and a music

teaching peer came up with a teaching philosophy, and she began to understand how to create a vision:

I had never had a philosophical discussion about music education prior to that experience. . . . We generated this philosophy [which begins] “Music is a unique symbol system that every student can learn. Each student should have the opportunity to experience music as a means of human expression. . . . [and continues]. . . . This philosophy is translated into the classroom with a multidimensional approach to teaching students as a complex art form and creating an atmosphere where all students can learn.” . . . And I was actually able to operationalize that . . . once I internalized that, I thought, “What does that look like in my classroom?” I was able to really get into that and really develop. For me, it’s all connected . . . developing this philosophy [and] being able to operationalize it. The transference [to educational administration] is creating a vision for the school [and] keeping it present in your mind, because it’s internalized.

*Mission: Operationalizing the vision.* To operationalize the vision, Mitchell espoused, both students and teachers must feel that it is a “part of the [district] fabric.” Patricia acknowledged that at times she set out to operationalize a vision or goal, but first paused to “put it out there and run it up the flagpole and see who saluted. And if nobody does, you say, ‘Okay, this is not an idea for now, a vision for now, but it might be down the road.’”

Schools and districts within large diverse educational institutions might have different visions, but share the same mission, David emphasized:

The mission is to serve. . . . We talk about service . . . I talk about service. Hopefully, everyone talks about service . . . service to kids and service to districts. And then that service has a meaning, and not just having kids feel good, or parents feel good, but that



we can demonstrate that children are learning toward some articulated goals and achievements. . . . For the school districts, I want superintendents who really can create great opportunities for kids, no matter what those look like, and that those opportunities have some equity . . . And my mission is to help support that however I can, whether it's working with a board or whether it's working with a superintendent . . . they are the system leaders.

***Building capacity: Inspiring growth.*** Participants shared a great deal about: (a) what they believed to be the essence of building capacity, (b) reaching out to both individuals and large groups of staff simultaneously, and (c) promoting both individual and organizational capacity. They talked about treating people respectfully, acknowledging their points of view, and stressing collaboration, group competence, and team effort.

In terms of individual capacity, the prominent participant sentiments involved getting people to: “aspire to greatness,” “aspire to do things they didn't know they could do,” “achieve results,” “become something they didn't think they could be,” and “reach a goal that they want to or should achieve.” To Mitchell, this also included having “others buy into what it is that you are trying to achieve, so that they are supporting you without knowing they are doing it.”

Charles emphasized the “we” that is needed to make real change happen in an organization, noting that “there is no ‘I’ in the word team,” and stressing the importance of “trying to bring out the best in everybody.” Charles described the individual and organizational cycle of “learning something new and getting back to something you know,” as a pattern that is continuous and intrinsic to the work of musicians.

Ashley also shared her viewpoint that building organizational capacity is among a leaders' most important job: “It's twofold. It's the training [and] it's the resources.” Ashley

stressed the importance of “asking questions that address understanding, readiness values, and barriers to change:”

How do we feel about it? Do we feel that we need to do this? . . . Do you need more staffing? What else do you need? . . . Is the timing good? What is [the level of] resistance that we’re going to receive? What is the [expected] yield?

Ashley also recounted the frequency with which she witnessed the state education department taking actions like creating new curriculum, designing new instructional resources, and investing large sums of money, only to have very little of their work actually reach the students and staff they were purported to help, simply because they were not well communicated and neither human or technical resources were appropriately provided:

There’s a great model called the *AVictory Model*<sup>1</sup>. It’s how I approach any type of work that I need to do. To get to the real work, you have to be embedded in the reasons as to why the work needs to happen in the first place. And it can’t be, “Oh, this will be fun.” We may enjoy the work that we’re going to do, but why are we doing it? [Is this an] adventure that’s going to improve student learning [and] school climate? Ashley described how she employs the model in her day to day thinking about how best to build capacity and inspire others:

- A: ability. Do the folks . . . you’re working with . . . have the ability to do what needs to happen?
- V: value. Do they value the work that needs to happen? Do they think it’s important?

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<sup>1</sup> From Davis, H. T., & Salasin, S. E. (1975). The utilization of evaluation. In *Handbook of evaluation research* (Vol. 1). Sage. [Citation provided by participant Ashley King]

- I: information. Do you have all the information you need? Do staff members know what they need to know in order to do the work? . . . It's your job to make sure they know it.
- C: circumstances. What does it take to get to the real work? How much stuff are you putting on these people's plates to move forward?
- T: timing. Is it just one initiative or two initiatives that are happening in the school district? . . . Are you giving them two things to do on top of the three that [they] are already . . . involved in? Because that's important. You can't overwhelm people.
- O: obligation. It's one thing to say you value something, but do you feel an obligation to actually do the work?
- R: resistance. You have to measure [and address] the resistance. No longer can we just say, "Wow, it's only a couple of people we can just ignore them." . . . Even if you can't answer the question, you at least validated their concerns, and that means a whole lot to them.
- Y: yield. The real bottom line is what is the yield? What are you going to do differently [now]?

"And it's not all good news," Wyant stressed:

If I know something's coming that teachers aren't going to like . . . [like a new teaching] assignment for next year. . . . "I'm going to look you in the eyes and I'm going to tell ya. I'm not going to be one of those guys who just does a driveway sale. I want you to hear it from me. Here's why I'm doing it." And I say, "You've got to trust me. You've got to trust me that I know that you'll be successful."

The thematic motifs related to the strand *building capacity: inspiring growth*, are detailed in Table 16, and accompanied by just a few of the numerous significant participant statements cataloged in the data analysis on building capacity. These thematic motifs reflect six of the most prevalent suggestions made by participants regarding capacity building: (a) *value human resources*, (b) *treat teachers and staff as experts*, (c) *promote a growth mindset*, (d) *safely navigate change*, (e) *reach beyond satisfactory*, and (f) *step aside and watch what happens*.

Table 16

*Building Capacity: Inspiring Growth: Thematic Motifs With Significant Participant Statements*

Thematic motif	Significant participant statements
Value human resources	<p>“There is an art to building capacity, People feel empowered if you build capacity in them.”</p> <p>“Honor staff members as educators and as people . . . people first.”</p> <p>“Leadership to me is not being the commander. It’s more like being the facilitator, and helping people to recognize their strengths . . . I’m hands off. I believe that the teacher is the ruler of their classroom as long as they are committed to the vision of this building . . . which is challenging students, providing appropriate supports, engaging students, making them want to come to school every day.”</p> <p>“I would read all the articles about being visible and building relationships and rapport and trust. I was in everybody’s classroom just to say hi . . . I would remember that so and so’s mother wasn’t feeling well, and I would e-mail them or text them or stop by.”</p> <p>“My first year, I actually had a yearbook I kept on my desk for the first couple of months, and every day I’d pick their face out, and found their room. I put a face with a name, started memorizing their first names, started using their first names.”</p>
Treat teachers and staff as experts	<p>“I try to help people recognize their [individual] strengths. I try to find common ground for all of us to work on, and then I try to build teams.”</p>

(Continued)

Thematic motif	Significant participant statements
Promote a growth mindset	<p>“To send an email out saying, ‘You need to be in the hallway between periods.’ Okay. People might listen. . . . But when it’s phrased as, ‘As you know, this time of year, the energy level rises in the building. We appreciate the effort you make to . . . whatever it might be.’ I think you’re going to get that buy-in</p>
	<p>“The teachers are the content experts . . . and the idea of building capacity is giving individuals the intrinsic motivation [to grow].”</p>
	<p>“Assume teachers have knowledge, and assume the best . . . I’m about positive presuppositions.”</p>
	<p>“[I told a colleague] ‘Here are my thoughts. I need your help in thinking about this.’ And she went out and not just researched but talked to the right people. [Then she] sent me a bunch of things, and [said], ‘Here’s what I’m thinking.’ And I was like, ‘I could have never thought of this.’”</p>
	<p>“Remain open to continuous learning, not being complacent, and always moving forward.”</p> <p>“Do we have certain professionals who have a lot more capacity? Absolutely. Do we have some where we have to be very directive? We do. In the end, I want the person who we built that capacity [with], to come back and say, ‘Here’s what we’re doing. I think we’d be better served if we did this,’ and that they have enough capacity to intelligently and logically, and with the data, support that conclusion.”</p>
Safely navigate change	<p>“Give people the skillsets, tell them why they are doing something, and share the data or whatever the outcomes are.”</p>
	<p>“This year we instituted something called <i>learning walks</i>, where the instructional coach and I would go in with a template, and we would check off things we saw, and then we come back and debrief about what we saw. And then she, because she’s a teacher, she’s not the suit at faculty meetings; she shares the best practices that we observed.”</p>
	<p>“If you are not growing, change environment.”</p>
	<p>“Establish safety and comfort zones.”</p>
	<p>“I tell people all the time that it is ok to know and admit when they have made a mistake.”</p>

(Continued)

Thematic motif	Significant participant statements
	<p>“Make mistakes. And mistakes . . . they’re easy to fix. But . . . you have to have a way to repair them and know what to do next time.”</p> <p>“If you’re dealing with the reality of your situation, then you figure out other ways to get to where you need to be. If there is something in my way. . . I’m going to have to figure out a way to go around it, over it, under it.”</p> <p>“I realized how much I needed to pull back on my drive and expectation for them. And I needed to think more about how I needed to deliver it to them.”</p> <p>“I’ve never had a grievance filed against me by the union. We have an open-door policy. We work it out ahead of time. And I try to be as focused as I can but keep things light. And school should be fun above anything else.”</p>
Reach beyond satisfactory	<p>“Sometimes the institution of education craves satisfactory because then everyone’s happy. I try to keep everyone happy, but that’s not my outcome goal. Show me the information. Show me the data. Show me what happened to the kids as a result of the program. . . . because if it is just that everyone’s happy . . . all of a sudden, [you might realize] nothing is happening for kids.”</p> <p>“I [focus on] the teachers that are going to go above and beyond what’s expected of them when applicable . . . so that we can move toward being a Blue-Ribbon school.”</p> <p>“I don’t think I built a lot of capacity [in the past]. I think people just did the job, but they really didn’t know what they were trying to do because I don’t think I clearly communicated it effectively. . . . I don’t think I looked enough at other models that existed or learned from other people when I could.”</p>
Step aside and watch what happens	<p>“You have to get out of their way. You can’t stand there and be . . . you can’t be the focal point. . . . You don’t have to be the person right there in front. You need to let them figure it out. I like to step aside and then watch what happens.”</p> <p>“I lead from behind. . . . I like to spend a lot of time talking about why something needs to happen . . . get feedback from folks . . . then you let them take off.”</p>

(Continued)

Thematic motif	Significant participant statements
	<p>“Just like as a conductor, you can’t be a tyrant and get what you want from all those players by saying, “You will. You must. You have to.” You still will take the lead, [but] you have to figure out how to get the collaboration both from the individual, as well as how they [view themselves as part of] that puzzle, or that tapestry, or that orchestra.”</p> <p>“I’m not leading. I’m just kind of going along for the ride, and helping to open some doors as we go. . . . I will not walk into an English room and say, ‘Do it this way.’ My first question will be, why are you doing things like that? Let’s talk about it. Do you think there is a better way? . . . I try to help people get to their own decision.”</p>

***Cultivating leadership: Confirming shared purpose.*** David’s words captured the essence of what each of the seven participants expressed: “I’ve seen a lot of programs that are built by a couple of strong people, but excellent programs have great people at every level who are pushing each other to become greater.”

According to Hitt and Tucker (2015), as an extension of individual and organizational capacity building, effective leaders must also focus on building supportive organizational cultures and encouraging work climates that: (a) motivate all stakeholders to be both teachers and learners, leaders, and followers; (b) sustain positive work environments within which to safely implement change; and (c) instill a sense of belonging. The study participants shared a multitude of parallel ideas and life stories related to this topic which are brought to life within the thematic motifs of: (a) *never go it alone*, (b) *giving co-leaders what they need*, and (c) *recognizing the relationship to organizational change*.

*Never go it alone.* “You can never go it alone as a leader . . . . You can never do it all yourself,” Charles stressed:

[A] school is an ensemble. . . . That analogy rings true in my head, and I think whether it was learning how to play, watching a band, going to see a band, or [creating] the overall product, you can never do by yourself . . . that’s what is intriguing to me.

Never going it alone is about being both “realistic and humanistic,” Charles continued: “I’m one person, I do the best I can.” He spoke about how he segued from: “I’m just one person,” to realizing that “not having all of the answers, [could mean] getting all of the answers from your team.”

Several other participants also acknowledged that they “seek support from others,” “need help often,” “use the people around [them] for support,” “think better when considering other perspectives,” “know that one person cannot do it alone,” and “delegate leadership.” Mitchell described how he came to understand that he could be “more well-rounded as a school leader [if he were] to include these other shareholders and stakeholders . . . and align . . . with individuals that have strengths in the areas of my weaknesses.”

Wyant emphasized that this was something he had to learn: “[Today] I’m not afraid to let people take the reins and do what they need to do to make something happen,” He explained, however, that it took time to understand why this is important:

For years, and years, and years, for example, I struggled with the special-ed accommodations for Regents exams. [Then] I had a special-ed teacher say, “Wyant, I’ll do it for you.” [I said] “Do it.” And she did it great. I said, “It’s yours from now on.” And she does it for me every year, because I don’t need to be the smartest guy in the room. I really don’t. Let’s get the job done.



Marilyn shared a very similar sentiment:

Sometimes I take the lead. I obviously have set the purpose, the goals, the essential questions, the guiding questions, and the agenda for the meeting. But good leadership is also good followership. I'm going to share [the leadership]. I don't have the need, even though I'm a soprano [laughter], to always have the airtime in meetings.

At some point for each participant, however, the conversation progressed from their basic understanding that they can never go it alone, to realizations that good leadership is more than delegating, it is about intentionally collaborating and sharing leadership. These ideas are further expressed within the added keynotes of: (a) *collaborative decision-making*, (b) *sharing leadership*, and (c) *releasing responsibility*.

*Never go it alone: Collaborative decision-making.* Expanding on the earlier analysis, (which described the participants understanding of decision-making with a focus on an often unilateral, solitary process) many participants continued on to speak in greater depth about their commitment to collaborative decision-making. They shared how they often returned to the understandings developed as music teachers when considering this aspect of their job as administrators.

Collaborative decision-making was described by participants as the manner in which leaders “seek feedback” before a decision is made, “talk things out with others,” maintain an “open-door policy” for students and staff, form “decision-making committees,” and “communicate and inform” others when decisions have been made. Mitchell talked about his goal for staff “to feel that they are part of the solution and part of the decision-making themselves,” particularly with regard to “autonomy of [their] classrooms . . . [and] as directors of [their] programs.”

Wyant described how he is committed to “speaking to as many people [as possible] about a big decision . . . and getting input from those people.” He shared how he made this a priority when he arrived at his current school:

There are no [more] decisions made in a vacuum. We have a handbook committee. We have an athletic handbook committee. We have a shared decision-making team. We have a BLT [Building Leadership Team]. I mean we have committees for everything. Patricia clarified the difference between her direct and indirect approaches to decision-making, identifying the indirect approach as an opening for collaboration:

When my leadership is direct, I come into an administrator’s meeting, for example, and say “I believe this is where we need to go. And this what we need to do. And these are the ways each of you can help make that happen.” Indirect is more like, “We have this problem. Let’s brainstorm how we’re going to solve this problem,” or, “We need to improve our test scores or our graduation rates. What are your thoughts about how to do that in your school? And in a month’s time come back with a plan that you and I will discuss”. . . I set the stage . . . I lead in the execution of a goal . . . [but] it requires collaboration from all the players.

*Never go it alone: Sharing leadership.* While all of the participants spoke to their commitment to shared leadership, they had experienced and practiced widely different approaches to distributing leadership among school and district staff. What did become clear, is that all of the administrators interviewed: (a) supported and created increased opportunities to take on leadership roles among their staff, (b) advocated for key leadership positions to be funded, and/or for stipends to be paid to those who stepped up to lead, and (c) made it a priority to provide the resources and training required to ensure successful outcomes.

Marilyn asserted that in her current role as principal, shared leadership “really is relationship building,” and begins by valuing the teacher’s opinions and recognizing their potential: “I see them as leaders . . . teacher leaders are vital.” Marilyn went on to describe a number of specific roles her teacher leaders took on that focused on curriculum and instruction, schoolwide organization and behavior management, providing and organizing professional development, and more. Marilyn shared how she continues to create leadership opportunities, like a recently formed teaching and learning council, and how she is a firm advocate for financial stipends for those who step into leadership roles.

“Leaders don’t build programs, people implement programs,” David advised:

Leaders help design programs. Leaders help put the resources together for the program, but the people who do the work are the people who really make the difference. . . . and that’s why I have people who understand the standards better than I do, understand literacy better than I do, understand lots of things better than I do.

*Never go it alone: Releasing responsibility.* Charles noted that student achievement is actually dependent on teachers and educational leaders understanding that the responsibility for ensuring sound education is on a constantly changing continuum: “The eighth graders that we produce, after they leave here, one person cannot do that. We were all a part of the process.”

In a similar vein, David and others acknowledged that the higher they were on the administrative hierarchy, the less personally involved they tend to be in a variety of situations that they remain ultimately responsible for. Sharing leadership and releasing responsibility fully in these situations becomes a must, David explained:

You have to have people you can trust that are communicating things effectively. . . .

They understand the facts. They understand the policies. They know how to do good

research. They know how to find out either what happened or what they think should happen and why, and how it will affect the organization.

Marilyn talked about how she has been using the *gradual release of responsibility* model for many years as an administrator and her belief that if she stays in her current job long enough: “I think I’d have the Orpheus Chamber group [conductor-less orchestra] that I want.”

*Giving co-leaders what they need.* Participants spoke about the importance of formalizing teacher leadership opportunities by having a wide variety of leadership structures in place for teachers and to formally schedule not only common planning time, but professional development and turnkey professional learning communities to encourage leadership. Several participants provided a long list of practical resources that must be in place for co-leaders if shared decision-making is to become a reality in schools. These ideas are represented under the thematic keynotes of: (a) *training and trust*, (b) *time to plan and process*, (c) *funding and resources*, and (c) *permission to fail*.

*Giving co-leaders what they need: Training and trust.* Charles suggested that leaders consider what they value as educators and spoke to how much he personally “values professional development, [respects] teachers’ ability to teach others, and recognizes when the teacher can take the lead or know more than I do.”

Patricia suggested that trust is built gradually, and described how “over a four-year period,” the administrators in her district and the board of education had learned to “pull together to figure out what we needed” for the district and its students:

When I say they trust me, they know I care about them. . . . It doesn’t matter what their job is—bus driver, part-time secretary, whatever else—I treat them the same way. And I

care about them the same way. . . . They believe in your leadership. And they [participate in the shared work] . . . because they trust you.

All participants spoke about the rich variety and amount of professional development that they provide for staff members and in which they generally co-participate in or facilitate. The job, Ashley explained, “is to train your teachers, so that when new people come on, they can train the others.” Ashley stressed the importance of the administrator’s role in organizing the training and purchasing the appropriate resources, and specified that the best professional developers come on board with a “specific goal “ to fade themselves out of the process:

Administration has the responsibility of making sure that it wasn’t a one-shot deal. That we also . . . give them opportunities to unpack, to review . . . [and] to send the teachers back for . . . the second level of training. . . . Before me, they had done all the training [at] level one . . . but there was never a plan on what to do with it. And teachers were [just] told, “It will be part of your tool chest.”

David also talked about how it is not enough to simply place someone in a leadership position, and gave an example of how he supported one new staff leader:

She is the capacity builder now. . . . She is [the expert in this area]. We gave her a sense of “We want you to do this, we believe you can do this, and we’re going to support you however you need, but here is what needs to get done.” And then we [assigned her] a team of people who work with her as a leader to figure out these answers.

*Giving co-leaders what they need: Time to plan and process.* Several participants laid out their district strategies for turnkeying professional development and promoting shared leadership.

Charles described how in his school, each teacher has a team period every day of the week . . . and then [on] PD Friday . . . [staff] facilitators run different workshops for teachers . . . [for example], tech ambassadors where teachers are teaching others. I have seen that growth . . . that's something that we value in importance.

In Wyant's school, his team created a schedule of common planning time every day: What I did this year was, I set up a series of eight half days for all the high school grade levels so they have time to meet together, either with me or without me. . . . We bring in subs for one-half of the day, and then they flip to the other group of teachers. Kids are in school.

Ashley interpreted the giving of time, as time for staff members to process new learnings and plan for implementation:

Give people due time. You have to have time to do something new. Important work takes time. It doesn't happen overnight. This is my third year in the district and right now, things are starting to come into fruition. You can't expect to be there for a year and, wham, "I've changed everything." In my mind, that's not how leadership should work. It has to be a relationship. . . . Give people time to figure out what we need to do to move our kids forward.

*Giving co-leaders what they need: Funding and resources.* A brief composite of the participants' thoughts on funding and providing resources for educational programs and initiatives included the desires they hold in common to: (a) find out what is needed, (b) fund it, (c) make it happen, and (d) get feedback about it. Participants described at times how they "begged, borrowed, and stole," encouraged departments to advocate for what they needed, and

typically employed some form of shared decision-making to allocate funding on an equal basis. Charles described asking his staff to provide their “ideal list of things needed,” but to recognize that they “cannot have the whole pot.”

Wyant stressed the reality that providing appropriate resources can be linked to staff morale and buy-in:

Most of the time a teacher comes in asking me for something, I’ll give it to them. I don’t fight them on it unless it’s something that’s contrary to what we’re trying to do. But I’ll give them their pencils. I’ll give them chairs. I’ll give them whatever they need. I’ll give them release time if they need to meet with another teacher, but then when I need them with me, I need them with me.

*Giving co-leaders what they need: Permission to fail.* The need to support the “risk of failure,” was a sentiment echoed by several participants. “I think the values I keep and the way I do business now as a principal, I largely did as a music teacher, just on a smaller menu,” Wyant shared: “If you fail, you fail. But you take your best shot at it. It is what it is. . . . Can’t be successful, if you never fail, right?”

“Give people permission to fail,” Ashley also asserted:

I think that’s one of the things that people are very afraid of. “Well, suppose it doesn’t work?” “Well then, don’t do it again [laughter].” Or if it doesn’t work, let’s talk about. “Why do we think it didn’t work as well as we thought it would? Is it because we launched it too soon? Let’s talk about it before we just toss it out.” Because it can’t be that you try something new, toss it out, try something new, toss it out. You also have to go back and find out what implementation factors might have been a big factor as to why it wasn’t as successful as people wanted. . . . No idea is too crazy.

Marilyn and Patricia spoke to the importance of “speaking to the problems directly” and “putting them out there,” and David similarly shared that he learned over time to encourage people to clearly communicate their mistakes and failures:

You want people to do the job, but you also need to make sure they communicate . . .

Failure’s one thing, catastrophic is another thing. Don’t let it get catastrophic. We can always solve a problem. . . . It’s okay if somebody doesn’t know. Let’s figure it out.

At times, Marilyn explained, teachers are simply scared:

They are scared. . . . I hear . . . the buzz out there, “She’s gonna make us do the Daily 5.”

No, I’m not actually. We’re going to focus on balanced literacy, and if it’s not the Daily 5, then what is it? . . . If you hear people talk, they only tell you about their emotions. I say “OK, I know how you feel, but tell me what you’re thinking. Is it the same?

Because it might not be.” Put your emotions aside. . . . I hear that you are afraid.

Mitchell likened the risk of failure to helping people, including himself, to “get out of their comfort zone[s].” Giving co-leaders permission to fail, also means giving yourself permission to fail, several participants noted. “You have to know [and] admit when you make mistakes,” Marilyn expressed: “[People] are like. . . ‘She just apologized to me.’ Yes, I make mistakes. I’m a person. . . . You have to be humble.”

“You make mistakes in all of this . . .and you make decisions, and you get supported for those decisions, and then there’s blowbacks for them,” Patricia also shared. “[But] you learn a certain kind of strength. . . . Your courage gets strengthened [and this helped to] shape my values.”



Recounting his first year as an administrator, David could only say that he made a lot of mistakes, but he survived:

I survived from April to July. [Having been a music teacher], I wasn't afraid of working with kids and I wasn't afraid of working with parents. And I kind of understood program a little bit. . . . So I gave them some ideas . . . I met with every kid . . . I met with every parent . . . and we put in some new structures. . . . [They] spent a lot of money . . . and God, the darn thing worked.

*Recognizing the relationship between shared leadership and change.* Although much of the shared leadership conversation has focused on teacher and other staff members taking on leadership roles, most participants applied what they were sharing to the broader community and to the premise of fostering positive change. Shared leadership must be “purpose driven,” David asserted:

If you're truly going to move an organization, you have to have a strong sense of purpose, and that's not defined by one person. . . . If you do anything without a purpose, people go through the motions. And if it [just] goes through the motions, you don't have the success.

“When you are talking about change and when you are talking about doing something new. . . . you've got to get [other] people to talk,” Ashley asserted: “You've got to work together, because change is hard as it is . . . if people don't feel like they have some input . . . you are never going to be able to move anybody to do anything.”

“We all have roles,” David contributed in his final interview:

We all have different roles . . . but in the end, you are all colleagues [working] towards a certain mission. I think we get a little stuck on “Well, they work for me.” Yes, they do,

technically. But that can't be the day-to-day relationship. Whether it's a teacher, a cleaner, a bus driver, or one of my assistants. In the end, we are colleagues in an organization with a common mission.

***Ensuring high quality student learning: Focusing on outcomes.*** For the seven participants, the relationship between their daily work and ensuring positive student outcomes was paramount. Despite the complexity of issues surrounding students and achievement in educational arenas, the participant thoughts on this topic were so similar, and the shared emphasis on relationships so strong, that the saturation of data and composite of their ideas could be reduced by the researcher to just four overriding thematic motifs: (a) *create safe spaces to learn*, (b) *meet students where they are*, (c) *think about outcomes*, and (d) *evaluate programs and staff*.

*Create safe spaces to learn.* Creating safe spaces for students to learn, participants noted, requires that building and district administrators focus on students first, not as a conceptual idea, but with the constant, concrete mission represented in the thematic keynotes to: (a) *ensure excellent learning facilities*, (b) *build relationships with students*, and (c) *promote self-discipline and self-motivation among students*. Charles cited his district's mission to "promote safety and learning:"

Once students feel safe and comfortable, learning occurs. . . . If students feel safe and they feel successful, then they're going to maximize their learning. It needs to be from the ground up.

*Create safe spaces to learn: Ensure excellent learning facilities.* Both David and Patricia cited the importance of paying attention to the physical plants and the design and management of school facilities so that students have safe, functional spaces in which to learn:

[The] schools were just falling apart, so we continued to work on having our schools in good condition. If you're not warm, if you don't have heat in the building, and if the roof has leaks and you have a pail under there? . . . We developed a master facilities plan. I dubbed . . . the small stuff . . . DRIP [District Renovation and Improvements]. . . [And] the long-range stuff that you have to get the community . . . to fund . . . CAP [Capital Improvements]. All the principals would submit. . . [and we would ask] What's urgent? What's important? What's [just] nice to have?

“We've taken care of a lot of the safety or routine issues [in this region],” David emphasized:

We did our roofs. We did our paving. We [dealt with the] lakes that were forming in the middle of the parking lots. . . . Now we are really thinking about what facilities [we have] and how to use them, and why do we use them.

*Create safe spaces to learn: Build relationships with students.* Several participants strongly emphasized the connection between relationship building and school safety, stating their views that being attentive to individuals and groups of students and remaining highly visible in classrooms and schools is a prerequisite to achieving safe, productive learning environments:

When the kids see that you have their back . . . that they have that support [both inside and] outside of the building, I think it has a huge impact on their academics in the classroom . . . 10 fold . . . because when they see, especially at an off-site performance, or game . . . [that you are] there rooting them on . . . for that moral piece of support. . . . then when they're here in the building, it lowers my disciplinary problems because I

have more of a connection with the kids. And when you lower the disciplinary problems, now the kids could focus a little bit more in the classrooms. (Mitchell)

Mitchell went on to tell the story about visiting a star athlete in the hospital:

I went to the hospital that night to check on him and followed up with his parents. And then the next morning when he came in . . . we talk[ed] about the game, what went well, what did not go well. . . . And then . . . kind of gel it into “What’s going on in the classroom? Where are you academically? What classes are you doing well in? What classes are you not doing well in? How many hours of community service do you still have left before you graduate.

“I use the attributes I developed as a music teacher,” Wyant pointed out:

I try to be personal with kids. I try to find what kids like. I try to be as visible as possible. I try to engage kids out of the regular academic arena. So if they’re playing basketball, I go down and shoot a round with them. I play in the concerts every year with the kids in band, because they just think it’s cool that I play in the band . . . I just try to be a part of their lives. I know that most of them are not going to remember who I am when they’re gone. But I hope they remember that the six years they were in this building that they got a good education [and] had a little fun too. That it was a pleasant experience. And that’s kind of the way I was with music. . . . [But] kids have to be here. They have to come to school. They have to take algebra . . . they don’t have a choice. So how do you reach the kids on the same level [as you could in music] and show that passion with kids who, if they had their way, they’d be building an engine somewhere in a garage.

*Create safe spaces to learn: Promote self-discipline and self-motivation among students.*

Turning the focus of his answer to student discipline, Wyant warned that “We’ve got to make sure kids are safe . . . before they can learn.” He described his first years as principal in a challenging high school this way:

The first couple years, I couldn’t put my finger on it. . . . We were so busy dealing with the discipline piece that I couldn’t even really get into the instruction piece because we weren’t functioning normally . . . We have a pretty dysfunctional community here . . .

Today I actually had a visitor from the state police, the school district police, and child protective services. So that dysfunction becomes your priority in a way. . . . We had to deal with the discipline piece before we could really even get to the instructional piece.

Encouraging students to self-regulate their behaviors and become productive members of their school communities, was a common theme for participant administrators of elementary schools and high schools alike, and they shared several creative ideas for discipline and student management systems that encourage the students themselves to be self-disciplinarians who are self-motivated to learn. Marilyn, for instance, talked passionately about the THINK motto in her schools: “Is it true? Is it helpful? Is it intelligent? Is it necessary? Is it kind? And if it’s not, then you don’t do it or say it.” Asking these questions of themselves, Marilyn suggested, helps students to “manage their impulsivity” and self-determine the right course of action.

“I tell the students trust is based on past experiences,” Charles contributed: “So if a student comes in and they’re not honest with you the first time, that’s a trust conversation. How can I trust what you’re going to say next? . . . Trust is earned. It’s developed over time.”

*Meet students where they are.* To the participants interviewed, meeting students where they are means: “giving every kid what they need,” “want[ing] all kids, no matter where they

[are] to have something that they were going to aspire to,” “giving students choice,” and “preparing students for the next level of education.” This was a challenge all seven participants identified as constant and complex, however:

I thought everyone knew how to give good directions in class where kids could follow. They don't. [I don't observe all teachers] following up, engaging children, asking questions that are meaningful, keeping kids cognitively involved in the lesson, really trying to address where all learners are in a particular lesson, understanding what the heck the lesson is for, and understanding assessment. (David)

The following thematic keynotes highlight four overriding participant directives that help to anchor the complexities of meeting students where they are: (a) *differentiate learning*, (b) *make curricular and program decisions based on what is best for kids*, (c) *understand the power of instruction*, (d) *provide inspiring experiences for students*.

*Meet students where they are: Differentiate learning.* The “fancy word is differentiation,” Charles offered:

[It's about] taking them in a logical sequence [to] where they need to go. . . . You understand where kids are and then try to make them have as much of an individual learning path as possible. . . . Knowing that everybody's learning style is different . . . you might be more of a visual learner, you might be more of a kinesthetic learner, whatever it might be . . . try to have options for students where they can show their knowledge and skill.

“I understand differentiated instruction,” Ashley shared, “because I did it as a band director constantly:”

I mean, constantly. Modifying levels or rewriting. . . . for the clarinet player who had a lot of difficulty, give her the bass clarinet part or . . . take the tuba part and change it from bass clef to G clef and give it to your tenor sax player. . . . or again, just rewrite the literature so they can participate . . . [in] solos and ensembles. . . . We did a lot of that as a musician.

*Meet students where they are: Make curricular and program decisions based on what is best for kids.* Marilyn emphasized the importance of developing sound curriculum and recalled a few of the key points that emerged from her work on a national learning standards project when she was a music teacher: “Way back then [both teacher and student learned to] select the [standard they hoped to master], check off [a rubric], and then provide evidence of how they achieved in their portfolio.”

Writing good curriculum, other participants also emphasized, means thinking about academics across content areas and collaborating with others. Charles suggested that, the idea of advancing learning is not . . . going to come [only] from an administrator, [but] it’s the structure that’s in place . . . a department, figuring out what is best, they feel, to advance their subject and their content.”

To Patricia, this meant,

Everything in my background . . . I brought to the floor. . . . [It is not about knowing] how to write [the] elementary math curriculum or secondary English curriculum. . . . [It is about knowing] what good curriculum looks like. . . . [and] develop[ing] a really strong relationship with a lot of the teachers by bringing them in to do curriculum work.

*Meet students where they are: Understand the power of instruction.* “In my mind,”

Charles shared:

[Instruction is] this three-legged stool. What do you teach? [and that’s kind of directed by the state or the local curriculum], How do you teach it? . . . How do students learn best? . . . I believe that students learn best by doing themselves. And it could be fancier terminology that’s out there, but they learn by taking ownership and doing and making choices.

David noted that he has been thinking about best instructional practices for some time: Powerful instruction is not only inspiring, but technical, and I think when you’re a music teacher or a musician, when you’re studying, you need inspiration in any number of ways . . . and you need technical instruction as best you can. . . . I know the heart of what should be achieved through instruction, and I know when I see good data or when I see good learning, and I think I know the difference between just a random series of activities and really good learning . . . . I want strong programs that are consistent across all grade levels. . . . [and] I think that that experience as a music teacher truly has always [helped me to feel] comfortable in some of these realms. . . . I don’t think instruction is always as natural to every discipline. . . and I see [this] in a lot of lessons. I’m not saying there aren’t marvelous teachers out there because there are. But I do think [as a music teacher] I had a good sense of what instruction should be, not just in my classroom, but what it should be in the school.

Marilyn used an ELA instructional format to similarly describe the role of creativity and imagination in helping others to deliver instruction effectively: “Imagine being a kid and having the Daily 5 [literacy program] as a structure, and then going to first grade. Imagine, right?”



Think about it from the child’s perspective. . . . This is about assured experiences for kids, assured experiences.”

*Meet students where they are: Provide inspiring experiences for students.* Mitchell talked about wanting his “math kids and math teachers to go down to the stock market. I want them to see how numbers actually work in the real world. I want my science kids to go to laboratories, and go to medical centers and their labs to see how this is put into practice and how it’s put into everyday use.”

David also spoke about how beyond basic instruction, he “wanted kids to have an incredible experience, and not just [some kids], but all kids.” He recalled how as a music teacher, he was determined to,

find some common ground with them [students] or try to find an experience that they could be successful at. Because that was it! If you could put them in a spot they could be successful, then you could . . . make sure that every kid had opportunities to be successful at their instrument, and [that] they were going to have the tools necessary to be successful. . . . I just felt like all kids needed opportunities.

“I think you can lose sight of [the students] at times, especially this time of the year when you’re going from one secure box of testing materials to another [laughter],” Charles admitted. He went on to describe a recent overnight field-trip experience he had with students, and how it helped students to build relationships with one another and with him: “I think that just hits home, back to the core. It’s about the kids [and their experiences].”

*Think about outcomes.* Whether talking about curriculum and instruction, differentiation, or opportunities for students, just about every participant conversation about student learning included a discussion of outcomes and assessments. If the researcher were to choose one

standout among the overall responses from participants, one point that they individually and collectively wanted to drive home in the interviews, it would be the importance of understanding outcomes and the value of assessments. These sentiments are reflected in detail under the thematic keynotes of: (a) *getting to an outcome*, (b) *value assessments*, (c) *use the data*, and (d) *just graduating kids is not enough*.

*Think about outcomes: Getting to an outcome.* “Outcomes, outcomes, outcomes, “David stressed:

Music and art teachers always think about outcomes. That’s not the case for a lot of teachers. They don’t understand their outcomes in any kind of meaningful way. It’s “This is the textbook, here’s what the kid produced.” But we [music teachers] know what that level-six standard is. We know what the high school and college standard is. We know how a student is doing against that standard. . . . [It’s about] making sure that everyone understands what we’re trying to accomplish. . . . There should be value added to what we do. And that value added should help children be successful in their transition and in their lives. And we should have structures that support them, and this is hard work. I’m not suggesting it’s a just a simple thing. . . . [But] why do anything that’s not driven on getting to an outcome?

*Think about outcomes: Value assessments.* Effective leaders, Marilyn stressed, “understand both the art and the science [of instruction]. [This includes] designing curriculum, and designing assessments, and understanding that teaching is incomplete without assessments.” We must “know what we need to strengthen”, and always ask “What is the impact?”

Charles stressed that educators most understand not only “What needs to be assessed and why, [but also] how do you assess it?” “It’s [a cycle of] instruction, assessment, and feedback. .

. . [a way] we can measure quality,” David summarized. Others similarly pointed to the critical importance of “developing some type of assessment,” “focusing on data,” and ensuring that curriculum decisions “are the result of a feedback loop.” “[If] there’s one thing music teachers understand, and art teachers understand, it’s assessment,” David continued,

We’ve been doing it since we were in fourth grade. Every lesson is an assessment on what a student does. . . . Our whole system is built on it. Every audition we’ve ever done is an assessment. Every audition we’ve heard a child do is an assessment. Every time we’ve gone to NYSSMA . . . all of it is assessment on a student’s work product against a standard. It all makes sense to us.

David also recalled how he became more and more reflective about assessments as a means to measure how each student is doing:

What do you do when you get the data? . . . Well as a music teacher, you know what you do. You get the data, you listen to the tape. Whatever it is, you get the data . . . how the kids did at NYSSMA, did on their lesson, or whatever it is. And then you knew what to do. You knew what to fix. And it shocked me [when I became an administrator], that many teachers didn’t know how [to do this]. I mean it’s so rudimentary to me. You hear something, you fix it. You call on the sections that are the weakest sometimes to play, not always the best. But a lot of teachers, that’s not what they do.

Wyant recalled that when he first became a principal, assessments may have existed but were not formalized, and how using assessments was a new practice for teachers:

We formalize them [assessments] now. We track kids pretty well here with data. And really just staying on them. . . . We eased into [benchmark assessments] 2 years before we actually made it a formal tool. . . . It’s really making teachers believe they can do it,

and showing them that they don't have to work as hard as they are. Kids can be responsible. Kids should be working harder than teachers should be.

"Planning is everything," Wyant continued:

Plan, plan, plan, plan, plan. And then the numbers are what the numbers are. I say, "If you can put your head on the pillow at night knowing you did your best job . . . today, then you can't be upset with yourself. You can't do more than your best." I [also] say, "if you put your head on your pillow and say, 'Eh, I just kind of walked through today,' that's the issue you have to get on board with." So it was building confidence, it was giving them the tools they needed. . . . And then being willing to kind of jump into the pool with them, and say, "Look, I'm here to support you. Tell me."

*Think about outcomes: Use the data.* Despite the complexities of assessing learning, Mitchell summarized, "[you know you have been successful] when you have positive results." Charles likewise noted that results matter, but it is the ability "to understand and interpret data from multiple perspectives . . . to take different forms of data and make it . . . meaningful and useful to people," that has served him most effectively as a leader. Ashley also stressed that success cannot be achieved unless the data is actually processed and utilized, and actual changes are made when the results are less than positive:

We have all this data floating around. We've brought in lots and lots of data systems for observations, for state assessments, for Regents exams, for local assessments. Now you have to [go back and] start doing the work with your committees. . . . That's part of my frustration, where the building principals look at the data, [and] the teachers are looking at the data, but nobody's having a conversation about [what comes next]. "Oh, we did okay. Oh, we didn't do well." But there's never that next step. So, what are you going

to do differently? What are you going to do to increase the learning in your building? . . . . What do we think the deficiencies are? Looking at the state assessments, why is it that our children, as seventh graders, are still having a hard time identifying the main idea? Ashley also urged educators to go back and look at their curriculum often and continually ask,

“How are the students doing? . . . Is your curriculum aligned with the standards? Are you touching all the standards?” Look at your summative assessments . . . state tests . . . the end of the year exams. . . . universal screenings. . . . Then see how students are doing, looking at the . . . snapshots you take along the way.

Wyant, who began his current tenure as principal when the school had a graduation rate of 47%, spoke to the importance of acknowledging results and monitoring progress:

First of all, it's not panicking at the results because it's just one assessment and they're Seventh and eighth-graders. For God's sake, they're not even human yet. So it's basically putting supports in . . . counseling, getting to know the kids better, getting the families more involved. . . . Look, we have less than 10% of our kids who will pass the 7th and 8th grade ELA or math test, but we have an 80% graduation rate. They're getting there.

Wyant also lamented, however, that whenever he thinks that they [the school staff] are “really moving kids forward,” the reality that this does not include all of the students, can become a continuing source of disappointment for educators:

I thought, until this year, we were really moving forward. Now we have increased the number of students getting advanced regents and advanced regents with honors. We're up to 75% [from 40%] of our kids going to a two or four-year college. That's great. So

I think we are building that thirst and that awareness that they really need to go further than high school. But we still have 20% who drop out. We're losing those kids.

*Think about outcomes: Just graduating is not enough.* “Just graduating kids is not enough,” several participants stated:

[The long-term goal is for] students, wherever they graduate from, [to] have opportunities beyond school . . . We don't prepare kids to graduate; we prepare kids to do something after they graduate. . . . Some kids are more ready to take on their next challenges than others. They've had more opportunities. They've had more rigor. . . or they've had more successful supports. (David)

Wyant suggested that when all is said and done, his message to the teachers is: “Look, we're losing a lot of battles along the way, but we're winning the war. Kids are graduating. The question now, is, “Is that enough?” It's not enough to graduate anymore. It's beyond high school [that we need to focus].”

*Evaluate programs and staff.* Teacher and administrator evaluation, in general, was supported by participants, and in years past participants like Marilyn and Patricia were deeply involved in authoring their school district's evaluation plans. Charles spoke of the importance of evaluation in,

holding a mirror up for people. . . . The teacher, I think, by the reflective process, gains experience. . . . “What are you teaching? How are you teaching? How do you assess it?” And I try to take that paradigm and apply it to whatever I'm doing. . . . I think I probably take away equally as much during an observation as the teacher does.

Ashley suggested that student learning ties in closely with teacher and administrator evaluation and described her approach to observations:

[For teachers], you're really looking at what kids are doing. . . . When teachers are highly effective, kids are now responsible for facilitating their learning. . . . I was going into classes. And I would say to them, "When I do your announced observation, I'd like to see how you're implementing [this specific program] . . . I would like to see that as a component of the lesson that I'm observing. Let me know what time I can come in. . . .

[For principals], I want to see if data analysis is happening? If I go down to the building, do I see a data wall anywhere?

Mitchell spoke to the idea that no matter what subject or language the teacher is speaking, he looks for specific signs:

[If] they are able to communicate with their students, and if the students are grasping the information and have a full understanding of it. I can go into a foreign language classroom, where I don't speak Mandarin, but if I can see that the students are understanding the information. . . . [If] from the second I walked in the classroom to the second I left there was no loss of instructional time, transitions were smooth as glass, and the kids were fully engaged 100% of the time.

But when questioned specifically about New York State's Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR), and how student outcomes are directly tied to teacher and administrative evaluations, responses were very varied among participants:

"To me, that wasn't a great shift," Ashley stated:

Because that was always what we focused on. It was always [about the] performance outcomes of students. And so for us, for me as a music teacher, it just seemed natural

for me to understand that. But for others, it's very difficult for them to understand that. That's the reason why I was never really surprised or felt that it was unjust for me when I became a building principal, to be rated by how well my students were doing on the state assessments, because that to me was just a natural thing.

Marilyn approved of the aspects of this evaluation system that encouraged teachers to “move away from culture of dependency,” and Mitchell supported the idea that there is an “accountability factor [that teachers are] going to be held to . . . when we have discussions.”

David tempered his support of APPR, however, by stating his opinion that:

Accountability does not build capacity. Accountability's important, [but] it's giving them a sense that they are the solution to the problem. . . . I think APPR, at its best, can only measure competence. It can't measure excellence. . . . Yes, we start with APPR, but that's not what we talk about. Tell me about their instruction. Tell me about what you see. Tell me how they make the lessons come to life. How do they make it relevant? How do they work with other teachers?

Wyant cautioned others about the “imbalance of power” between students and teachers, teachers and principals, principals and superintendents, when it comes to being evaluated, and called the APPR in its current manifestation, “probably the most destructive thing to the morale of teachers I've ever seen:”

There have been a number of situations where we [the teachers and I] have to have that difficult conversation. . . . but the APPR in its current manifestation has struck fear into a lot of teachers. . . . I have seen nothing positive from it at all. Nothing. . . . I think I have some outstanding teachers here, and they're the ones that are perhaps most afraid. . . . I mean, I had teachers in tears. I had teachers who decided to retire early. . . . I think it's



changed the way people do things in the classroom. I think a lot of them teach to the test now. They are so focused on post-assessments and pre-assessments that they have lost the bigger picture. I have seen nothing good come out of it. Either for teachers or for myself.

Finally, Mitchell expressed his hope that teachers and administrators will self-evaluate throughout their careers and consider more than the number of years they have been educators:

What do you want to hang your hat on at the end of your career? What did you do innovatively? What did you do effectively? How did you have the kids want to come to school every day? What are the things that you did to get them interested?

***Fostering partnerships: Embracing community.*** Hitt and Tucker (2015) considered *connecting with external partners* to be one of five essential leader practices that positively affected student achievement. Effective leadership practices, they asserted, included building relationships and collaboratively engaging family and community members in the educational process as a way of securely “anchoring schools in the community” (p. 558).

Similar thematic ideas were repeated often and with equal emphasis by the seven study participants who agreed that “we must reach beyond our school and use the resources of our community,” and that “everyone [in education] should be connected.” Charles added that each new connection with the greater community should culminate with getting “the good news out.” Marilyn emphatically spoke about community relationships and partnerships as “non-negotiable,” suggesting that school districts must answer to the community and develop close relationships with parents and district stakeholders and hold themselves to a high standard: “There are the national norms, and then there’s the [higher] school district standard.”

Ashley summarized these relationships as “brokering community resources.” Participant thoughts and ideas regarding this important topic were analyzed and summarized under the thematic motifs of: (a) *open your doors*, (b) *think creatively*, (c) *show up and be visible*, and (d) *be the change the community needs to see*.

*Open your doors.* The overriding assertions that school districts should “open their doors,” “reach out,” “invite community members in,” and “have an open dialogue” with community members was a prevalent suggestion by participants. The schools, the districts, the boards, the administrators, the regional cooperatives, the families, and the local business communities, David suggested, all “need to have a vested stake in everything we do so that they see this as [their school district], their program, that we [who work here, are] just privileged to run. . . . how everyone connects to the community is really important.”

This, however, can be “the most difficult part of the job,” Wyant suggested, commenting on his district’s unique geographical and socio-economic challenges:

[I]f you can picture the solar system, [our] school district is the sun. And then we have hamlets that surround us all coming to this one central place. We are not the center of the community, because there are [many] communities, so it makes it very difficult.

Mitchell also admitted that it can be “a slow process,” but expressed his hope that [with] the mindset of “if you can convince one friend, then have them convince one friend, et cetera, et cetera, you’ll build somewhat of a community and it’ll just slowly keep building.”

*Think creatively.* Thinking creatively about how to open the doors of a school or district to community members was a constant stream of thought among participants. In Wyant’s case, his district “just hired a parent-family coordinator to try to start bridging that gap a little more.”

For Marilyn, making each invitation (including the ongoing parent forums her school hosts) about the students and teachers, has helped increase the numbers of families who attend:

If I made it student-centered I got more parents. So now it's just about kids and teachers . . . I just introduce it, try to just take a step back. . . . The technology teacher and the librarian did the work [for one such presentation] in their encore classes, and they selected kids . . . [who were the focus of the] whole presentation.

During a tour of Mitchell's building, he pointed out to the researcher a number of blank spaces and walls both inside and outside of the building that he described as "artist canvases," which for many years had been left empty and un-noticed by school officials and community members. Mitchell talked about the process he has begun to enlist community members to help elevate these spaces with improved signage, walls of fame, and more, as a means of connecting with the district's community: "because when it comes time for budget votes and things of that nature, I want them [community members] to see the impact of what they have to contribute on the school."

Mitchell added that he must carefully consider the needs of both the school district and the variety of educational stakeholders:

When I'm working with the students, and the parents, and the community members, I have to kind of shift a little bit . . . it's a different approach . . . because each member of an educational community has a different role. The parents . . . the students, [and for instance], upper administrators [who] want to be reassured that you have everything down the way it needs to be, and that ultimatums and mandates are being met properly, and that everything is kind of working as a finely tuned machine. It's a lot of moving

pieces at once. . . . It's making sure that people are just kind of jelling at the same time and things are moving the way they're supposed to.

*Show up and be visible.* It may sound simple, several participants suggested, but “showing up in the community,” “attending as many events as possible,” and “getting ones’ name out into the community,” are critical steps toward fostering positive community relationships and partnerships. “When any of the local businesses [are] doing activities, I always make a point of showing up and being there. . . . When we have any of our community events, I show up,” Ashley emphasized.

*Be the change the community needs to see.* “I look at [myself] as the conduit,” Charles shared:

I want to be the person to help make things happen. So if somebody says, “I was told that this person wanted to come in and do this,” [I would say], “Okay. Let’s see how we can make it work?”. . . . There are [also] investments that we’ve made professionally with teachers, whether it’s bringing in teachers’ college or different consultants. . . . A lot of times we . . . speak during a PTA meeting [to present] what we do in our challenge lab, [or] what it looks like in the science classroom. We’re trying to do that outreach.

Ashley recalled recently recruiting her speech psychologist and several special-ed teachers to give a board presentation about a new reading program they had implemented:

The kids are gaining so much. I mean, it’s amazing. . . . it’s starting to click. . . . And so, when they [the teachers] are down in my office and they’re like thrilled because kids are reading, kids are spelling, kids can visualize the spelling through the strategies. . . . [A] teacher was so excited, she was down here bouncing around. I said, “Well, can you do that in front of the board? Because it would really be nice if we could?”. . . . And I said to

them, “[If] you really want them [the board] to understand, do a lesson with them. Let them experience it. Because then they’ll understand why this PD [professional development] was so important.”

Mitchell provided a recent example of his ongoing work with community members:

I’m working right now with one of the elders of the community. . . . I was speaking with Mr. A, who was born in the 30s, and he was telling me about his brothers who went off to World War II, and who went through school here, and were on the baseball team.

And we were putting together the hall of fame. . . . It’s taken years. There’s never been a hall of fame here, ever. So when we have this wall that’s going to be put up outside the auditorium of all our historical moments here in [this city], of our past athletes, and those who are deceased and no longer with us, this is the change that the community needs to see.

**Realizing organizational change.** Importantly, each of the seven participants viewed their work through the lens of transformation and the positive changes they were able to help their educational teams realize. Participants took their creative role as leaders seriously when it came to determining both the degree of positive change accomplished, and their ability to inspire others to not only embrace change, but initiate change actions themselves. Participant experiences in this passage of their journeys are summarized within a series of thematic strands that suggest what their advice might be to others who want to initiate positive change efforts within their organizations: (a) *be both visionary and actionary*, (b) *value human resources*, (c) *hire great people*, (d) *ensure positive outcomes*, (e) *support the arts*, and (f) *recruit new leaders*.

*Be both visionary and actionary.* Marilyn often described herself, her work and her mission through the ideal of being both “visionary and actionary,” and these two words well-represented the composite of participant ideas on how to fully and successfully realize organizational change: “You have to have the vision,” Marilyn stressed, “but you [also] have to know how to actually create the actions to implement the vision, or it’s just words on a page. . . . [Real change] is in the pursuit and the striving . . . that is where the work is done.” “The point of all of this,” Mitchell also affirmed, is “to not remain stagnant . . . to keep progressing and moving forward.” Participant ideas within this strand are further expressed through the thematic motifs of: (a) *plan for change with a systems approach*, (b) *move from the world of talk to the world of do*, (c) *initiate change thoughtfully*, and (d) *innovate and inspire*.

*Plan for change with a systems approach.* “Great organizations,” David avowed, are built on great systems so that the work will sustain, even if you aren’t there. You certainly have to build people’s capacity individually, but [to do that] you have to have great systems in place [first]. . . . Because in the end, you can’t build great systems on individual heroics.

“I always have a system,” Marilyn explained, and “I am process oriented.” The details she outlined regarding her entry plan as she begins each new job, for example, captured the central tenets of similar approaches taken by the six other participants. Marilyn outlined the following steps in her entry plans: (a) inviting teachers and other stakeholders in to meet and talk with her, (b) asking of them a series of questions concerning issues facing their school or district, (c) sharing her background and asking how she might be of service, (c) collecting data about what she observes and sharing it out, (d) taking time to develop an understanding of the culture of her organization, and (e) focusing on developing relationships—teachers and students first.

Beyond her entry plan, Marilyn also shared her ongoing system of “reflect, review, and refine,” which she not only used for “reflecting and reviewing, [but] for setting agendas, for setting goals, [and] for taking action.” She offered a concrete example:

We created a survey that we put out recently, and we’re collecting all the data. And we’ll be reflecting on it. The TLC [teaching and learning council] will start at 1:30 and go to 4 o’clock. . . . We’ll reflect on the school goals. . . . then we’re going to analyze the survey results. And then we’re going to set the agenda for the faculty meetings for the month of May, and then I will draft the school goals as a result of everybody’s input for next year. . . . I’m closing out one year and planning the next simultaneously. And I think that’s where progress happens as a leader.

Patricia described a parallel system of “tiers, interventions, and . . . process, that might look like a flowchart.” “If you’re me,” she continued, “everything is reduced to a chart. I’ve got these flowcharts, [but] they need to be integrated so teachers see the link.” Patricia shared how she might bring an initial draft of a plan to a meeting:

Depending on who or what it was [I would] say, “This is a draft plan. Give me feedback on the plan. . . . Tell me what you like about it, tell me what you don’t like about it.” . . . And then you do a second draft plan. And then you get to the point of a timeline.

“It’s all part of [a] system,” Ashley also emphasized, noting that many people do not understand the hard work required to employ a systems approach. Ashley described in detail how she still uses a system commonly known to many music teachers as *woodshedding* to help her staff break down problems into manageable parts and understand the value of practicing their skills:

[Woodshedding] is how you teach kids to break something down to the smallest component. Let's say, for instance . . . there's this four-measure passage that you're really having a hard time with. So we'll take out the slurs. . .go right down to the note names. . . you get the note names going, you get the note values going, you get the fingerings going, and then you bring it up to where you can play it slowly. And then you play it again a little faster, a little faster, little faster. [Music teachers] call that woodshedding. . . . [As an administrator], we implemented this new . . . universal screening system. . . . I had to learn [the] new system because the cost of bringing a consultant out here was enormous. . . . And so this is what I do. I go in there and I look at all of the manuals, and. . . I watch all the training videos. . . . Then I go in there and I figure out how [to] set-up the assessment that kids will take. And then, [I figure out] "How do I do this, then how do I do that?" And by the time I'm done with all that information, then I look at it all and say, "Okay. . . . How do I roll them out to teachers? What kind of PD do I provide them? How do I chunk it? How should I group them?" . . . And then I meet with the teachers [and] ask them for their input. After I get the teacher's input and the building principal's input, after I give him a little presentation of all the stuff and what's going to happen, then I sit down, and I organize how we are going to train, and then who's going to do it. . . . In this case, it was me. . . . And I do all the memos [for] the staff as to what they need to bring to the table. And then I have to have my staff prepare all the resources that need to go out in order to implement the new program, so all of that. That's all the background work that people don't see. So that's my idea of woodshedding. It's not easy . . . a lot of time and effort goes into it.



Charles summarized his similar use of a fluid system of “programs and decision-making based on current or projected student need,” but also considered how his “work affects practices and procedures throughout his organization. I think the first step is [to] understand, [to] clarify, [and to] speak with the people involved. . . . To miss that step, you’re on shaky ground moving forward with something. . . . Keep everyone in the know.

*Move from the world of talk to the world of do.* Patricia described what she experienced as the ongoing challenge of “getting out of the world of talk and into the world of do.” Having a vision is the first step, Patricia suggested, but,

if you’re not [an effective] leader, you have trouble getting it into the world of do. . . .

[The] role [of] a leader [is] to oversee the execution of the plan, to make sure it’s succeeding, and analyze that along the way.”

Patricia went on to express her frustration about how leaders must institute numerous committees, and have a lot of meetings “even if you do not like them,” and asked out loud “What do I mean by that?”

I am a people person, but I didn’t like a lot of the process. . . . I liked when I could synthesize and sit down and write [a vision or plan] and then get it reviewed. I love getting into a document and saying, “This is the masterpiece.” But what it takes to get that, you [sometimes] have to listen to a lot of garbage . . . a lot of people impressed with themselves . . . a lot of people who have bad ideas, a lot of people who don’t stop talking. The meetings that go on after you’ve worked a long day, for two, two and a half hours. . . . In the end [however, it is the leaders job] to get [ideas] into a plan that can be executed reasonably and effectively.

Ashley also gave a concrete example of how her staff often has difficulty moving beyond the creation of vision and mission statements, and how this can halt any action on new initiatives:

We have this data committee going. And it took three sessions for them to decide on a mission. . . . I was trying to get them to understand . . . that [if] you've never done this work before . . . to develop your vision, mission [is] very hard to do . . . because you don't really know what the work entails. . . . I wanted to say that 'we spent three, ninety-minute meetings on this,' [but I said] "Let's just take what we have and just put it aside. We can agree that we can live with this for a period of time. We won't publish it anywhere, but now, now let's start doing the work . . . because I can guarantee that once we do the work and come back to it [the vision and mission], then it will make more sense."

*Initiate change thoughtfully.* Wyant cautioned that "initiating change is slow and steady," and Charles suggested that realizing change requires "the idea of evolution, not revolution:"

Be fully in the know with something before [you] talk about a change. If there's change that I've seen that hasn't been successful, it's because it's been too grandiose at first, or there's not an understanding of bringing everybody on board.

Patricia focused on the importance of both timelines and communication:

By what time-frame could we implement this? And what do we have to do before we implement this? We have to get this out there to the parents, we have to advertise it, we have to make it appealing and attractive. . . . You must sell it and tweak it, and communicate the process.

Wyant illustrated an example of a change initiative in his building, and his views on the importance of both timeline and communication:

Say I'm going to institute a new dress code. It's going to be my suggestion. A new dress code. For me, that's a 3-year window. So 2 years before I'm ever going to do it, I'm going to be in a faculty meeting one day and say, "Hey guys, the Supreme Court has been striking down a lot of suspensions based on dress code violations. There's something we need to think about." And then that'll be it. And then the next year, I'll bring it up again and then say, "I've been doing a little more research . . . we're going to talk about this a little more. Is there anybody who would like to be involved in this conversation with me?" And you always get the stalwarts. Then we start talking about it. Then in the third year, we start really getting into it. Then we start getting into examples. We start getting into more buy in. . . . By the time I finally say, "New dress code," nobody's surprised by anything because I've communicated with parents. I've communicated with kids. I've communicated with teachers. It is what it is. And I know I have a core support system that's going to help. . . . you'd focus on those, and they'd start slowly bringing people in. And then you always have that . . . 20% [who say] "I'm not going to do it," and you say, "Yes you are, because now it's policy."

*Innovate and inspire.* Mitchell stressed that being a real change agent means that leaders must challenge the idea of "past practice," and the common "this is the way we have always done it attitude." He articulated his goal to "change some of the thinking and the mindset," to focus on "potential," and on the "people [who] come up with new, innovative ideas and things that can have us grow as a . . . school and as a district."

“Meetings should not be to talk about what we are currently doing,” David also asserted.

He described how he often sits and listens to people talk in long meetings, and finally asks:

“Is anyone interested in doing something a little different?” . . . If I can’t hear somebody say two or three innovative things they’ve [considered or executed], then I’ve got to question, “What are you doing?” Not that change is the end-all frame, but . . . “How do you know what you’re doing is effective?” Just whatever comes across the desk [and] deal with it?

Ashley recalled the major changes that had to happen in her last school when the demographics changed, and how the staff and community relied on their collective innovations to change the building culture and turn their school around:

I mean the board members, they were all like, ‘What are you going to do? How are you going to fix this, Ashley?’ . . . The town was kind of divided, and people were upset, parents were upset, the board was getting complaints . . . And I kept saying to them. . . . ‘We just have to figure out what we need to do to move our kids forward’ . . . We [began] doing really innovative things. No idea was too crazy. . . . We had the music teacher [for example], doing rhyming and songs . . . to help increase their language acquisition. . . . The journey was hard work, but we enjoyed it because we felt like we were making gains. Every year we got our test scores back and every year, when we felt our kids were doing better and they were achieving more, we felt good about it. . . . 5 years later we were recognized as a Blue-Ribbon school.

Mitchell felt that innovation was dependent upon regularly inspiring others and being inspired oneself:

I think that it's having them [teachers] get out of their comfort zone. [Not repeating] the same lesson plans that they've been doing for the last 20 years, [but inspiring] them to come up with new and fresh, innovative approaches to reinvigorate the kids. [I am uninspired, for example] walking into the Charlie Brown classroom where the kids are falling asleep on one side of the building, [but inspired] when I go to the other side of the building and [the teacher's] got territorial tape and boundaries on the floor because she's doing a lesson on trading.

Throughout the interviews, participants also shared a number of stories about those who have inspired them personally. Mitchell, for instance, told the story of a 92-year-old poet he heard speak at a commencement address:

She wishes her generation had done more to prepare the world for the current day that we live in. . . . That's something that I'll never forget because when I speak to my kids now and even my teachers, it's the same thing that I tell them. That we have a four-year window in which to mold these kids, to get them ready for their next chapter in life after high school. Some of them are going to go in the military. Some of them are going to go right into the workforce. And some of them are going to go into college. . . . How do we pull them up? . . . so that they're successful and are able to do something . . . after they graduate high school. . . . I want to make sure I do everything I can within a four-year window to prepare you to make better decisions for society . . . because it's going to be your generation that is in charge.

*Value human resources.* Participant ability to realize change by positively altering the climate and culture of their schools and districts, was directly associated with each participant's self-described commitment to their human resources—staff at all levels, and their desired outcome (or product)—student achievement. Patricia articulated this as the equal importance of creating “a climate conducive to teaching and learning [for students and teachers], and a climate conducive to wanting to come to work [for staff].”

Charles recalled a fellow educator saying to him “culture never graduates:”

And that's kind of in my head . . . How to you create that culture? . . . How do you keep it? . . . [It ties into] making an effort to thank people and follow up. . . . Showing them that you value their piece of the puzzle.

Participant discussions on the topic were explored within the thematic motifs of: (a) *It's OK to be personal*, (b) *be approachable and visible*, (b) *be an active listener*, (c) *act as role model and mentor*, and (d) *celebrate process, growth, and success*.

*It's OK to be personal.* Wyant emphasized the critical importance of getting to know staff members on a personal level:

I get to know their families. I get to know their birthdays. When they have a birth, I'm at the shower. When there is a death, I'm at the funeral. It's just being a part of their lives and letting them know that what they do for me is [more than] a job. I don't only value what they do for their job, I value them as a human being as well. And I think that has served me. It served me well when I was a teacher with my students. I mean I haven't been a teacher for 15 years now, and I still have students who invite me to weddings, and to bar mitzvahs, and birthday parties. And then certainly with teachers

now, because people will come in and talk to me. They get to know me as a human being as well.

Likewise, Patricia recalled the value she placed on getting to know her staff as well as how she learned to count on others who grew to know her personally. She remembered the “anecdotal things people wrote to her at certain rough periods in her career,” and described these relationships as “her rock.”

David similarly reinforced the importance of understanding the implications of making personal connections: “[If] they like the work, [I] feel like they will jump through brick walls for you.”

*Be approachable and visible.* “I am approachable and visible,” Charles stated:

In my mind there is no substitute for being there and being present. . . . Every morning I walk around the building. When the bell rings, I try to be visible between periods. I’m not stopping into every classroom, but I’m a presence in the hallway. . . I am physically visible in the building.

“I made it my business to be visible every day,” each of the seven participants reiterated.

Patricia described it this way:

Teachers got comfortable with me being there. And I would sit and I would stay for a while. . . . [or ask them to] “invite me when you have something new that you would like me to see”. . . . I [would often ask] if they could do it differently, what would they need? And they certainly needed support. I used to love just walk[ing] out of the office and go[ing] into . . . the classrooms . . . I just loved the little kids. [They would] just look up at you and say, “Ms. Charles, are you married?” or [laughter] they would comment on your earrings or something.

Marilyn also shared that:

Being out of my office was where I wanted to be. I try to get out of my chair and just go check in. I try to connect . . . There were certain people I know I need to get to. For me, that's a priority.

Wyant remembered being told that before he arrived at his current school, "principals were never in the hallways." Wyant, however, initiated his own approach:

I try to be as visible as possible ... [both in and outside of the] regular academic arena. . . .

I walk into classrooms; kids don't even notice me anymore. Or some of them will say, 'Hey, Mr. Murray. How are you doing?'. . . The kids don't get flustered.

Mitchell expressed his strong belief that "administrative visibility affects academic success," an understanding that several participants thought was not necessarily shared by all administrators. Ashley, David, Patricia, and Wyant, in fact, all lamented how often they had asked themselves "Where is the leader?" and shared their belief that lack of leadership presence negatively affects everything in education from school climate and morale, to student behavior management, levels of teacher motivation, instructional practices, academic achievement, and community support and funding.

*Be an active listener.* Several participants stressed the importance of being "an incredible listener," "asking clarifying questions," and "listening for understanding." "You better do a lot of listening," Patricia reiterated several times:

You just have to constantly ask, "What do you think? What do you think? What do you think? . . . And then when you get maybe, three, or four, or five people, depending on the size of the organization saying the same thing, you could bet it really is a problem, or a strength, or that's at least the folklore about the problems or the strengths. So, I think that



that's very key. [If] you don't listen, nothing's going to happen. You're just not going to know, and so you're going to make decisions without knowing,

Charles, likewise, suggested that: "I always try to be a sponge and try to listen [to] make informed decisions."

*Act as a role model and mentor.* On this topic, all seven participants were clear, and strongly asserted their belief that the frequently asked questions regarding "why teachers don't do certain things," should be followed up by asking if "there is a leader taking the time to work with them on those [things]." "If the answer is no," several participants stated, then "that's the reason why" teachers might not be meeting their expectations.

Mitchell pointed to Bob Marley (a Jamaican singer song-writer) to describe what he views as an important quality among leaders in any field: "He led by example . . . he walked the walk, and he talked the talk:"

As an administrator, as a leader, if you don't believe in what it is that you're telling people, and you're not leading by example . . . what are you getting accomplished? Are you here for a paycheck? I mean, if that were the case I could've gone into corporate America and made half a million dollars. You don't go into education for the money . . . Let people see what it is that you have to offer, where it is that you're headed, and [that] you're leading by example, by doing. Not just sitting behind a desk, sitting behind a computer, sending out emails, and saying what you would like to have done.

Many participants attributed much of their individual success to being actively and continuously mentored by senior administrators who believed in them and were prepared to promote them as they progressed as educational administrators.

David, for example, described his experience with one district superintendent, and how he tries to pass this type of mentoring on to others:

“I think you are going to be a superintendent and I want you to learn how to do everything”. . . And he knew how to do everything . . . was well respected. I did learn HR [human resources] and school finance. . . . collective bargaining . . . I was at the table. I had never done any of that. Never as a teacher, or administrator . . . If there was an experience, he wanted me to have it. He’d come in and talk about organizational charts or we’d talk about instruction. . . . He would take the time to explain things that people don’t really understand in today’s world. What the school logbook is, what the commissioner’s decisions are, and how they’re all interconnected. . . . Piece by piece, little by little, [he] put me in an unbelievable spot . . . I learned so much . . . and I was practicing it too. He gave me lots of authority. . . . [And when I decided to change jobs, he provided] advice on how to prepare for superintendent interviews. . . . I still use [his example] today when I talk to folks [about their careers].

*Celebrate process, growth, and success.* Without exception, conversations with participants turned to the importance of recognizing and celebrating the work of educators, not as a reward, but as an acknowledgement of progress and growth. Participants shared the importance of “taking pride in the work people do,” and “celebrating the synthesis of the work.” They also warned against the approach of “achieve, get rewarded,” replacing it with the acknowledgement of those who “keep going” under challenging situations, and remembering to “take a pause,” to organize “enjoyable culminating activities.”

Patricia spoke of how she enjoyed “lavishing praise” on others, and Ashley described the culminating events as “my favorite part” of the work.

Ashley recounted her days as a music supervisor and expressed her feeling that the true reward for music students, teachers, and supervisors was the “making of the music. . . . The reward for doing all the work? . . . You got to hear really great music at the end, created by kids.” Both Ashley and Marilyn recalled that later in their careers as principals, they experienced a combination of surprise and pride in their school communities after receiving the state’s Blue-Ribbon status for achievement.

After we received the Blue-Ribbon Award, we celebrated. I mean, we did. We booked a restaurant. We had a huge celebration. . . . And it was us and the teachers. . . . All our kids came to school on Blue-Ribbon buses. . . this was a success not for a teacher, a school, a district . . . but for the whole community. (Ashley)

“We’re still celebrating,” Marilyn announced:

We had a Blue-Ribbon committee that turned into the Blue-Ribbon celebration committee. And we created a Blue-Ribbon calendar for the year. . . . You don’t stop to think sometimes . . . because you’re always moving forward and trying to do the work, and you’re just in it. [It’s important] to step up on the balcony to look down to say, “Wow! We’ve done a lot in five years.””

Ashley also talked about the importance of connecting with the daily work and achievements of kids and teachers in classrooms as a means of maintaining her “balance between celebrating [learning] and dealing with the hard things going on:”

When there’s a tough day or something’s happening, I go find a classroom I can visit. I used to do that when I was a building principal too. You know, [if I] have a tough parent meeting, I . . . pop into the elementary, to a kindergarten classroom, and sit there and do

manipulatives, or engage with kids in multi-sensory learning, or go to a music class . . . grab an instrument, sit down, play with the kids.

***Hire great people.*** Five of the seven participants discussed playing a role in hiring educational administrators for their districts, and all seven mentioned their participation in the teacher hiring process in one or more school districts. Each expressed their deep understanding that hiring affects every aspect of their collective work as educators and the success of schools and districts. David underscored the participant commitment to “hire great people at every level” of their educational organizations and suggested that “you can’t have expansion if you don’t have extraordinarily competent people.”

An overview of the substantial amount of data on this topic discovered during the interview analysis, resulted in this thematic strand being presented in Table 17. This table highlights several thematic motifs that summarize the composite of suggestions that participants had for hiring effective teachers and educational leaders. These thematic motifs include: (a) *hire people who can offer something you can’t offer*, (b) *hire people whose competencies match the role they will fill*, (c) *hire people with fresh ideas*, (d) *hire people who communicate effectively*, (e) *hire people who get the most out of others*, (f) *hire people who are passionate about achieving and understand outcomes*, (g) *hire people you can trust*, (h) *hire people who will make hard decisions when needed*, (i) *hire people who value relationships*, (j) *hire a diverse group of people*, (k) *hire people who will push their leaders to think in different ways*, and (l) *avoid common hiring mistakes*.

Table 17

*Hire Great People: Thematic Motifs with Significant Participant Statements*

Thematic motifs	Significant statements
Hire people who can offer something you can't offer	<p>“Anyone who can offer something that I can't offer, I'm interested in. If they can offer a perspective or skills that I don't have, I probably want them around me.”</p> <p>“I seek people that can strengthen my weaknesses and whose areas of need my strengths will support . . . so that we kind of cover each piece of the puzzle evenly.”</p> <p>“I always try and surround myself with people that are different than me, have different strengths than me, and who are very capable. Some days I think the people around me are much more capable than I am. That's half the trick.”</p>
Hire people whose competencies match the role they will fill	<p>“There are some things that you can't teach people. When I was an administrator looking for a teacher, I really focused on diagnostic skills. Somebody, [for example], who can listen to a child read and know if they are they reading with prosody (pitch, stress, timing) . . . [and if] they understand what they're reading.”</p>
Hire people with fresh ideas	<p>“We need to look at . . . strong individuals that can come in with fresh ideas and innovative ideas. . . . I want individuals that have ideas outside of the box.”</p>
Hire people who communicate effectively	<p>“To me, it was more about, ‘How are they going to communicate with staff, what are they going to convey? What is important to them?’ Because I know that what's important to a [new hire] is also what's going to [effect what] happens in the building.”</p>
Hire people who get the most out of others	<p>“I also want people who can get the most out of others, but in a way that people appreciate the work. I don't want people scared into doing their job. I want people motivated to do their job.”</p> <p>“How [others] motivate people [is] sometimes different than how I motivate people. It's funny. I don't really think about it a lot, but you know it when you see it.”</p>

(Continued)

Thematic motifs	Significant statements
Hire people who are passionate about achieving and understand outcomes	<p>“Hire people who know how to define [achievement] in some way. Then people grow in that, over time, and people learn. People build capacity.”</p> <p>“I have great people who will work with me, who really know their jobs, and know what is asked of them, and know what deliverables are expected.”</p>
Hire people you can trust and who are willing to learn	<p>“You have to hire people you can trust. . . . with an unquestionable sense of ethics.”</p> <p>“Are you willing to learn? Are you a hard worker? Do you value the team effort?”</p>
Hire people who will make hard decisions when needed	<p>“I don’t want people who are bullies or intimidators, but I want people who will make hard decisions. I want people who, [even though] they might not like it, will do what they need to do. . . . and will follow up.”</p>
Hire a diverse group of people	<p>“It’s more than just gender, more than ethnic [diversity]. . . . There are people who have certain skillsets that I just don’t have. People who have worked in various parts of education that I’ve never done. . . . and that’s healthy.”</p> <p>“I think that diversity is just trying to find [in different people] what is needed to meet the needs of the students.”</p> <p>“The cultural diversity component . . . to me it’s a natural thing . . . because as musicians we study so many different cultures. . . . I’m more savvy when it comes to . . . cultural dynamics. I mean we were embedded in [cultural diversity] in order to understand [music] in history, in culture. . . . It’s not something I think about, [but] I identify it when it’s lacking.”</p> <p>“I was not there when I first started. Now, I am very attuned to it [diversity]. I think probably when I started, I wanted people who were more like me than dislike me.”</p> <p>“In terms of diversity . . . you [also] realize the different beliefs that people bring to a table . . . they’re unique and they’re value added.”</p>

(Continued)

Thematic motifs	Significant statements
Hire people who will push their leaders to think in different ways	<p>“I do not want to be in a room without diversity. . . I do want a table of individuals that don’t all have the same point of view.”</p> <p>“As a goal. . . . Perhaps [we can] more effectively train and draw people, men and women of all colors and backgrounds into the profession.”</p> <p>“One of the problems we all have is we are ourselves, and you need to be that, but at the same time, you’ve got to listen to others.”</p> <p>“Listen to them and the results will be better because of it.”</p> <p>“They’re always getting me to think in different ways and always pushing me.”</p>
Avoid common hiring mistakes	<p>“Districts where people [just] move up the ladder, or they know each other. . . . It’s a little too familiar, [and inhibits sound hiring practices].”</p> <p>“The principals I know are all like me. We’re all WASPy. We all came from lower-middle-class or middle-class homes. We all went to four-year schools. . . . In this county as far as diversity, our administrative staffs and teaching staffs do not reflect the student population in this community.”</p> <p>“Rarely do people say, ‘In the next three years, we have three things we wish to accomplish that are really important to us and we know are critical to our mission. And we’re going to make sure the person has the right skills to do that.’ We tend to hire based on how we feel versus what we hope to accomplish. I see that over and over and over and over and over again.”</p>

Charles brought the discussion of hiring back full circle to being a band director:

If you have this vision or mission of what a good sounding band should be, what do you need to achieve that? For me to achieve that vision of the band, you need different instruments. And they all add a different value. The timbre of a saxophone is different from a trumpet. The best trumpet player’s never going to sound like a saxophone player.

And I think when hiring, whether it be teachers, or administrators, it's that idea . . . that you all bring something [unique] . . . but have the same common purpose.

*Ensure positive outcomes.* As a result of the data analysis, a detailed discussion of assessments and outcomes has been woven through several sections, categories, and overarching themes. In this thematic strand, the researcher briefly returns to the theme of ensuring positive outcomes, this time in response to the strong emphasis that participants placed on outcomes as they relate to realizing organizational change. A common viewpoint among participants, was that assessments, data analysis, and a focus on outcomes is vitally important to effective leaders and organizations who desire transformative change. This idea is summarized through the thematic motif of *staying on course toward outcomes*.

*Staying on course toward outcomes.* Ashley stressed that educators often “adopt a program because of the yield. . . . but [explained that] in order to get the result [and see positive change], you have to implement it with fidelity. . . . you have to do that work in order to get the result that you want.”

“If educators cannot articulate how they intend to achieve outcomes,” David also suggested , they are unlikely to realize positive changes:

If I see an elementary teacher who can't speak to their literacy results, that would concern me. . . . If I see a superintendent [I might ask], “What are the three things you really most want to accomplish in these next couple years and why?” If they can't answer that question, I would have concerns. . . . If I see a high school principal who just thinks about the massive schedule as an end result versus what it does for kids, and can't speak to their graduation results, and what happens to those kids, and what opportunities they provide for kids, that's a concern for me. So, if they can't articulate outcomes, that



would be [a concern]. . . . Part of my job is to make sure that we stay on course towards our outcomes, and you just hope that they're the right outcomes and the right measures.

***Support the arts.*** Each scholastic discipline must be “valued equally” if positive organizational change is to be realized, Marilyn asserted. In establishing this stance, Marilyn made the decision to “always use the phrase, *the other academics*,” when referring to arts and music disciplines, a phrase the researcher used to name the thematic motif for this strand.

*The other academics.* Wyant pointed to new state curriculum mandates that minimize the arts in 21st century classrooms: “The state has set it up that way. Especially now, the focus is on math and reading for everything. So everything else takes a back seat to it.”

Despite this reality, one that most participants made note of several times during the interviews, all participants expressed their belief that schools should have richly supported arts programming available to students. Marilyn described many of the administrators she has considered effective, as individuals who understood the important role of arts in education. One such superintendent, Marilyn noted, was,

a big art supporter, not just of what we did here in the building, but outside. She was a patron of the arts. She wanted to ensure that every child had a path to success, and that included the arts. . . . When she used the word academics, she didn't [have] the connotation that everybody has [that] academics is English, math, science, social studies, [and] maybe Foreign Language.

***Recruit new leaders.*** Participants were asked directly about the recruitment of new educational leaders in the 21st century, and their answers are briefly summarized within the thematic motifs of: (a) *whose responsibility is it?* (b) *who wants the job?* and (c) *recognizing the potential in others.*

*Whose responsibility is it?* When asking participants about the role of current administrators in the training and recruitment of future educational leaders, responses from participants varied from “I don’t have responsibility for it. Not . . . me personally. . . . [and] in some respects I’m more concerned about local matters than things like [administrator recruitment] that are more distant from me,” to “we need to think universally. . . . [and I feel the] responsibility for making sure that [sound educational leadership] and the opportunity to be inspired by others continues in the next generation.”

Participants did have in common, however, the shared belief that all is not well with the current state of educational leadership in our nation. Participants also shared that they felt uncertain about their ability to alter this reality. Speaking about New York state education department politics, for instance, Ashley shared that:

Maybe that’s just my defense mechanism because of all the change that’s happened around me, that I just can’t get embedded in it anymore. I just want to know, how much local control do I have? Just tell me how much local control that I have, and then I can work with that. I can figure it out from that point on. I know it sounds kind of cynical.

Patricia restated the importance of “finding the talent, recruiting them, training them, giving them the means to want to go into the field, and then supporting them.” We have to have effective principals, and superintendents, and school boards, and communities of people who value public education . . . just to begin to turn this ship around. And it has to turn around in this really narrow canal.

*Who wants the job?* Several other participants shared their concern about the lack of “people who want the job.” “This business needs good leaders,” Marilyn emphasized, “and

people like me, I'm retiring, my husband is retiring. We're like a dying breed, and the next generation needs to step up to the plate."

Wyant shared a similarly bleak account:

The profession has changed. [I know] six high school principals within five years of retirement, and there's nobody out there. [The school district] next door to us has been without a principal for three years. They can't find anybody who wants to take the job. . . . Nobody wants to do this anymore. I mean, who wants to do this anymore? When I became an administrator, it was fun. I had fun. I don't have fun anymore. I mean, I enjoy my days, but I don't have fun. A lot of its driven by the state, APPR, all that stuff. And the mandates . . . I just don't have fun anymore.

Wyant went on to point out that accompanying the shortage of potential educators seeking administrative jobs is the more serious shortage of candidates with actual administrative experience and the skills and competencies needed to be an effective leader:

What I see is people at my level with tons of experience and people with none. I don't see that middle road much. . . . And all the principals I see around here, 'How long were you a teacher?' 'Three years.' 'Okay, were you ever a principal?' 'No.' 'Okay, well good luck to ya.' They're throwing them into situations where they need somebody there.

Several participants suggested that teachers with experience in a variety of disciplines might consider administration if they recognized what Marilyn called their "transferable skills." Commenting specifically on the common misunderstanding that administrators must be experts in all content areas, Marilyn reiterated that:

Everybody comes [to the leadership table] with expertise in one content area, right?

[You are not likely to be an] expert in all of them, because you have an affinity for one or two maybe, if you're lucky. Most teachers have one.

*Recognizing the potential in others.* Most participants explained that they saw their role as primarily a support role in which they recognize and encourage individuals who work with them, and demonstrate a capacity for leadership, thus paying forward the type of support they received as teachers.

As Ashley shared:

I do see my role as noticing who are the leaders in my buildings and prompting them to be leaders. That's what happened to me. I wasn't even thinking about leaving the classroom until a building principal and [the director of music] said, "Go get your administrative degree."

Charles similarly stated that in terms of recruitment, he didn't want to sell the idea to others, but gave an example of how he might speak to a teacher who he viewed as having leadership potential: "I just want to give you the facts and [share my] experiences, and [let] you make your own decision . . . I see a lot of the skills you are developing are very similar to my [administrative tasks]."

Wyant similarly recounted that:

There have been some teachers here where I've said to them, "You would make a great administrator." But I'm not going to push them in that direction. Because they ask me. They know the hours I work. Even though I make good money, when you break it down by the hour, I make less than a teacher does. They know the headaches I deal with because they see them.

Marilyn, however, shared the strong obligation she feels to mentor staff members with certain competencies and qualities toward leadership, and in particular, to point out to other music teachers the relevant leadership skills she observes in them. She described a recent discussion about a music teacher in which she pointed out her leadership skills:

[She has] all of the transferable [leadership] skills that we have as musicians, that make us great administrators . . . She can deliver tough news in a way that can be heard. And she's bright. She's a hard worker. She developed her own band pre-band method book that I want to help her get published . . . She scaffolds instruction like nobody. Every elementary teacher should see her scaffold instruction when it comes to literacy. It's unbelievable. . .[and] she has the scheduling gene.

### **Belonging at the Leadership Table: Aesthetic Cadence**

To abridge the large amount of phenomenological data collected during the field work and subsequent data analysis that charted the seven participants' development as musicians and music teachers, and their transition from teachers to leaders, and to segue into the Chapter 4 summary, the researcher opted to conclude the section belonging, with a return to participant portraits that begin with the title *aesthetic cadence*. Cadence is a musical term that refers to the tempo, rhythm, pace, and pulse of a composition. These portraits are written to highlight the distinctive quality and rhythm of each participants journey toward leadership and to honor the aestheticism and artistic creativity that participants' have named as fundamental to their work as educational leaders and their sense of belonging at the leadership table.

At one point during the interviews, Marilyn described how she had to drive "46 miles over two bridges to a place where . . . my creativity blossomed," and later spoke about using music to build bridges in the important process of relationship building and leadership. To

borrow Marilyn's analogy, the bridge or bridges which participants crossed over on their journeys from music teacher to educational leader appeared, based on data analysis, to be bridges that they were able to cross back and forth on throughout their careers as educators. The following portraits highlight the voices of each participant as they spoke of overriding understandings and competencies, deepening relationships, and fundamental core values that they have taken with them as they as they have transitioned more fully from one side of the bridge to the other.

This final analysis category and the participant portraits that follow conclude the researcher's journey through the rich collection and the deep analysis of the data and serve as a segue into the Chapter 4 summary and Chapter 5 discussion.

## Wyant Murray

My Mom, believe it or not, is 91 years old, and she still comes to every concert I play in.

To be honest, I never intended to teach. I always wanted to be a performer. I took the few extra classes needed for a teaching certification because a professor said: “You never know what’s going to happen in life.” I went from conservatory training, into a professional performing career on the road, into a teaching career in middle and high school.

My expectations as a teacher were, “Boom, let’s go.” And I had to temper that because these are kids. It’s great to have high expectations, but sometimes my expectations were unrealistic, and I had to realize that it’s okay to be a third clarinet player. The world needs third clarinet players who may not aspire to be better than that but love what they do.

And I learned that as a musician, as an educator, you can really reinvent yourself time and time again. You really can.

~

You never know what’s going to happen in life.

My Dad was an old school guy, well into his 50s when I was born. He quit school as a teenager when his Dad died, worked all his life, but did not graduate from high school.

My Mom, the one focused on my education, graduated from high school and nursing school. Both supported me musically and in leadership, knowing my greatest strength is the ability to get along with people from all different walks of life.

As a musician, as an educator, you can reinvent yourself time and time again, and I do, both by recognizing who I am and developing new attributes along the way.

As an educator, so much of your job is just public relations, just basic talking to people.

If you can’t do that, you’re not going to be successful. I don’t care how well you do everything else. You’re never going to get by, and people are never going to trust you.

You have to be able to relate to people on their level.

You can’t expect them to relate to you. You’ve got to relate to them.

~

Knowing my greatest strengths has helped me to forge new territories.

On the road for many years as a freelance musician, I had a lot of different experiences, working with a lot of different people, in different areas of the world. I walked into situations where I didn't know people, didn't know places.

But if you want to be hired again, you get along with everybody. That certainly was a valuable tool that I leaned on when I first came into the classroom, into schools. Now, as an administrator, I can relate to the custodian or the PhD.

I'll find something in common with both and talk to them.

I think that has helped a lot. I really do.

I've got to relate to people, to talk to people, to think with people, to move forward with people, to make changes with people, just to get by.

And people help me to take on challenges, at times intentionally. I chose my current high school, with a majority of students on free and reduced lunch, many struggling. After 2 years down thousands of referrals and less than 10 out of school suspensions each year.

After 3 years now up from less than half to 80% of students graduating.

And some days I think: "Wow. I'm making a difference," because you never know if you are making a difference in a kid's life.

~

I've leaned on people, honored people, as the most valuable tools in my leadership reserves.

At the end of my third year as principal in one high school, I recall the kids walking up to receive their diplomas, and each handing me a banner in their school colors.

I had no idea what this was for until the valedictorian stopped his speech and said, "These are presented to Mr. Murray as an award for bringing life back to our school."

You never know if you are making a difference in a kid's life.

I still consider myself a musician and music educator, performing on trumpet and trombone, guest conducting, and continuing a small private studio that is free of charge, requiring only that the students "do exactly what I say and work hard."

I do it because I love to do it. I don't think I'm ever happier than when I'm playing. It's just one of those things where I forget about everything. I don't think about school,

I don't think about the challenges. I just play, and my Mom, at 91 years old, still comes to every concert.



## Patricia Charles

The pursuit of excellence and the values of trust and honesty were instilled in me in my schooling.

I always had a passion, love, and interest in kids, and was ready to teach. Although I could not start out as a string teacher, because there were no such jobs in my state in 1969, there was a shortage of teachers and I got a job as an elementary general music and choral teacher.

I taught 1,100 children in five schools each week.

When finally, I got a job in the middle school five days a week, I thought: “Oh, my God. This is so thrilling to be in one school all day long.” I was able to start an all-boys choir and a string program that grew so large, that its two orchestras filled the gym floor.

I didn't go directly from being a music teacher to wanting to become a school administrator. Knowing I was never going to be one to do the same thing for 31 years, I took a major digression after about 15 years of teaching, and pursued other interests, while teaching piano and violin from a little studio in my house.

~

I had many passions, loves, and interests.

I got a master's degree in political science. My thesis was like some people's dissertations, and I was going to go into politics. Yet somehow others pulled me back into music teaching, music supervision, and eventually administration.

I knew I was never going to be one to do the same thing for 31 years. Ever.

The years spent as a building principal were among the happiest in my career. I just loved it. It's not like it was all cookies and honey. There was a lot of problems there, a lot of issues, but I got carte blanche to do a lot of things.

From pillow and blanket assemblies, to the Earth Day clean-ups and the every-other-month themes, I had a chance to really use my creativity and I had input from good parents and good teachers. And, wow! It was powerful. It was great.

~

But again, I was pulled in a new direction, toward a new challenge.

I knew I was taking on a district in serious trouble when I became assistant superintendent and then superintendent in a new district. The clean-up was just tremendous.

Relationships had broken down, finances were bad, we had trouble passing budgets, we didn't have programs for kids who needed support or kids who were really bright, there was virtually no professional development for staff, and we were getting a lot of bad press.

It was everything that I had ever cleaned up before and more.

Yet we just kept moving forward and learning from our mistakes. I always thought that

I was born to clean up messes.

And, wow! It was powerful.

Despite a lot of obstacles, a lot was accomplished.  
I feel very good about the paths that I've taken. I'm proud of what I have done in my career,  
and I have no regrets. I feel like my professional life was purpose-driven.

~

I've just kept moving forward, while reflecting backward.

There's no question in my mind that my experiences as a music educator were fundamental to  
my success as an administrator, but that isn't the whole thing.

If you're talking about qualities and characteristics, they're not going  
to all tie back into music. It's not in compartments. I can't separate out things like  
hard work, or diligence, or stick-to-itiveness.

It's not hard work here, and music educator there. It's not persistence here, and music educator  
there. But these are the threads that came directly through my experience and training as a  
musician and as a teacher, which are wired into my brain  
and are inextricably linked.

The paths I've taken in my professional life have been purpose-driven.

When I retired, a new scholarship was generated in my name that would recognize  
students involved in music, in leadership, and in service to others.

Recalling this honor brought tears to my eyes.

The pursuit of excellence and the values of trust and honesty have come full circle.

## Mitchell Kline

It's in the small things, positive change.

Roberta Flack said: "When you have that little musical voice in the back of your head, use it and exploit it positively, use it to express yourself."

As a teacher, I transitioned from a district of 1900 + schools governed under one urban department of education to a small affluent suburban district whose school board supported the arts.

As a teacher, I moved on from a catch all general music program created from scratch, to the opposite end of the pendulum and four high achieving choirs, where I watched kids be self-sufficient, need very little guidance, act seriously and as self-disciplinarians at rehearsals, and give performances that were spot on.

As an administrator, I want to use all of my experiences, both positive and negative, and pass the lessons learned on to the next generation.

~

I will keep moving forward.  
It's in the small things, positive change

As an administrator, I want to make it very clear that I am a musician, and I will fully support the arts, and spread that same level of support across every content area.

I will help kids be self-sufficient.  
It's in the small things, positive change.

As an administrator, I want my students and teachers to grow, to broaden horizons. I want to support them as I have been supported. I want them to experience things beyond the classroom, experiences that will make their eyes open wide and shout 'Wow.'

~

I will support the arts.  
It's in the small things, positive change.

As an administrator, I will be visible in ways as simple as going through the McDonald's drive-through down town where our high-school kids are the cashiers and enjoy seeing you. I will stop and to talk to their boss for a minute to ask: 'How are our kids doing here? Are there more hours available for our students?'

I will help students and teachers to grow and broaden their horizons.  
It's in the small things, positive change.

As an administrator I will shake everyone's hand at school events. I will say  
'Oh, good to see you.' I will speak with the board members, the local sheriff, the parents,  
the students. I will put in long nights and make sure everyone is happy  
and that the budget passes. I will also notice that 'the last people standing,'  
both literally and metaphorically are the musicians, and  
I will join them for a few tunes.

~

I will be visible.  
It's in the small things, positive change.

As an administrator, I am going to respect the balance  
between being an administrator and a performer, but  
I will play the trumpet every day and keep doing this at 90 so I can pass it on to  
my children and students.

I will shake everyone's hands and join in a few tunes.  
It's in the small things, positive change.

"When you have that little musical voice in the back of your head, use it  
and exploit it positively, use it to express yourself."  
This is my forever vocation  
and I believe  
it will be in the small things, positive change.

## Marilyn Nichols

It's Monday. I'm in the chair.

As a teacher, I had my own professional standards for the K–12 music programs I directed.  
To realize my full potential as a teacher, I had to leave places where  
music was not valued; my work was not valued. Each time I did,  
my whole world was transformed,  
and I felt everything come together for me.

At times I had no classroom, so I taught music on wheels. I once pulled the piano and the  
piano did not move back. I pinched a nerve in my neck and could not conduct. This hazard of  
being a music teacher led to the 'Orpheus chamber music'  
mode of conducting. I would walk in and sit in the audience and watch the  
students take the lead. It was awesome.

I became incredibly metacognitive, the attribute I realized I was missing as a child learning to  
read, write, practice, everything. It changed my world. I began to develop new dispositions  
through *Habits of Mind* and teach them to the kids and the teachers. This work,  
merging with my background in music, became the  
linchpin of who I am now.  
The core, a way of being, who I am.

~

Everything came together for me and I realized my full potential as an educator.

But I suffer from honesty: "You need some voice lessons,"  
I said to one workshop presenter. I went on to tell him about breathing, and lifting the palette,  
the velocity of the air stream, and how it keeps the palette up, and  
the technical side of singing, and  
he said: "You need to write a chapter for me."  
I said: "I'm not a writer, ask my 11th grade English teacher, look at my grades."  
And yet the 'kid who couldn't write' became a published author.

Being metacognitive is now my way of being, the core of who I am.

As both teacher and administrator, I dove into educational theories and  
intellectual practices, wrote curriculum, designed assessments,  
and read all the articles about being visible and building rapport and trusting relationships.  
It was profound. Teachers and students experienced success.  
Schools and communities were donned in blue-ribbons. I developed positive inclinations  
and sensitivity, and the desire  
to be challenged and keep doing important work  
in the 'spirit of continuous improvement.'

~

The 'kid who couldn't write' became a published author.

I never really wanted to be a principal, I always wanted to be a curriculum director.  
But my path did not lead me there. My experiences and my job searching  
led me to this chair.

I call it the chair, I got the chair. And so I will retire from the chair and it's fine  
because I've been able to do all the curriculum work that  
I wanted to do in the position I'm in.

It is my desire to be challenged, to live on the 'edge of my confidence,' to be  
the conductor sitting in the audience, the principal rising from this chair each day to inspire  
students to achieve and teachers to take the lead.

We sing duets when a gorgeous voice  
among a staff member is discovered. We collaborate to achieve the work of our school  
in duos, in trios, in quartets, in ensembles.

They know me  
as the singing principal.

~

My experiences led me to the curriculum work I wanted to do . . .

to transforming my current world and experiencing everything coming together.

Early on an administrative mentor said to me: "Marilyn, when you are  
striving for excellence you will always stand out,  
but you will never fit in."

I think this sets me apart in a good way. I'm the  
only educator in my family and kind of the outlier.

I'm the only administrator here with a music background, and I am  
that person at the table that says: 'Have you thought about it from this perspective?'

And they all say: 'Ugh, there she goes again.' But they know  
I put my heart out to students,  
I put passion into my work.

And when asked how I am at the start of each week, I answer:  
"I'm good. It's Monday."

## David James

It just felt very natural teaching kids, believing in their potential.

Having been a music teacher, I can't say it affects or influences what I do day-to-day, but it affects who I am. My belief systems are still rooted in many of the things I did as a young musician and music teacher, and this set the course for who I became as an educator.

As a teacher, I wanted so much for my students. I wanted to make sure the kids I taught had something a little different than what I had as a student. I wanted them to have performing opportunities beyond symphonic band or orchestra. I wanted them to experience the choral connection, and small group ensembles like wind and brass and percussion ensemble. I wanted the kids to be able to play their instruments well and play challenging literature. I wanted them to become good musicians. I worked literally every period of the day. That's all I did. That was my whole life.

As a regional superintendent, I personally meet with every principal and their supervisors in each cooperative district, and we go over every single person, every single teacher, twice a year. We talk about what's happening in class, how they're doing as an employee, what's happening with the kids, how do we know they're successful? What's more important than that?

~

I want so much for the students, the teachers, the schools.

I've grown. I'm better at collaborating. I'm better at that sense of vision. I'm better at the big picture stuff. I'm better at letting some stuff not worry me, although, I tend to be a worrier in general. I mean, little stuff. I used to be like, 'Oh, I should take care of that.' Now I'm like, 'You know what? Somebody else will take care of it. It'll be perfectly fine.' That's harder to do than it sounds.

What's happening with the kids? How do we know they're successful?  
What's more important than that?

We continually grow and change and adapt to any number of circumstances, for any number of reasons in our profession, and I began to understand the relevance of all of my skills and experiences. Yet I didn't know then what I didn't know. I don't know now what I won't know in a few years.

~

I've grown. I'm better at collaborating.

I'm really proud of the work that people do here. We've done a lot of good work.  
We talk about service, I talk about service, hopefully, everyone talks about service.  
Our mission is to serve.

I began to understand how my skills and experiences might serve.

And I was going to somehow stay involved in music, maybe do some conducting. I don't  
know what planet I was on. I clearly did not understand how the job  
was going to shape my life.

~

Everyone talks about service. Service to kids and service to districts.

Over 40,000 school children covering multiple school districts  
and several thousand square miles. Our work is both big in scope and big in size. I would  
have never thought I would get a job like this,  
never in a million years. It has been an interesting journey.

The job has shaped my life.

Throughout your entire life,  
you reflect.

But it just feels very natural, believing in our potential as educators.



## Charles Carver

If there's something I can give back, I think that would be a small token  
of appreciation for all that I have received.

Beyond our undergraduate degrees, we created our own cohort—a music teacher, a history  
teacher and a special education teacher—I think  
we kind of rounded each other out. Playing basketball  
in the mornings, driving down the parkway every week to pursue our master's degrees, stopping  
at McDonald's to get smoothies, we kind of thought,  
'Hey. We have 30 credits left to go, to get to MA60, let's do it as a degree, how about  
administration?' And later we all defended our doctoral dissertations within  
six months of each other. Soup-to-nuts, it was done.

I taught music for 13 years, band with general music then full-time band. I enjoyed teaching  
music, but an opportunity presented itself. As I was ending my degrees, the position of  
disciplinary dean became available at the middle school,  
part-time dean and part-time teacher.

I became dean without having to drop music teaching, which I enjoyed.

And when I applied for the job as assistant principal for a new district, I felt like I was playing  
with house money. I wasn't looking to leave where I was, but  
just went through the process and moved up.  
I was fortunate.

~

A music teacher, a history teacher and a special education teacher,  
I think we kind of rounded each other out.

Journeying in an educational cohort was like sacred time.

The bonding, the different perspectives, the sounding board to bounce ideas off of, the  
intellectual engagement. I didn't necessarily go to school to become an administrator, but there  
was a skillset I developed along the way as a music teacher that was applicable to the  
administrative work I do now. And whatever skillset I develop here, I hope  
that it's wide enough that it applies to the next thing I do as I move forward in life.  
Where life will take me, I don't know.

I was fortunate to move through the application process  
and move up and into a job as assistant principal, but my  
French Horn has a prominent place  
in my new office.

As an administrator, I view myself as a cog in the wheel, a piece of the puzzle.  
I like to play basketball, but I get a lot more reward out of making an assist than making a basket.  
Some of my best moments as an educator have been developing and presenting at meetings  
or something I've done to help the students make a basket.

~

I developed a skillset as a music teacher that is applicable to the administrative work I do now. Where life will take me next, I don't know.

Who I am as an administrator is who I was or parts of who I was as a music teacher. I don't think who I am changed when I transitioned from music teacher to dean to an administrator. I think the different capacities I have change, but I think my educational philosophy remains the same. This connection was probably instilled over time.

I don't think it was always right there in front of me.

I view myself as a cog in the wheel, a piece of the puzzle.

My mind thinks in analogies. There are many pieces in education, in a school, and they're all valuable. A conductor of an orchestra shows their value for others through listening, respecting, trusting. This is the most direct comparison to leadership in my mind, and is something that I've experienced as a leader.

I have never met a group of people that don't appreciate being valued.

~

The different capacities I have will change, but my educational philosophy will remain the same.

I remember there was a piece in band. It was called A+.

We played it to introduce the importance of syncing everybody in the band up to make the best music and reach the highest possible levels. When you see students succeed and achieve, when the staff put time and effort into a project, and the outcome is successful, that's the addicting part, that's the gratifying part. It could be an academic success, or just seeing

Johnny decide to not to talk to Bobby that way after 20 times speaking to him about social awareness.

I have never met a group of people that don't appreciate being valued.

As a leader, it's not how much you know, it's how much you care. The knowing, you can learn, but it's the caring and helping to inspire others that makes me feel I am giving back.

## Ashley King

I was lucky. The first two districts I worked in as an administrator,  
just kind of gave me wings and said 'fly.'  
The transition into my first job, as the district music coordinator was easy. I went into a  
leadership role within my own district for a subject area that I loved, and  
sure enough, a cello did 'fly' off a bus at 55pmh. It recovered, so did I.

Music teachers are different. Music teachers have a  
greater insight into what children can and can't do. In order to get students  
to play musically, we really delve into who they are and capture that and show them how to  
capture that. We help them internalize their skills. I mean in order to have a sense of pulse it has  
to be internalized. In order to have a sense of accuracy and pitch, it has to be internalized.  
After you get past the mechanicals of learning the actual note names and the pitches and looking  
at the dynamics. After that, in order for it to become truly music,  
it has to come from inside. It becomes internalized.

In a unique performing arts program I taught a piano lab, Orff classes,  
guitar, history of jazz. Later I was a band director and stayed  
a band director for the rest of my 16-year career as a music teacher.

I remember the feeling as soon as  
I dropped the baton and the students started playing. After the students performed,  
I looked at them and I was in such awe. And they were like, 'Were we okay?' I was like, 'I can't  
believe how well you played.' And I always felt that  
I owe it to them to push them to achieve more than I think they can.

~

We have to really delve into who students are and capture that and show them  
how to capture that. I often think of myself as a music teacher now, always  
wanting to do what's best, always wanting to do the optimum,  
and discover what truly comes from the inside.

District leadership matters. My first district was a phenomenal place to be as an educator,  
especially a music teacher, because the board valued the music department, the parents were  
supportive, the climate was inspiring, and whenever I needed something, and I could articulate  
the reasons why, I usually received what I needed for my students.

We owe it to each student to push them to achieve more than they think they can.

Described by kids and colleagues as funny, demanding, up-front, high expectations. I always  
advocated for my students; needing to miss class, to stay after school, for extra help, support  
dealing with a social crisis, or not having enough money for an instrument. I tried to convey to  
my students, that by practicing, being studious and working hard, they would become  
creative musicians, creative thinkers.

It was my colleagues who encouraged me to go back to school and  
get my administrative degree.

~

District leadership matters.

I think I spent a whole lot of time at interviews talking about how I would use the collaborative skills I learned as a musician to get people to participate and have input.

And also, I'm pretty funny. I think they liked my sense of humor and how I approached things.

I always advocated for my students and tried to convey that their hard work would lead to creative thinking, opportunity, and possibility.

Getting my first principal's job was a whirlwind for me, receiving a call that "there is a job offer, and the job is made for you," having a next day interview, becoming a finalist, and 2 weeks later appointed by the board and leaving a district I had truly enjoyed to welcome in possibility.

~

They liked my sense of humor and how I approached things.

It's just the way my brain works. I can look at something, and I can typically envision what needs to happen and jump to the end, to the final product.

Yet I was the kind of kid that, until you told me why I needed to do something, I couldn't figure it out. I need to know where I'm going in order for me to map out how to get there.

Communicating this to teachers and staff, mapping a way forward, inspiring high levels of performance, is truly our job as leaders.

It can be a whirlwind.

Students and staff often need the same thing. For those who need structures and supports, provide them. For others, set them free earlier to explore their innate creativity.

Just give them wings and say 'fly.'

## Chapter 4 Summary

Throughout the chapter 4 data analysis, the researcher examined the participant reflections on the variety of learning and professional roles they have played and their developing role-identity as leaders in four sections including: (a) *becoming*, (b) *being*, (c) *building*, and (d) *belonging*. Within each of the four sections, the totality of the data analyzed was structured within relevant categories and the overarching themes of: (a) *competencies*, (b) *relationships*, and (c) *values related to change actions*, which were constant themes in every category analyzed, and were further delineated to support the analysis by a number of thematic strands, motifs, and keynotes.

The three-interview process enabled both the participants and the researcher to reflect on the questions and topics before, during and after each interview was completed. This gave both the participants and the researcher time to reflect upon the factors in each participant's story that interacted to bring them to their present situation and current understandings of their work as educational administrators. It further helped the researcher to begin to make sense and assign meaning to many of the commonalities and shared experiences that were revealed, and through close examination, develop a deeper understanding of participant experiences as they related to the context in which the phenomena occurred (Seidman, 2013).

The researcher wove together the overall findings in Chapter 4 using a narrative writing style to capture a reflective trajectory of lived experiences that included the participants':

- (a) description and elucidation of their experiences developing musicianship, teaching music, pursuing further education and administrative certification, and practicing as educational leaders;
- (b) recurrent exploration of the connections between these experiences and their purposeful

practice of educational leadership; and (c) shifting self-realization of role-identity as they transitioned from teacher to educational leader.

While it will be left to the discussion in Chapter 5 to link the formulas and ideas generated with regard to effective leadership to the central research questions and the study's conceptual framework, it should be noted that it is not the intent of the researcher to prove the extent to which participant leadership practices have been effective and/or transformative. However, to confront the question of what the research data revealed regarding what constitutes effective leadership, the researcher utilized Chapter 4 to necessarily represent the saturation of data generated by participants on the topic, and justly interpret what they individually and collectively endorsed as effective leadership practices.

Finally, since the researcher's field work and analysis of this study was focused wholly on educational leadership, participant descriptions of their engagement in the practice of educational administration was similarly focused on the specific and mutual goal to promote change action within educational organizations. Participants' supported transformative change in educational organizations that is fully advantaged by the "shared leadership capacity" of teachers, staff, and administrators in a collective "pursuit of excellence" and desire to ensure that "all students will learn and achieve."

Most of the participants acknowledged that they have been reflecting on the topic of orchestrating educational leadership and its connection to their music backgrounds for some time. Several participants shared, however, that although they have "thought about this a lot," they have "never talked about this before," or "didn't realize the connection" between administration and their music background until they began to practice as educational leaders. One after one, participants expressed that as they began to orchestrate leadership in a variety of

capacities as members of their educational communities, they began to recognize the competences they had gained from being a musician and music educator that supported their ability to lead transformatively.

In Chapter 5 the findings of this phenomenological study will serve as the guide for the researcher to answer the central research question and subquestions and to formulate a logical and informative discussion about the study results in relationship to the review of literatures and the central framework of the study design which was based on three linking perspectives: (a) the components of effective leadership and effective school leadership as theoretical constructs, (b) the connection between the arts and leadership, and (c) the process of becoming and practicing as an educational leader.

In Chapter 5 the researcher will also discuss the importance of the results stemming from the profound sharing of participants': (a) lived experiences on the pathway to leadership from childhood to formal training, and as they experienced the formation of a leadership role conception and identity; (b) self-professed understandings of what qualities and practices lead to successful school leadership; and (c) self-described individual capacity for effective school leadership and the reasons why they believed this to be so. The discussion will also be centered around the related question of how the pool of educational administration applicants might be diversified in order to provide the leadership talent needed to achieve the goals of educational organizations.

Finally, Chapter 5 will include the researcher's interpretations and personal insights about the study results and the implications of the findings and ideas for the field of educational administration as a whole. The discussion will include an evaluation of the research, and its possible impact on the future recruitment, hiring, and practice within the community of

educational leaders. The discussion will also comprise specific recommendations to educational scholars and practitioners for further research on the teacher reference group of music educators and other unique teacher reference groups in order to expand and diversify individual leader profiles as well as the range of competencies and approaches to educational leadership in the 21st century.



## **Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion**

The researcher's goal in this investigative process was to understand a phenomenon experienced by one unique population of teachers—music educators—who have made passage along a developmental transition into leadership roles and now serve as practicing educational administrators. Throughout her own passage through the phases of this dissertation, the researcher participated in a qualitative analytic process, and employed the scientific method of phenomenology to investigate seven participants in a cycle of semistructured interviews designed to capture the essence of their lived experiences during their developmental transition through the life stages of: (a) becoming a musician, (b) being a music educator, (c) building on their leadership competencies, and (d) engaging in the practice of educational leadership and developing a sense of belonging at the leadership table.

The first four chapters of this phenomenological study: (a) established the context of 21st century challenges in educational leadership, (b) determined the theoretical and conceptual constructs upon which the study would be based, (c) clarified the methodological choices and structure of the research, and (d) provided a thorough analysis of the data collected during the three-part semistructured interview process.

### **Summary of Chapters 1–4**

In Chapter 1, the researcher established the context of the study by highlighting the challenges and high impact issues facing 21st century educators and educational leaders, and by noting how the researcher's own background as a music educator who has transitioned into leadership roles has inspired the research project. In Chapter 2, the researcher summarized the results of a comprehensive literature review that resulted in the development of a conceptual framework and aligned the goals of this research with a number of critical issues on the

educational landscape and with current scientific research and scholarly discourse on the topics of: (a) the components of effective educational leadership, including the approaches or models of leadership that make the greatest contribution to school culture, teacher effectiveness, and ultimately to student learning, (b) the connection between the leadership qualities, characteristics and competencies of artists (in particular musicians) and their capacity to practice effective educational leadership, and (c) the developmental process in which teachers, (including unique teacher reference groups) transition into leadership roles.

In Chapter 3, the researcher described the epistemological approach and assumptions that would guide the research and outlined the step by step research structures, empirical techniques, and analytical procedures used throughout the investigation. Chapter 3 also served as a platform for the researcher to discuss the limitations of the research design, and any methodological problems that might be encountered during the phenomenological study. The researcher sought to conduct research and analyze the data collected as well as interpret and assign authentic meaning to the lived experiences of those involved.

Throughout Chapter 4, the researcher converted in-depth descriptions of participants' lived experiences, thoughts, ideas, and reflections and researcher field notes into data that the researcher then analyzed, interpreted for meaning, and presented to the reader. Adhering closely to the phenomenological research process, the researcher rendered data through the voices of the seven participants. The researcher obtained these voices through a series of semistructured interviews, which provided the primary data source from which the researcher's reflections, analyses, and answers to the research central question and subquestions have been derived.

## Chapter 5 Organization

The summary of the findings in Chapter 5 will be based on the researcher's interpretation of the data as it relates to the central research question and subquestions and to the three interacting conceptual frames that underscored the study. In addition to an in-depth discussion of the empirical findings, the researcher will communicate her view on both the limitations and the potential implications and significance of the research results.

This chapter will also present a number of researcher recommendations for future research on topics related to the field of educational research, including future policy and procedures regarding the selection, recruitment, and training of educational leaders. It is the researcher's expectation that the results of this research and recommendations for future directions in educational leadership will inform an audience of researchers, scholars, policy makers, and practitioners in the fields of education and leadership.

### Empirical Findings and Discussion of Results

#### In Answer to the Central Research Question

The central research question asked how individuals with a formal education in music and experience as a music teacher describe the essence of their transition from teacher to leader, including the process of becoming and practicing as an educational administrator?

**The pathway to leadership: continuously evolving.** Data analysis revealed that the transitional experiences on the path to leadership, as described by participants, included a nonlinear timeline and a developmental process which encompassed the participants':

(a) intentional and unintentional socialization into leadership roles throughout their early years as musicians and careers as music educators, (b) evolving, interrelated, self-identification as musicians, teachers, and leaders that continued to drive their pursuit of and purposeful

engagement in educational leadership, and (c) realization of the different professional roles available to them as educators and leaders that were a match for their learned and practiced competencies. These competencies were demonstrated in the data as an accumulation of leadership skill sets that had been recognized by the participant and others at varying times and to varying degrees and had been amassed throughout their early years as musicians, during their careers as music educators, and in training and elective studies related to education and leadership.

Attempts to understand and define the developmental, multistage process that teachers experience on the path to educational leadership, including the recruitment, training, and selection processes, have been the topic of a number of studies and reports (Armstrong, 2012; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Brunner & DeLeon, 2013; Collay, 2014; Curry, 2000; DuPre, 2011; Fink & Brayman, 2006; Ghaus-Kelley, 2014; Hasson, 2011; Jarmon, 2014; Myran, et al., 2011; Steele, 2015; Zafft, 2013). Browne-Ferrigno's (2003) study identified the transitional processes of role conceptualization, initial socialization, role-identity transformation, and purposeful engagement of leadership, and her work had a profound effect on future research in this area and on the current researcher's ability to analyze and interpret the data and to successfully recognize important transitional markers experienced by the seven participants.

While the data in this study served as another confirmation of the existence of these developmental milestones and their relationship to successful leadership experiences for teachers in general, for the seven study participants, the data repeatedly pointed to these transitional leadership experiences occurring throughout a long-term cycle of learning that could not be isolated to the years spanning *teaching careers and training for leadership* as were the focus years for the Browne-Ferrigno (2003) study and others that followed.

Evidence examined in this study aligned more closely with Armstrong's (2012) description of a nonlinear, fluid, and constantly changing continuum toward leader identity. This was also expressed by Collay (2014), who asserted that initial socialization and the formation of a leader identity can begin well before a teaching career begins and during early life and career spans, with each transitional stage contributing to a secure foundation for the participants future success as educational leaders. The results also corroborate the research of Bathhurst and Ladkin (2012), Collay (2006, 2014), and Dupre (2011) whose findings paralleled Armstrong's claims and led to new questions being posed by the researcher during the data analysis process. Had the participants in this study conceived themselves in the role of leadership before developing a leadership identity, as Collay (2014) had suggested? Was leadership socialization (through frequent exposure to and practice of leadership and a positive orientation toward an administrator reference group) a prerequisite to developing self-conception and identity as a leader, as Armstrong (2012) had suggested?

***Readiness to lead.*** Ultimately, the answers did not come down to timelines or distinguishable shifts in identity from musician to teacher to leader. Participant stories revealed leadership learning trajectories that spanned many years and leadership experiences that transitioned with them from childhood through adulthood. Their stories revealed how their leadership identities ebbed and flowed as their opportunities to practice leadership continued to grow exponentially, often long before they recognized their passions and practices, conceived of leadership as a professional role, or took their first formal steps toward administrative certification. As a result, when questioned about their overall readiness for the task of educational leadership in their first formal administrative jobs, all seven participants expressed

that while they approached the work with the typical cautiousness and attentiveness of most new administrators, they felt very comfortable with and well prepared for their new roles.

In fact, having already crossed the bridge from teaching to formal leadership and taken their competencies and values with them, a few participants seemed surprised by the researcher's questions about leadership identity. In making what they considered a natural, in some cases indirect, and subtle shift from one role to another, participants expressed that they had never expected nor desired their role identity transformation to leadership to be complete or to wholly define who they were as educators. It was a continuation of their important ongoing work as leaders in the field of education, no more, no less. As such, participants had never stopped expecting and looking forward to the challenges and to the arc of continued growing and learning, leading and following required of them in their current and future leadership roles.

**Parallel experiences in discipline related teacher reference groups.** Collay's (2006) introduction of the idea of subgroups or cohorts of teachers with similar lived experiences, and Armstrong' (2012) integration of the term *teacher reference group* into scholarly literature stood out consistently for the researcher during the analysis period. This conceptually oriented term captured the awareness that groups of teachers who share similar backgrounds and common on the job experiences might in a sense also travel on a similar transitional passageway, experience similar roadblocks, stockpile similar competencies, and develop similar values and philosophies related to leadership.

Several other studies also suggested that studying specific teacher reference groups and their transitional experiences related to gender, race, ethnicity, cultural background, sexual preference, education levels, vocational outlook, and so on, might be of significance (Armstrong, 2012; Bizjak, 2017; Brunner & DeLeon, 2013; Collay, 2006, 2014; Curry, 2000; DuPre, 2011;

Fink & Brayman, 2006; Ghaus-Kelley, 2014; Hasson, 2011; Jarmon, 2014; Myran, et al., 2011; Steele, 2015; Zafft, 2013). More formal studies such as these, the researchers suggested, might produce results that would aide positional leaders in predicting and identifying specific leadership competencies in members of distinct teacher reference groups. Accordingly, this might also lead to the intentional promotion of training opportunities and leadership roles for more persons with previously unexamined but readily observable and sought-after leader skill sets.

This research, while paralleling the approach of several of the researchers reviewed, extended the term *teacher reference group* to include a group of teachers focused on a specific subject discipline. The researcher utilized subject discipline, in fact, as the predominant identifying factor for participant selection, defining music educators as part of a discipline-specific teacher reference group, examining their common discipline-specific practices and competencies, and considering the possible association of these practices with the known components of effective leadership. Corresponding with previous studies reviewed in Chapter 2, the data analysis confirmed a strong number of commonalities in competency areas, approaches to teaching and leadership, and core values connected to change actions that were potentially related to the ability of the music educator teacher reference group to subsequently practice leadership effectively. In the next sections of Chapter 5, the researcher's answer to the study's subquestions will continue to reflect the researcher's analysis of the totality of the composite data and her understanding of the associated scholarly literature.

## **Reframing the Research Subquestions**

The researcher embarked on her field-work with the clear intent to think critically and deeply about and answer the following subquestions:

**Subquestion 1.** How do study participants describe their lived experiences prior to and during the transition from music teacher to educational administrator?

**Subquestion 2.** How do study participants describe their leadership style and approach to practicing leadership in their administrative role?

**Subquestion 3.** In what ways do study participants view their transitional experiences, current leadership style, and approach to practicing leadership as an extension of their formal training in music and background as music educators?

As a result of the data analysis, however, the researcher discovered that while participants gave thoughtful and insightful answers to questions related to subquestion 1 (concerning their transitional experiences) and subquestion 2 (regarding their purposeful practice of leadership), they consistently answered these questions in relationship to subquestion 3 which was focused on the connection to the participants' previous training in music and background as music educators.

This subtle but frequent integration of the interview questions related to subquestion 3 into the first two topics necessitated a realignment of the researcher's approach to the presentation of data before construing the results. To address the data as presented and to appropriately interpret its meaning in a way that fully addressed the research problem meant reframing the answers to the subquestions to allow the data itself to direct the findings and any new contributions to knowledge that occurred from the research.



Significantly, the researcher realized early on in the interview process that participants had intentionally elected to be a part of this study because at varying points along their trajectory from teacher to leader, they had already begun to reflect upon a sense that their background in music and as a music teacher had to some degree prepared them for their roles in leadership. They had already asked themselves some pertinent questions about: (a) the factors that had prompted them toward their leadership journeys, (b) the factors that had prepared them to purposefully and enthusiastically face the personal and professional challenges that accompany leadership, and (c) whether their experiences as musicians and music teachers had been among the factors that contributed to their capacity for leadership. Further, they had begun to consider not only how their past experiences as musicians and music teachers had influenced their work, but exactly which of their experiences as musicians and music teachers had contributed to what they described as a certain, often unexpected, but uncanny ability to comfortably assume leadership roles, lead other educators and educational communities effectively, and make change happen in the schools and districts where they were employed.

Not only had “becoming an administrator trigger[ed] [reflections on the] paradoxical journey across organizational boundaries . . . cognitively, emotionally, and socially,” as Armstrong (2012, p. 418) suggested, it had already provoked the seven participants interviewed into a reflective mode focused on their backgrounds as musicians and music educators. Participants commonly stated, however, that this study had provided them with one of the first, and in some cases only opportunity they have had to articulate and voice their thoughts, ideas, and reflections on the topic. It is a connection, participant Charles suggested, that “was probably instilled over time. . . . I don’t think it was always right there in front of me.”

Therefore, within the scientific process with which this study was grounded, and in a logical reframing of the subquestions as presented, aspects of subquestion 3 have been subsumed into the answers to subquestions 1 and 2, and aspects of subquestion 1 and 2 have been subsumed into the answers to subquestion 3. The researcher followed this format for the purpose of delivering concise and accurate results derived directly from the source of the data—that is, the voices and shared experiences of the seven participants.

**Subquestion 1: How do study participants describe their lived experiences prior to and during the transition from music teacher to educational administrator?** In asking the first subquestion, the researcher had a particular interest in how participant responses might inform the high impact issues revealed in the review of literature, including the importance of: (a) understanding the developmental process involved in the transition from teacher to educational leader; (b) revealing any potential challenges or existing barriers to the transitional process for participants, specifically for members of one specific teacher reference group; and (c) informing future policies and practices surrounding the recruitment, selection, and retention of a diverse pool of high quality educational leaders.

*The capacity for leadership discovered through transitional experiences.* As discussed in relation to the central research question, in all seven life journeys, the path to leadership described by participants was a nonlinear progression that occurred in often unexpected and unanticipated ways, with each participant’s capacity for leadership being developed, honed, and demonstrated well before their decision to lead or to pursue training in educational administration. Each individual’s personal recognition of their capacity to lead effectively can be summed up best as an ongoing discovery or series of discoveries that were revealed

throughout their transitional experiences and their eventual engagement in formal educational leadership roles (see further discussion under subquestion 3).

*Barriers acknowledged and overcome.* Research examined in Chapter 2 pointed to potential barriers, challenges, and at times exclusion from leadership roles faced by members of certain teacher reference groups before and during the transition from teacher to school leader. Previous studies found that impediments to leadership included both external and internal resistance from educational stakeholders, which resulted in intentional and unintentional roadblocks to participation in teacher leadership, active mentoring, and training programs for teacher reference groups that had been viewed as outside of the mainstream of educational leadership or that had not been considered for their leadership potential (Bizjak, 2017; Brunner & DeLeon, 2013; Collay, 2006, 2014; Curry, 2000; DuPre, 2011; Ghaus-Kelley, 2014; Hasson, 2011; Jarmon, 2014; Zafft, 2013).

Findings in this study mirrored some but not all of the impediments to leadership described in other studies. Data did reveal, however, that it was the norm among participants to face and overcome challenges and barriers with regard to attitude and/or opportunities related to their backgrounds as musicians and music teachers. Findings revealed that at differing times and to differing degrees participants experienced existing barriers to: (a) institutional leadership socialization opportunities and/or job opportunities on their pathways to leadership, and (b) stakeholder buy-in while pursuing jobs or on the job as educational administrators. They named bias, difficulty getting jobs, and the uncertain and at times negative perception of others regarding their ability to lead effectively beyond music to be among the obstacles they faced on their pathway to leadership.

*Attitude.* Marilyn highlighted a dominant reality—that of music being considered low in the hierarchy of important academic content areas—as influencing attitudes of educational stakeholders regarding both the importance of the subject and the understanding of those who teach the subject.

A common theme related to attitude was also captured in Charles’ simple recollection that “people wondered.” The cumulative indicators in participant stories confirmed a very real, but often intangible negative attitude about their: (a) teaching and leadership competencies beyond music teaching, and (b) validity as candidates for leadership positions outside of the domain of music education.

*Opportunity.* Data also revealed that although participant skills (related to leadership and non-leadership competencies) as music teachers were highly visible and often admired, access to leadership opportunities, particularly those outside of the realm of music, was haphazard at best and required significant participant self-initiative to counteract prevailing stereotypes and to support their movement into leadership circles. This realization was accompanied by the indication that at times teaching colleagues, positional leaders in supervisory roles, community members, or potential employers either overlooked or did not make the vital connection between the regularly observed leadership competencies of the seven music educators and what they personally or institutionally understood about leadership.

The researcher asserts that making this connection and understanding the relevance of teacher competencies related to leadership is needed to create and reinforce a bridge to opportunity for music educators and members of other discipline-specific teacher reference groups who are typically embedded in schools and districts in which positional leaders control “access to sponsorship, recruitment, selection, placement, training, and mentoring.” (Armstrong,

2012, p. 418). Armstrong's (2012) findings emphasized that recruitment and hiring practices are often "not neutral in intent or impact because of [the positional leaders'] power to skew individual and organizational leadership outcomes" (p. 419).

It would be an inaccurate representation of the participant experiences and their extremely upbeat and positive attitude, however, to infer that participants viewed these barriers as anything more than an ordinary challenge to meeting and achieving their goals. They described in detail the significance of each occasion that they were tapped for leadership based on the recognition of their leadership potential by district leaders, outside observers, or college professors. And while all participants acknowledged the sentiment Charles articulated, that "the potential existed for obstacles," they also accepted that this was based on a broad misunderstanding of their potential for leadership. With little reluctance, each participant had taken on the job of: (a) actively self-initiating or pursuing leadership opportunities in their schools and districts, (b) demonstrating and promoting their competencies related to leadership and ensuring positive outcomes for students across subject boundaries, and (c) communicating their competencies and values related to leadership and change action in a manner that would help things "line up" (Charles) positively on their own paths to leadership and for other music educators who followed.

One ardent belief shared among the seven participants was that before being labelled as either a music teacher or a leader, they wanted to be known as passionate educators who advocate for students and teachers and who want to participate in the continued evaluation of new learnings and understandings about educational leadership. Based on the evidence, the researcher recognized that for the seven participants interviewed, this necessarily began with their ability to self-recognize, define, and engage the leadership competencies that they have

amassed throughout their lives and careers. Once these competencies began to be self-identified and self-reflected upon by the participants, next steps appeared to be each participant taking it upon him or herself to ensure that his/her leadership competencies shined through the barriers often and strongly enough to warrant: (a) their full participation in school and district leadership opportunities typically not offered to teachers in the discipline of music, (b) a change of attitude among a number of reluctant stakeholders, and (c) an eventual place at the leadership table.

**Subquestion 2: How do study participants describe their leadership style and approach to practicing leadership in their administrative role?** In asking the second subquestion, the researcher had particular interest in how participant responses might inform the high impact issues revealed in the review of literature, including the importance of:

(a) understanding the scientifically researched components of effective leadership and effective educational leadership, (b) employing leaders that understand and are equipped to practice effective leadership, and (c) recognizing the recruitment and selection of highly effective leaders as a critically necessary precursor to achieving transformational change and ensuring improved levels of student achievement in educational organizations.

*Empowering and transforming: A leadership progression.* Findings support the conclusion that the seven participants in this study understand, can articulate, and have been engaged in the components of effective educational leadership that have been documented and charted by ongoing research. Findings demonstrate that each of the seven participants is well equipped to practice effective educational leadership in a manner that empowers and invests in educational stakeholders (including teachers, staff, leaders, and community members), advances positive outcomes for students, and transforms educational learning communities through collaborative change actions (see detailed discussion under subquestion 3).

Researcher conclusions were informed by and interpreted through the lens of a great deal of extant empirical research on the topic, including an historical perspective of the known components of leadership and educational leadership and the integration of a number of up-to-date leadership theories with educational leadership frameworks that guide researchers and practitioners in the field (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Bass, 1993; Glatter, 2006; Hallinger, 2003, 2005; Hickman, 2010; Hitt & Tucker, 2015; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2008; Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Marks & Printy, 2003; Nedelcu, 2013; Northouse, 2001, 2016; Printy, 2014; Robinson, 2008; Spillane, 2005; Sun, 2010; Timperley, 2005).

*Fundamental skills and belief systems take root.* The participants placed high value on the leadership skills gained as young musicians and as music educators and acknowledged the transference of these competencies to their effective practice of leadership and as highly influential to their approach to leadership. They articulated a common belief, however, that the sum total of their competencies exists in combination with leadership skills and value sets gained in non-music related experiences and training programs that have also contributed meaningfully to their overall custody of a distinct set of leadership competencies. All participants described their focus on lifelong learning, and their pursuit of new interests and passions as a way of living that continues to influence their day to day work of educators.

David stated with certainty, for instance, that his “fundamental skills . . . and a lot of my belief systems are still rooted in many of the things I did as a music teacher. . . . [and] really set a course for who I am as an educator.” What he cited as key, was the importance of understanding the “relevance of . . . [all] skills and experiences” accumulated throughout one’s life and career. Rather than compartmentalizing competencies and values into place and time, Patricia shared,

she honors them as “threads” that bind the experiences of being a music educator with those of being an administrator—competencies that are now “wired into my brain and . . . inextricably linked.”

Wyant explained how the strengths he had acquired as a musician have helped him “to forge new territories,” “reinvent myself time and time again,” and develop “new attributes along the way.” Charles likewise expressed his hope that whatever “skill sets I developed along the way as a music teacher [would apply] . . . to the administrative work I do now. . . . and [also to] the next thing I do as I move forward in life.” “While the “capacities I have change,” he went on to say, “my educational philosophy remains the same.”

No matter the sentiment expressed, each competency, each relationship, and each value gained from their experiences as musicians and music teachers, will always be, as Mitchell surmised, about respecting the “balance between being an administrator and a performer,” and as Ashley inferred, part of the “culminating performance. . . . [because] as a conductor, you are a leader.”

And as a leader, all seven participants emphasized, you are a conductor.

***Effective leaders: Who finds them? Who inspires them? Who nurtures them? Who challenges them?*** While all seven participants recognized that the recruitment and selection of highly effective leaders is a critically necessary precursor to achieving transformational change and ensuring improved levels of student achievement in educational organizations, the degree of responsibility they each believed they should assume in influencing the recruitment, selection, training, and retention of new educational leaders was shown to be variable in the data analysis.

***Challenging ineffective leadership.*** Findings revealed that all participants had experienced the first-hand negative effects of ineffective leadership and what several participants



(and a good deal of reviewed literature) described as a shortage of high quality educational leaders who value public education and who are willing and able to face the current challenges with creative, sustainable interventions (Armstrong, 2012; Bathurst & Ladkin, 2012; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Collay, 2006; Fink & Brayman, 2006; Hitt & Tucker, 2015; Newton, 2001; Newton & Witherspoon, 2007). And like the orchestral players described by Bathurst and Ladkin (2012), the participants each shared the need to at times “react to an incompetent conductor [or educational leader]. . . . [by] ignor[ing] gestures and instructions . . . that violate their own understanding of the flow of the music or the composer’s intentions” (p. 110).

More often, however, the collective participant response to what Chaleff (1998) called “dysfunctional behavior by leaders” (p. 37), was for each participant to demonstrate their own “courage and skill” levels and step up to the leadership plate themselves (p. 37). As teacher leaders, they each described instances where they had been able to “tap into the courage to take [a] stand . . . [and] reflect back to the positional leaders the consequences of their policies and behaviors” (Chaleff, 1998, p. 38).

Like Chaleff’s (1998, 2014) multiyear call for “intelligent disobedience” among the followers of ineffective leaders, the researcher’s analysis of participant responses did not provide definitive answers or solutions to the realities they faced in this regard. Conversations with the seven participants, however, were marked by a data-supported consensus about the need for: (a) training and hiring leaders who can confidently act as both active, interested followers, and inspired leaders who communicate and demonstrate observable goals to empower others and circumvent authoritative management; (b) institutional openness to a diverse pool of potential leaders who are encouraged to recognize and expand upon the skills and inherent talents they possess and consider them in relation to their transferability from teaching to leadership roles;

(c) training programs and on-the-job leader support programs that provide access to inspiring procedural and policy exemplars and contact with role models who successfully navigate patterns of distributed leadership and ongoing mentoring; and (d) regular evaluation and monitoring of programmatic and leader effectiveness.

*Who will find, inspire, and nurture new educational leaders?* Further analysis of the findings raised another critical question about who is responsible for the many important aspects of leadership recruitment. Participants voiced concern about who will inspire new recruits to take on leadership despite the on the job challenges, long hours, low hourly pay, high levels of volunteerism, state and federal mandates, and high turnover rates that restrict innovative, sustainable leadership. The researcher, herself, echoes the participants' sentiments and wonders who will make and keep the promise to potential leaders that their path to leadership will lead to the type of vocational joy and autonomy to lead creatively and ethically that she has witnessed in the seven participants who answered the call to participate in this study.

Turning to the data, perhaps the decisive collective answer to this difficult question was revealed in the participants' consistent and strong message that leaders should "never go it alone." The participants themselves expressed often and clearly that they cannot and will not take on this burden alone, and they cannot and will not stop courageously calling for the engagement of other educators, policy makers, and education advocates to face and to tackle the challenge.

***The connection between mentors and the cultivation of individual leadership style and approach.*** Shifting the discussion from ineffective leaders to positive mentors, the researcher made the passage with participants from their commonly stated "I'll never do that," to the equally frequent sentiment of "there must be a better way," and finally to their awe-inspiring

stories of positive mentors who helped open up their worlds, spark their passion for leadership, bridge the gap between their skills and confidence, and light a fire in them by modeling pathways from teaching to successful leadership and positive change as educational administrators. Patricia, for example, described her active pursuit of mentors to guide her in each of the areas that she needed support and felt lucky that “as I moved along [they] would give me all kinds of advice . . . [and] were always pushing me.” And when Wyant eventually described what he called the “perfect transition” into his first formal leadership role, it was the active mentoring and unfettered support of the then current superintendent that made it so.

Mentoring featured so often in the participants’ responses to interview questions, in fact, that its significance and influence upon the participants’ effective educational leadership became a critical finding of its own. From their earliest memories to their most recent recollections, the influence of mentors in the all stages of participant development as they became musicians, worked as music educators, gained new competencies, and began to practice leadership and develop a sense of belonging at the leadership table, were at the center of their conversations with the researcher.

Data aligned strongly with a Nora and Crisp (2008) study of the multidimensional aspects of mentoring, which detailed four central domains of mentoring including: (a) psychological or emotional support, (b) goal setting and career paths, (c) academic subject knowledge support, and (d) the existence of a role model (p. 337). Elements of the first domain paralleled the participant descriptions of supportive mentors who provided moral support and objectivity in an environment marked by active listening, problem-solving, and positive encouragement. Participants also valued experiences that mirrored the second and third domains of mentoring including an “assessment of . . . [their] strengths/weaknesses and abilities and assistance with

setting academic/career goals and decision making” (p. 343) and support that “centers on the acquisition of necessary skills and knowledge . . . [and] on educating, evaluating, and challenging the mentee” (p. 343). But it was the fourth domain—shining a light on a mentor’s ability to act as a role model and willingly share reflections of their own lived experiences—that most closely resonated with the essence of the rich, personal, and positive effects that mentoring relationships have had on each of the seven participants (Nora & Crisp, 2008).

These close mentoring relationships, the first of which developed when the participants were young musicians, highlight another uniquely significant aspect of their early training as musicians and the resulting positive mentoring toward leadership that continued throughout their careers. Findings revealed that because participants had experienced regular, positive, one-to-one mentoring at an early age, they were more likely to seek out and respond positively to mentoring as high school students, college students, teachers, and leaders. Participants spoke glowingly of mentoring relationships with peers, colleagues, administrators, and friends, and of their desire to “give back” by providing mentoring and being a positive role model to others. The participants would surely agree with DuPre (2011), who espoused that “simply holding a title does not ensure effective leadership; one must also possess an aptitude for serving as a role model” (p. 102).

**Subquestion 3: In what ways do study participants view their transitional experiences, current leadership style, and approach to practicing leadership as an extension of their formal training in music and background as music educators?** In asking the third subquestion, the researcher had particular interest in how participant responses might inform the high impact issues revealed in the review of literature, including the importance of: (a) adding to the body of knowledge about the leadership potential of specific teacher reference

groups by considering if the commonalities in the backgrounds and transitional lived experiences of one teacher reference group—music educators—were connected to the development of effective leadership competences, and (b) informing current positional leaders and policy makers in educational institutions about the results by providing information that will assist them in the challenge of recruiting, training, and retaining a diverse pool of high quality leaders.

Data revealed that all seven participants: (a) employed approaches to leadership that fulfilled the known elements of effective educational leadership framed by Hitt and Tucker (2015) (who synthesized 56 research studies and compiled a unified 21st century leadership matrix on effective educational leadership); (b) articulated that the purpose of transformational change in educational organizations is related to the overriding resolve to ensure improved levels of student achievement; (c) utilized a range of innovative solutions and distributed leadership practices to collaboratively address the challenges faced by the educational institutions they served; and (d) strongly connected their transitional experiences, current leadership style, and approach to practicing leadership as an extension of their formal training in music and background as music educators.

A significant commonality found among participants was reflected in the frequent meaningful coupling of one principle idea with another, supporting the articulation of their leadership goals: (a) beyond visions toward the conceptual underpinnings that would support the launch of a specific mission; (b) beyond basic skill sets toward competencies employed to implement specific action plans and desired outcomes; and (c) beyond internalized ideals toward cultivating communal values that would inspire growth, confirm shared purpose, and lead to transformative change actions.

In the spirit of this discovery, the researcher's Chapter 4 analysis warranted a closer comparison between the 5 domains of effective educational leadership practice established by Hitt and Tucker (2015) as exemplars, including: (a) establishing and conveying the mission or vision, (b) building professional capacity, (c) creating a supportive organization of learning, (d) facilitating a high-quality learning experiences for students, and (e) connecting with external partners, and the related researcher formulated, data inspired transformative action duets that captured the collective tenets of leadership analyzed in the data and promoted by the seven participants:

1. Shaping vision: Launching mission.
2. Building capacity: Inspiring growth.
3. Cultivating leadership: Confirming shared purpose.
4. Ensuring high quality student learning: Focusing on outcome.
5. Fostering partnerships: Embracing community.

At the heart of the five interrelated leadership tenets were three overarching themes discerned from the Chapter 4 data analysis and interpreted by the researcher to be the essence of the participant beliefs regarding the overriding principles of educational leadership. These were:

1. Competencies—the development, expansion, and execution of an interrelated cluster of technical, humanistic, and conceptual leadership understandings and competencies.
2. Relationships—the ability and desire to establish, nurture, and broker relationships through meaningful, collaborative interactions with a variety of educational stakeholders.

3. Values leading to change action—the solidification of values that support a vision for and realization of heightened individual capacity and organizational transformation in educational institutions.

The researcher's analysis and interpretation of these salient themes and accompanying thematic strands, motifs, and keynotes (addressed in-depth in Chapter 4) supported the answers to subquestions 1 and 2 through the reflective lens of subquestion 3 and highlighted the connection between the uniquely nuanced experiences of individual participants and their sum participation in a phenomenon that gave rise to the high degree of meaningful parallels and commonalities in their lived experiences as musicians, music teachers, and educational leaders.

***Leadership competencies: Deeply-rooted, rehearsed, performed, reviewed, reflected upon, and expanded.*** The unique set of competencies that the teacher reference group of music educators acquired and mastered during their training as musicians and tenure as music educators were found to be well-aligned with the known components of effective educational leadership and directly connected to their current ability to practice effective educational leadership.

For the purpose of this discussion and to summarize the vast findings as a result of the Chapter 4 analysis, the researcher's discussion has focused on the discovery of six overriding sets of leadership competencies that were shown to be uniquely inherent to the job of music educators, that set music educators apart from their teaching counterparts, and were associated in the reviewed literature with leadership competencies that are considered to be prerequisite components to effective educational leadership and leader success on the job. As Wyant stated, music educator competencies quite decidedly “encompass a lot of the skills you need to be a school leader.”

The researcher's thorough examination of data related to leadership competency uncovered evidence of the seven participants' common mastery of competencies and associated skills related to: (a) *performing with comfort and confidence*, (b) *acting on a creative impulse*, (c) *practicing and rehearsing toward identified outcomes*, (d) *dealing with complexity*, (e) *differentiating learning goals for students and staff*, and (f) *moving curriculum and programs from vision and design to implementation and operation*.

*Performing with comfort and confidence.* At once considering themselves educators and music performers, the participants used the confidence gained and the visceral energy of performing as vocalists, instrumentalists, and conductors which Wyant described as the "rush that musicians feel," to enhance their confidence in a number of administrative roles, from public speaking to communicating messages (including controversial ones) to stakeholders. Participants also strove to provide opportunities for others (staff and students) to experience the same feelings by providing multiple opportunities for them to shine, demonstrate new learnings, and show off their growing capabilities to peers and community members.

*Acting on a creative impulse.* Patricia called this creative impulse a kind of "special insight," marked by the ability to "envision" endless possibilities for growth and to "see deep[ly]" into problems and barriers toward a vision for change, and the solutions contained within the actions that accompany positive change. She described calling on her creative impulse to sense where "seismic shifts [or] mini-explosions" were happening in an organization and where "spurts of growth" were needed to address current issues. David talked about the need to stimulate this type of thinking by asking probing questions of staff about personal actions that might result in offering "something a little different" or the realization of "innovative" new ideas or newly fashioned solutions to problems. Bathhurst and Ladkin (2012) stressed that it is



often in the differences, the risks taken, and the mistakes made, that the creative impulse is observed among musicians.

The reflective nature of the conversations with study participants which revealed their collective openness to new ideas and the creative impulses of others, was aligned with Bathhurst and Ladkin's call for plural leadership wherein the "judgment as to whether [an idea, creative impulse, or mistake/unintentional action] . . . flags something new and interesting or should be explored further" (p. 112).

*Practicing and rehearsing toward desired outcomes.* Data revealed the participants' collective commitment to practicing and rehearsing, and their understanding that results are achieved through constant preparation, welcoming of mistakes, and the performance of skills often enough to see and track improvement and reach expectations of excellence. They described this work as entailing a cycle of new learning, practicing, and achieving that involved risk-taking and a "spirit of continuous improvement" (Marilyn).

Data revealed that an intentional focus on these skills and understandings was prevalent for participants from their earliest memories of musicianship. Participants compared rehearsing to solving problems and making difficult decisions and connected their work as leaders to their understandings that this can mean "playing until the wee hours of the morning" (Wyant), nurturing solutions long enough for them to "grow properly" (Mitchell), and realizing that whatever the desired outcome, achievement is not a finite idea, because "we are never finished" meeting the challenges (Marilyn).

*Dealing with complexity.* The ability to creatively solve problems and make decisions about a variety of complex issues came with the participants' expectation for continuous challenges. This was evidenced by their accompanying desire to seek input and support from

others, their self-recognized ability to transform chaos into decisive and realistic systems that others can comprehend and duplicate, and their focus on the courage and confidence they have called upon when making difficult decisions that are fully supported by transparent rationale and collaborative ideals.

The data highlighted a great number of concrete skills like dealing with large numbers of students of varying ability and ages, developing complex schedules that fit in with the core academic classes, and meeting instructional, performance, and competition deadlines. These complexities were handled by employing the “musicians’ brain . . . to process multiple things” simultaneously (Charles) and to adapt to constantly “moving factors” (Mitchell) in both school and community. The often-intense levels of management were illustrated graphically by Patricia’s well-depicted “first grade back-to-back 20 minutes, 20 minutes, 20 minutes. Second grade, 20 minutes, 20 minutes. Third grade, 25 minutes, 25 minutes,” but beyond this, attention was focused, for all seven participants, on producing a successful product and reaching the desired outcome. Leadership is so much more than [managing] . . . people and time,” Marilyn asserted, “It’s got to be more.”

*Differentiating learning goals for students and staff.* Participants also showed a mastery of understanding regarding the power of leadership to guide instructional practices and build teaching and leadership capacity in others. They articulated a collective aim to give every educational stakeholder what they need to succeed and to differentiate levels of intervention and support for a variety of institutional requirements, programs, and personalities. This came with what was expressed by participants as an intense desire to give all stakeholders something to aspire to, and to provide the types of resources, professional development, and support systems

that inspire people to move forward and reach higher levels of mastery with a sense of autonomy, purpose, and belonging.

*Moving curriculum and programs from vision and design to implementation and operation.* Closely related to the creativity impulse and the tenets of innovation came the constantly voiced and echoed descriptions of curriculums designed, programs created, and initiatives implemented. As detailed in Chapter 4, during the participants' tenure as music educators, the data pointed to change actions that were not wholly inspired by the personal desire for change, but by the absolute necessity to regularly innovate, implement transformative programs, and demonstrate growth in order to keep their programs alive and survive the constantly shifting programming and administrative landscapes they faced. As leaders, these skills transferred into an expertise that enabled innovative design, creating, recreating, and continuous transformation and growth to become the norm in the educational organizations in which they served.

*Leading through relationships: Following, leading, learning, growing, and collaborating.* The struggle to secure effective organizational leaders, Chaleff (1998) suggested, is not based on the "failure in leadership," but on the continual "failure of followership" (p. 37). Chaleff (1998, 2014) held the belief that building relationships, a sentiment that the researcher found was reflected in the data, is the key to effective leadership. And throughout his career, Chaleff as well as the participants interviewed has specifically been talking about relationships in which leading and following as a joint action is not only compatible, but desirable, marked by valuing feedback and accepting "unpopular truths" (Chaleff, 1998, p. 39), and by striving to create organizational cultures "in which candor is valued and divergent views will be freely given" (Chaleff, 2014, p. 14).

Participant data revealed that as music educators, participants had shown courage when it came to establishing positive relationships and confronting positional administrators and boards of education to educate them or advocate for their programs as music educators. What then had been a plea for understanding and the hope of participating in collaborative relationships with positional leaders, was later transferred to their own practice of leadership as a deep collective understanding that as leaders themselves it was an absolute—a must—an unspoken and unreserved commitment—to follow others closely with an intensity of conviction in the contributions of others, and the knowledge that in order to lead successfully, they also had to follow simultaneously.

For participants this meant advancing their own learning by following the lead of others with expertise across content and policy areas, letting go of the need to be “the smartest guy in the room” (Wyant), giving up “airtime in meetings” (Marilyn), and coming on board as a leader with the specific goal to “fade oneself out of some processes” (Ashley). Further, all seven participants asserted that the actual implementation of programs and goals relies on a leader-follower relationship in which administrators fulfill both roles in a manner closely akin to Hallowell’s (2011) urging to “grapple and grow” together toward “mastery” and a collective “sense of well-being and accomplishment” (pp. 36–37).

Evidence revealed that participants sought out and nurtured relationships at all stages of their transition and increasingly so in their practice of leadership. Data also revealed participant connections to both positive and negative experiences with past leaders that solidified their promises to honor leadership by demonstrating followership, seek and earn respect through the cultivation of mutual trust, and give and receive recognition for achieved goals and the making of shared memories. Commitment to these ideals was demonstrated through: (a) *the making of*

*shared memories, (b) selecting and connecting as a precursor for success, (c) creating unity through accessibility and visibility, and (d) aspiring to greatness as a community of learners.*

*The making of shared memories.* Participant stories abounded, in fact, with tales of long-held memories and examples of students who many years beyond their teacher-student interactions, shared poignant memories of positive experiences in their music programs and with their music teachers. Participants frequently commented on how many students remember and speak out about the impact of their music programs, music inspired experiences, and music teachers long after they have left school.

In turn, participants shared how they strive as administrators to offer the same type of inspiring, memorable experiences within a cooperative work environment focused on seeing initiatives through to fruition. Each new program or change in policy is assessed not only for its ability to produce the desired outcomes and be sustainable, they suggested, but must be people driven and focused on recognizing collective accomplishments that will be remembered in a positive light for years to come.

*Selecting and connecting as a precursor to success.* Data analyzed in Chapter 4 also revealed that the number and type of relationships that participants fostered were key to their effectiveness as leaders. These included relationships with a diverse group of educational stakeholders. As music educators, for instance, the participants had to sustain positive ongoing, multiperson, multiyear relationships including student to teacher; teacher to student; music teacher to music teacher; teacher to school/district staff; teacher to administrator; teacher to parent/guardian; and teacher to community partnerships.

Each of the seven participants gave multiple examples of the common ability among music educators to broker [relationships and] community resources that not only included the

ability to acquire the tangible and technical tools of their every-day jobs, but the ability to fully employ and celebrate the human-resources contained in active volunteerism, advocacy, and commitment from community supporters. As a result, the transference of this ability and a strong understanding of how to establish and nurture a significant number and variety of relationships as leaders was revealed in the data as second nature to all seven participants. In Marilyn's attempt to continue the intimate nature of long term relationships with students, staff, families, and community, for example, she adopted a philosophy as a leader that was in evidence in conversations with all of the participants, who each found a way to make their schools and districts, and in essence, their entire educational communities, their "classrooms."

Data also exposed the deeply personal participant understanding that relationships begin with self-reflection. Their vital self-directed relationships relied on the self-recognition of their effectiveness as educational leaders, including their self-described strengths and limitations, their ability to self-evaluate, their willingness to view themselves as conduits for change, and their inclination to invest themselves fully in the cultural and political landscapes within which they work. Armstrong (2012), Browne-Ferrigno (2003), and Collay (2006, 2014) might have identified this as the final transformation to a leader identity and would likely have agreed with Chaleff's (1998) reminder that leader engagement in "training, self-examination, and discipline" which benefits from district support in terms of time, finances, and policies, is "required to actually implement [real] changes" (p. 38).

Finally, the participants' views on matching the right people for the right jobs and hiring well, as analyzed in Chapter 4, were right in line with Hallowell's (2011) first step to peak performance: "select: how to put people into the right jobs so that their brains light up"(p. 6). Hallowell also asserted that the level of on the job challenges and the skill level of each

employee must be matched closely to promote positive flow in an organization. David echoed this sentiment precisely in his call to school districts to adopt this type of employee matching process by identifying exactly what a school needs to accomplish, and then finding the right people with the right skills to help them do it. He and other participants believed, however, that organizations will need “extraordinarily competent people” (David), to meet the expansive needs of educational institutions today.

*Creating unity through accessibility and visibility.* In addition to the participants’ drive to inspire and motivate people of all ages to work collaboratively toward short and long-term goals, the seven participants collectively expressed a deep understanding of the critical nature of high visibility, and the resulting positive nature of relationships that were enhanced through an open-door, educator-to-educator approach to problem-solving, along with their prominent presence in classrooms and at school-wide, district, and community events. These essential understandings may have grown as a result of being on-and-off-stage performers as musicians and music educators in multiple venues and for a wide variety of audiences, but were later realized as vital components of their jobs as music educators and transferred into internal values and self-directives that participants carried with them into their practice of leadership.

A sum finding of their collective beliefs, was represented by Mitchell’s statement that the active presence of leaders “creates unity.” This idea was matched by each participant’s understanding that this type of unified culture opens the path to productive dialog and a concert of shared ideas, innovative problem-solving, and celebrated solutions.

*Aspiring to greatness as a community of learners.* Participant’s spoke of nothing less than aspiring to greatness as individuals and communities of practice. Their priority to lead others toward excellence resonated in the data and came with the confidence and spoken

assurance that this type of ambition was reliant on sustaining relationships that connect the opportunity to learn and grow with a significant rate of progress toward organizational effectiveness and positive outcomes for students. Data revealed that participants never ceased reaching beyond satisfactory—shifting the bar from merely effective to outstanding—and pushing themselves and their communities of learning toward greatness and the expectation of excellence in their professional practices. Working toward any other outcome, participants articulated, would restrict their organization’s collective ability to attain goals and reach higher than expected levels of achievement. Whether conductor or administrator, participants strongly connected their past experiences as music performers and teachers, to their continuum of work as collective negotiators of excellence with a focus on advancing expertise of all kinds and on being participatory members of music, teaching, administrative, or community ensembles of any kind.

Finally, evidence showed that their resolve toward excellence and deep sense of responsibility for promoting communal, not merely personal values and actions, contributed to an overall sense of well-being in establishing and retaining a number of complimentary professional identities, as well as the type of collective institutional identity that enables its members to confidently face issues that are often presented as unsurmountable challenges, and lean in toward excellence together. Participants actively elected to build programs with other strong, able people and to provide clear direction, resources, and learning opportunities that instilled a hunger for growth, the active pursuit of excellence, and the willingness to both drive others and be driven to grow a culture sustained with positive energy and the desire for excellence.

The consistent pattern of practice revealed in the data and summarized in the paragraphs above was closely aligned with Bathhurst and Ladkin’s (2012) overview of the musician’s



“capacity to think beyond one’s individual contribution to see how it contributes to the collective endeavor. . . . [including] awareness of one’s own talents . . . [and] recognition and respect for the skills and competencies of others” (p. 108). Within the scope of such relationships, adherence to a plan and preparation remain vital, but both the softest and most dominant voices influence the path to progress and the desired outcomes.

The seven participants, the researcher believes, would have agreed intently with Bathurst and Ladkin’s (2012) proposition that the implementation of all change actions must be enacted with the constant supposition that “there is more to come” and each member of the ensemble is “essential in enacting that future” (p. 110).

***Values leading to change action.*** The discussion of findings related to the personal values and value systems that override the seven participants’ well-demonstrated ability to support transformative change in schools through their leadership, is in a sense the overarching theme of this entire body of research. The participants’ eventual approach to leadership and their ability to be agents of change was revealed in many aspects of the data and translated into a conceptual interpretation of leadership actions deeply rooted in the participants’ common value systems, and the essence of their lived experiences related to honing competencies, brokering relationships, and being at once visionary and actionary.

Values were clearly articulated by the participants around the issues of: (a) promoting cultures of excellence; (b) fostering continual learning and professional growth; (c) enlisting a diverse range of human resources; (d) advancing communal expertise fully and collaboratively; (e) implementing change by creating, growing, and if necessary rebuilding programs; (f) creating unity through visibility and presence; and above all (g) striving toward a common purpose and positive outcomes that lead to sustainable change. Also inherent within the participant’s central

values related to education was their recognition that change is an inevitable part of growth, should be viewed as a positive force, and should be accompanied by continuous reflection and evaluation using multiple measures of assessment to determine the attainment of goals.

Returning to the word “agentic” used earlier in a quote by Selkrig (2009) with regard to the essential leadership qualities of *assertiveness, independence, and courageousness*, the researcher repeatedly uncovered evidence of actions related to these qualities in participant stories. The word agentic, when examined further by the researcher, was also defined by how human beings are shaped by their lived experiences and environment and at the same time driven by inner impulses that direct their personal choices—choices that may be used to help transform their values into lived experiences (Agentic, n.d.). The research revealed that each of the seven participants were able to draw upon the agentic qualities of self and others to act as change agents within people driven organizations that: (a) strive to meet challenges and continually ask and seek answers to the critical questions related to achieving success in schools, and (b) develop identifiable, collective organizational qualities and values related to transformative change.

*Understanding outcomes: Achieving goals.* The robust connection between the participants’ background as musicians and music educators and the two related ideas of envisioning and articulating outcomes and continually assessing process and levels of achievement in order to realize positive change, was one of the significant surprises that surfaced from the data—not the mere importance of outcome based thinking, but the emergence of this type of thinking as a deeply rooted value that guided the professional outlook and approach of all seven participants. Outcome based thinking was cited across all thematic elements of the analysis as having had such a direct relationship to the participants learned competencies as performers and music educators that they were later translated into a value system that each

believed was critically important in executing transformative change and effective leadership. Striving for outcomes was interpreted by the researcher as an essential, deeply rooted participant value revealed in several contexts throughout the data analysis. Striving for outcomes, in fact, became that place “where progress happens as a leader” (Marilyn).

Importantly, their values leading to actions were supported by a variety of comparable systems developed by participants to fully utilize a data collection—feedback dissemination—progress monitoring loop that brought the idea of striving toward specific outcomes out of the conceptual realm and into the working knowledge sphere for educational stakeholders.

The question of what is valued by an organization as a whole was also of critical importance to participants like Marilyn, who felt stifled in her ability to effect transformative change when her own principles, passions, and contributions were not valued, or in the case of music teaching, were valued less than other disciplines. Yet conversely, satisfactory organizational reflection and answers to the questions of what is valued in particular school districts led Marilyn (and likewise the other six participants) to seek out workplaces in which their “whole world” was transformed by their teams’ collaborative work being acknowledged as of value to the multitude of educational stakeholders they served.

*Measuring results: A standard of excellence.* A collective picture emerged from the analyzed data that supported the view that desired outcomes or performances begin with a vision but ultimately must become actualized. Participants all shared the same view that operationalizing a vision brings together the things that people value with: (a) the staging and planning of goal setting; (b) the excitement of critiquing progress through the work of interpreting, processing, and assessing results from multiple perspectives and responding to results that are less than positive or unexpected; and (c) the development of new, meaningful

practices, and philosophical and practical directions for educators. Systems of reflecting, reviewing, refining (Marilyn), instructing, assessing, giving feedback (David), and discovering and implementing plans to use the results of data with fidelity (Ashley), were just some of the ideas referencing the process of measuring results against a standard of excellence.

Importantly, in an examination of the transcripts of all seven participants, data pointed to this overriding value of assessments as something that music teachers understand so deeply that it is acted upon as an inner impulse, at its base the rudimentary skill of “you hear something, you fix it, and you call on the sections that are the weakest” (David) as you do the work necessary to yield the results desired, experience ongoing progress toward a predetermined outcome, celebrate growth, and “get the good news out” (Charles).

**Resonating internal values associated with transformative leadership.** To achieve a full and accurate interpretation and description of the data, a brief discussion is necessitated about another set of value-laden participant qualities that were developed during their work as musicians and music educators and were integrated with the competencies, relationships, and values that participants acted upon as effective, transformative leaders. These additional leadership qualities might be described as inner impulses, internal values, learned value-action modes, or all three—they are the qualities of *courage*, *respect*, and *love* that resonated from the voices and stories of participants throughout the analysis of the data and were ultimately manifested in their work as educational leaders.

**Courage.** Cornel West (2008), in a video excerpt from the documentary *Examined Life*, described courage as “the enabling virtue for any . . . human being” (1:01). During this research, courage emanated from participants’ shared stories and was displayed through both the bold confidence and quiet assuredness in their words and ideas. Courage was felt in their stories of

grit and determination to succeed. Courage was shown by participants as young musicians tentatively playing first notes, making mistakes, and tirelessly rehearsing areas in need of improvement. Courage also enabled participants to continue risking failure in future endeavors and in the process to experience the positive results of trying out new ideas, making adjustments, and fine-tuning the practices that help to overcome obstacles and produce the seeds of growth and the sounds of success. “Just this willingness to risk” Chaleff (1998) claimed, “singles one out for future leadership roles” (p. 38).

As participants transitioned through their early lives and careers and into leadership roles they also demonstrated the courage to “step aside and let others lead” (Ashley) as a means to inspire growth. They utilized their courage to create safe spaces to learn and grow and as a means to maximize learning and help others to safely navigate change. When there was not time to rehearse their leadership initiatives, participants used their courage to improvise, to seek and take the advice of others on how to execute a plan or program, and to make it safe for others to candidly share their viewpoints (Chaleff, 1998). The data analysis repeatedly evidenced the participants’ ability to display Chaleff’s (1998) confidence that “we can each be the author of these characteristics of courage and skill, and by doing so, become models our colleagues, and even our leaders can emulate” (p. 39).

**Respect.** While the many personal qualities and actions related to respect are hard to define, the concept was revealed in the data consistently through the participants’ deep and profound respect for people of all ages and for the highest goals of the institutions they serve. Participants spoke of their abiding (but guarded and realistic) respect for the policies and processes of educational organizations, for the hard work and continual learning required of educators, for diversity of ideas and individual contributions to the whole, as well as their

profound respect for students and teachers and the possibilities for growth envisioned and programs implemented.

DePree (2008) in his book *Leadership Jazz*, talked about the importance of “respect for the future, regard for the present, [and] understanding the past” (p. 176). He clarified that leaders who can perceive the fluid connections between past experiences, the keen attention paid to the people and processes they are accountable to in the present, and the open and humble attitudes required in the face of the unpredictability and possibility of the future, will always be more appropriately in tune with the far-reaching implications of integrating the value of respect into their work. Likewise, in connecting their own interpretations of respect to their backgrounds as musicians and music educators, participants shared analogies to leadership that spoke of their respect for the anticipation of the music-making and of plans that are envisioned “before any sounds are made or any actions taken” (Bathurst & Ladkin, 2012, p. 108). Finally, participants’ collective words spoke of an “ethic of respect” that underpins their “abiding respect for the tool[s] of . . . [their] trade” (p.108), and for each and every action and reaction that has become and will remain central to their work as leaders.

**Love.** The kind of love that consistently shown through the participant stories is no less than the type of love that transforms an ordinary value into lived actions that can change lives—one student, one teacher, one life at a time. Data revealed, in fact, that participants have not only been leading with love, but have been mentored by others who lead with love. Contained in their collective leadership style and practice is a love defined by their passion for teaching and for learning, a love defined by service to others rather than personal recognition or ego, and a love inherent in every celebrated measure of growth in their students and staff.

To justify the inclusion of love as an overriding value in the data analysis of a scientific research project, the researcher turned to Martha Nussbaum, who in her 2013 book *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice*, courageously rejected “the claim that love is always likely to be unwise” (p. 212) in organizational contexts, and asserted instead the idea that “love-infused compassion can become, extended, a vehicle of political principles . . . not ceasing to bind citizens to what they love . . . [and] promot[ing] the common good (p. 313). The book’s table of contents alone, lists the word love side by side with equality, inclusion, distribution, compassion, patriotism, freedom, and justice. Within its pages, Nussbaum mentions the expression of “civic love” (p. 46), and states that “all love has aspects of the ideal, and political love no less” (p. 384).

Further, in a recorded interview entitled *Examined Life*, Nussbaum (2010) shared her view that “people get together to form a society . . . out of love. . . . They want to join with others in creating a world that is as good as it can be” (6:10). These ideas were sentiments that were also expressed by the seven participants who like Nussbaum, courageously used the word *love* repeatedly to describe their feelings towards students and staff and the essence of their work and actions as educators.

In continuing to search for scholarly endorsement of these ideas, the researcher had to go no further than the index of Palmer’s (2004) book, *A Hidden Wholeness*, which zeroed in on practicing love and the power of love (p. 203) as a means to elevate leadership. Palmer openly supported the idea that love, when practiced appropriately is,

neither judging us to be deficient nor trying to force us to change. . . . [but] surrounds us with a charged force field that makes us want to grow . . . [in an environment] that is safe enough to take the risks and endure the failures that growth requires. (p. 60)

The seven participants shared their own powerful experiences of love as a force for good, and similarly and unabashedly practiced the expression of love. Their stories revealed their love of connecting their daily work and achievements directly “to kids and teachers in classrooms,” (Ashley) and by seizing every opportunity to show off innovative programs and multiple measures of growth and success in verbal, written, and often visual demonstrations of their victories in education. Their stories demonstrated a passionate approach to both teaching and leadership which was driven by the intentional inclusion of love within the center of every vision, every mission accomplished, and a view toward building and sustaining relationships for the “next generation” (Mitchell). Despite the challenges of leadership, the words and reflections echoed repeatedly by the participants of this study, counseled a “sense of gratitude that you are able to do as much as you did, to think as much, to love as much, to play as much” (West, 2008, 10:23) and participate in a “process that one never reaches . . . [but in which] you are [intelligently and lovingly] . . . going up the hill looking for better . . . grander, more ennobling, enabling meanings” (12:17).

***The values I keep.*** In sum, the data related to individual and collective values revealed the participants’ deep “interconnectedness of humanity” and the promotion of “collective intelligence and energies” (Bathurst & Ladkin, 2012, p. 115) that has enabled them to support educational organizations to reach beyond the limitations faced, achieve results beyond initial expectations, and at times experience greatness. Their willingness to reveal their deeply held values and share their uniquely personal experiences has enabled the researcher to present their viewpoints and ideas through a variety of new responses to the challenges facing the nation’s schools and to highlight the relevancy of their backgrounds as musicians and music educators as a significant precursor to their unique brand of leadership. Wyant, who like the other six



participants, expressed a humility that is not always obvious in the researcher's interpretation of the data, summed up the driving force behind his work as an educational leader in just four simple words: "the values I keep."

## **Findings Related to the Literature**

### **Connecting Music and Leadership**

The idea that inherent musical processes are linked to leadership practices and that musicians exhibit leadership competencies, is not a new one. The small band of researchers reviewed in Chapter 2 hailed from business, government, and educational organizations and have described preliminary, growing evidence regarding the leadership potential and distinctive experiential approach to the practices of leadership exhibited by artists and musicians (Adler, 2006, 2015; Asbjornson, n.d.; Bathhurst & Ladkin, 2012; Cimino & Denhardt, 2012; DePree, 2004, 2008; Kelehear, 2008; Nissley, 2010; Vaillancourt, 2007).

Interestingly, since being immersed in this research, not a week has gone by without the researcher hearing or reading references to what appears to be a natural outgrowth of the literature reviewed. Specifically, the researcher has witnessed a burgeoning use of music ensemble-leadership metaphors, particularly metaphors designed to capture how the specific practices of jazz ensemble leaders or orchestral conductors might help other organizational leaders to visualize and internalize a number of defined practices that are now considered to be the essence of effective leadership. The researcher has come across this common metaphor at education conferences, on TED talks and YouTube videos, in scholarly articles, in strategic plans published by education foundations, and most recently when turning on the television news.

*The music ensemble-leadership connection: A process-oriented metaphor.* The Wallace Foundation (2013) for instance, in their widely respected work on school leaders, has

regularly disseminated information about a University of Washington study which used a musical metaphor to connect leadership to three different approaches used by leaders—the one-man band, the jazz combo, and the orchestral leader. Using these analogies, the study negatively critiqued the one-man band, but applauded the jazz combo leader for the ability to “delegate responsibility to others,” and the orchestral conductor for “helping large teams produce a coherent sound while encouraging soloists to shine.” (Wallace Foundation, 2013, p. 6).

A well-respected education scholar, Linda Darling-Hammond of Stanford University, was quoted in the Wallace Foundation (2013) report, stating: “I often use the metaphor of the conductor of the orchestra. We watch the conductor, we’re in the audience and we say, ‘I could do that. Piece of cake. Right?’”(p.19). She went on to give an overview of the types of roles that orchestral conductors actually perform in their daily work and compared it to what 21st century educational leaders are now expected to achieve:

organizational design and development . . . instructional leadership and the development of learning opportunities . . . change management, moving an organization from where it is to where it needs to be . . . outreach with various publics and communities that maintain support . . . [the procurement of] resources . . . good feedback and evaluation. (pp. 19–20)

More recently, both the May 2018 issue of the *American String Teacher*, and the June 2018 issue of the New York State School Music Association’s *School Music News*, featured articles about conductorless orchestras and democracy in performing ensembles. In the first article, “The Conductorless String Orchestra,” Katzman (2018) described the essence of an ensemble being conductorless as:

building a community where all voices matter, where . . . [players] take turns being leaders . . . where they can express their ideas in an open and trusting environment. . . . [fostering] teamwork, leadership, responsibility, ownership, awareness, and openness. (p. 21)

In the second article “Addressing Diversity Through Democracy in Performing Ensembles,” Collins (2018) asserted that ensemble leaders should “be open minded and fearless in the possible creative outcomes. . . . [and] must expand from the top-down, ‘expert on the podium’ to ‘side-by-side’ collaborator, guide and counselor” (p. 26), incorporating open collaboration and frequent experimentation into the process while ensuring mastery of desired competencies. Collins also suggested that collaborations that promote the diversity of “different interests, experiences, identities, and backgrounds” into the fiber of ensemble decision making processes, assist in the process of “attracting and keeping” valuable members (p. 23).

Even Martha Nussbaum (2010, 2013) and Cornel West (2008) in their parallel discussions of the *examined life*, turned to music metaphors as examples of how music-making offers endless examples of transformative practices in relationship to collaborative change actions. Nussbaum (2013) sighted how music-making affords the players the ability to “assume different argumentative positions, seeing the world from different and contrasting points of view” (p. 52). West (2008) suggested that change happens when leaders are willing to courageously face these opposing viewpoints and “ride on the dissonance, ride on the blue notes” (8:48) which sound the human challenges that are so often musically expressed through jazz.

At times, Nussbaum (2013) noted, change occurs during “the pause within the music . . . [suggesting] a more hopeful direction . . . for a workable conception. . . . [in a] world [that] as it

is needs a great deal of work” (p. 52). She added the optimistic note that “one will not stop aspiring to get that work done” (p. 52).

**The musician-leader connection: A valuable human resource for educational institutions?** While the music ensemble–organizational leadership metaphor is frequently used as a model approach to leadership and as a training tool for current or would be organizational leaders, the researcher has found that in the education-based scholarly literature reviewed, an insufficient amount of attention has been paid to the artists and musicians themselves, the people who have actually and successfully been employing the highlighted practices and processes for many years and who continue to do so today.

*Connecting the metaphor to the persons contained within: The portrayers of the vision and the possessors of the competencies required of effective leadership.* Returning to the data and the lived experiences of the seven participants, the researcher imagines that Patricia might compare this long interpretation laden subtitle with her description of the leader’s challenge of “moving [people] from the world of talk to the world of [the people who] do.”

The metaphor, as it is currently being articulated in the literature reviewed, however, misses what Seifert (2004) named over a decade ago as a vital connection between the people who are modelling these creative, collaborative approaches to leadership and their ability to take on leadership roles themselves. The metaphor as it is currently being articulated, minimizes the “formidable resource” Seifert identified, and the “years of hands-on experience . . . specialized training, and . . . carefully honed achievement enhancing skills” (p. 2), that the people at the heart of the metaphors might be able to provide to the educational institutions they serve.

Nussbaum (2013) was one of the few scholars to extend her metaphor beyond the musicians’ practices to the actual music-makers, reminding those who espouse collaborative

transformation of organizations, that “the music-makers are already here” (p. 409), and can be observed to be “achiev[ing] moments of deeply moving tenderness and reciprocity” (p. 411). The sentiment expressed in Nussbaum’s words, echoed not only Seifert’s (2004) call to tap the human resource inherent in the artists’ known competencies, but the researcher’s own position. Based on the findings, the researcher urges policy makers and positional leaders in educational institutions to consider the potential of the music educators within their school systems for the ability to transfer their learned leadership related competencies and insights into authentic leadership roles and ensure that creativity, innovation, empowerment, and collective engagement are used as tools of collaborative achievement.

It is the researcher’s hope that this study might compel those who promote the metaphors described in the previous passages, to begin to look beyond the practices that they espouse as exemplar leadership techniques, to the actual people that exercise the possibilities presented. The researcher, herself, is not apt to settle for the continuation of what the data revealed as the participants’ reluctant acceptance of a reality that means the role of music educators in publicly modeling and practicing highly effective and transformative leadership competencies will remain largely invisible within the hierarchy of educational leadership roles, ignored at best or culled as insignificant at worst.

Like Katsman’s (2108) vision of the leader’s role as a portrayer of “critical thinking . . . risk-taking . . . communication, and openness” (p. 23), the researcher believes that instilling trust and confidence in the transformative actions required of educational institutions in this century will require the type of leadership (and the recognition of those who lead) evidenced in the data as fulfilled by the seven participants and extending well beyond the scope of this research.

## **Effectively Leading Educational Organizations: Reaching Leadership Goals**

Connecting the findings on effective leadership to the literature reviewed, the researcher draws upon several researchers who: (a) significantly informed her approach to this study, or (b) completed investigations that the researcher considered to be important precursors to and well aligned with the Hitt and Tucker (2015) domains of effective leadership that were used as a central construct of the study.

Based on the researcher's post-study reflections on the findings as they related not only to the conceptual framework, but to the literature on effective leadership as a whole, the researcher, for instance, recognized the significant parallel between Yukl's et al. (2002) hierarchical taxonomy of successful leader characteristics and behaviors (including tasks and operations, relationships and interactions, and change behaviors that lead to action) and the three overriding themes that were central to the findings focused on competencies, relationships, and values related to change actions.

Also in line with the current research findings, were the previous findings of Marks and Printy (2003) and Printy (2014) who determined, for instance, that integrated leadership and full range leadership (a term based on the work of Avolio, 2011) were based on the interdependency of: (a) instructional and/or transactional leadership practices (such as setting direction, articulating expectations, and communicating information about policy and process), (b) transformational leadership (highly inspirational and motivating, stimulating high levels of cooperation and collaboration), and (c) shared leadership (requiring trust, mutual responsibility and dependency upon one another in follower-leader/principal-teacher relationships).

What is clear in the findings for this study—and supported by the significant association between what the participants' revealed about their lived experiences and approach to leadership

and the extant literature on effective literature—is that each of the seven participants entered into the field of educational leadership with goals no less remarkable than employing an effective array of instructional, transforming, and shared leadership skills and developing and expanding upon the competencies, relationships, and values leading to change action that were at the heart of their lived experiences during the four interrelated transitional stages of *becoming*, *being*, *building*, and *belonging* that were examined throughout this study.

Interestingly, Robinson (2008) cautiously noted the substantial challenge for educational leaders to fully meet their goals of “distribution of influence” (p. 241), and Printy (2014) realistically reminded her readers that to achieve full range leadership and the integration of such an extensive range of competencies is something that is “highly aspirational and difficult to achieve” (p. 310). Having completed this study, their hesitancy is well-understood by the researcher, who, based on the findings, would agree that achieving the vast array of technical, humanistic, and conceptual competencies that might appear on the job description for an educational leadership position is not an easily accomplished feat. And yet each of the seven participants, the researcher feels compelled to note, repeatedly expressed the will and the ability to confront the challenges of educational administration, to attempt to achieve the highly aspirational, and to rejoice in victories large or small on behalf of their educational communities.

### **Study Limitations and Delimitations**

The first identified limitation of this study resulted from the small number of public school administrators that responded to the recruitment efforts, met the criteria for participation, and completed the selection process. A related limitation resulted from the final count of seven participants who participated in the study all being employed by school districts within the New York State Department of Education. Results yielded from the study, had they come from the

perspective of music educators who transitioned to leadership in other states and geographic locations or within the non-public sector may have included insights and perspectives that would have meaningfully altered the findings. Based on these limitations, the researcher cannot generalize the meaning or application of the results for a larger populations of music educators nor extend the results to transitioning educators outside of the teacher reference group of music educators.

Both the nature of the study's phenomenological design and the purposive sampling procedure delimited participation in the study, but the researcher believes that electing to use the Seidman (2013) semistructured interview process involving three 60–90-minute interviews to conduct the fieldwork and gather data might also have resulted in a study limitation during the data analysis process. It is the researcher's opinion that shortening the interview length or number of interviews per participant would have strengthened the interview process by yielding a sufficient but not overwhelming amount of phenomenological data to code and analyze. One alternative approach might have been to limit the collection of data by adapting the number of questions asked or the number of interviews conducted when and if the researcher determined that a sufficient level of saturation of data pertaining to any one area of investigation, particular viewpoint, or satisfactory answer to the central question or subquestions had been reached.

Another limitation of concern had to do with the potential of researcher bias (related to her background as a music educator and transition to leadership) to influence the analysis and interpretation of the lived experiences shared and elaborated on by the seven participants. The researcher, however, clarified her position and reflected on this potential limitation at all phases of the research process ensuring that she remained highly vigilant in monitoring her own personal assumptions and presuppositions during the collection and analysis of data. This



supported the perspective that the open, trusting connection established between the researcher and the participants during the 3-interview cycle was partially related to the researcher's knowledge and tacit understanding of the field related experiences and issues they were discussing. Just as the ineffable nature of the pedagogy involved in the acting, intentions, theories, and informed practices of the leaders in the various fields of education brings complexity to the study, the manner in which the researcher employed the hermeneutic-interpretive approach was enhanced by her ability to observe, listen, and relate to the self-reported lived experiences described by the participants in what van Manen (1990) described as a "pedagogic way," enabling a strong "pedagogic interpretation" based on mutual participation in the phenomenon under investigation (p. 151).

The researcher further delimited the scope of this research by narrowing the sample of artists and arts educators referred to in the review of literature specifically to music educators who made the transition from student musicians to music teachers and later from music teachers to educational administrators in public school districts. In line with the recommendations for phenomenological research, the investigator also pre-restricted the number of participants in the study to fewer than eight. With a final group of seven participants in the study, the researcher was able to establish a series of comfortable, mutually enjoyable interviewing experiences, and honor the participant stories by striving to merge the scientific craft of data collection and analysis with the artistic and scholarly interpretation of the experiences they lived and shared so fully (Creswell, 2013; Saldaña, 2016; van Manen, 1990).

Another important delimiting factor of the study was related to the researcher's decision to construct two of the three conceptual frames based on the findings of a specific researcher or group of researchers. In the first instance, the researcher elected to use the Browne-Ferrigno

(2003) study as both a roadmap of the developmental transitional processes experienced by teachers transitioning into leadership roles and as an informed structure for the interview questions. In the second instance, the researcher utilized the Hitt and Tucker (2015) synthesis of known effective educational leadership practices and the five central domains of effective leadership that marked their findings as the guiding, comparative framework of effective educational leadership practices throughout the implementation and analysis of the study. In both instances, there may have been other related frameworks or additional bodies of work that were not identified in the review of literature that may have influenced the researchers understanding of transitional phases and/or effective educational leadership, and therefore enriched the research process and results of the study. While the researcher's review of and written synthesis of existing research and scholarly debate on the topics explored was comprehensive and no extant research was intentionally excluded from this review, there are study limitations inherent in the process of locating, reviewing, and assigning particular significance to the literature obtained and presented throughout the study.

The implications and recommendations of the study which will be discussed in the next two sections will in part respond to the limitations and delimitations, and address the possibility that: (a) the over-saturation of data collected in relation to certain aspects of the study strengthened the evidence and arguments presented in this chapter and will help to motivate further research and extend the significance of the results, and (b) additional research related to the research study, if conducted, will help to decrease the deficiency of literature related to certain aspects of the study and increase the probability that the results of this research will be corroborated and documented. This would also influence the generalizability of the findings to a larger population of music educators and other discipline related teacher reference groups facing

a variety of transitional experiences and practicing leadership in a multitude of distinct educational environments.

### **Study Implications**

Undergoing a phenomenological method of study based on the members of the specific teacher reference group of music educators has produced findings that address several critical areas in the field of educational leadership that have remained under-researched to date and will have implications on future educational agendas and subsequent research related to existing empirical findings and challenges addressed in the literature.

By taking the innovative approach of studying and analyzing the essential lived experiences of the participants from one discipline related teacher reference group and synthesizing their reflections and answers to the semistructured interview questions, a number of important findings and theoretical implications emerged related to the three interconnecting frameworks including: (a) the components of effective educational leadership, (b) the capacity of musicians/music educators to lead, and (c) the transitional milestones and challenges faced by the participants during their passage from teaching to educational leadership.

First, the results of this study have implications for the reconceptualization of the ideal educational leader and a positive shift in individual and organizational perception about the ability of the teacher reference group of music educators and potentially other under researched discipline-specific teacher reference groups to lead effectively. Second, the study has implications targeted toward improving the organizational practices and policies regarding the recruitment, training, and selection of future educational leaders, as well as the intentional diversification of leaders who serve educational institutions.

With regard to individual and organizational perceptions about the competency of members of the teacher reference group of music educators to lead educational institutions effectively, an important first step was to give voice to members of this teacher reference group, to examine how they made sense of their life experiences as musicians and music educators during to their developmental processes leading to and involved in the practice of educational leadership, and to gain a deeper understanding of if, how, and to what degree they perceived their practice as musicians and music educators (including competencies gained) as related to their practice of leadership (van Manen, 1990). This phenomenological study was strengthened by the use of Seidman's (2013) semistructured interview process and inspired by Saldaña's (2016) distinctive coding and analysis design, which in combination supported the researcher in interpreting the data and construing meaningful understandings about the collective patterns of behavior and qualities of the seven representative members of this teacher reference group, highlighting how they were distinguished as leaders by their background, discipline of study, and areas of expertise.

Further, in light of existing findings in the field of arts-based leadership and the connection between artists' processes and leadership, this study served as an important connecting link between: (a) extant literature connecting musicians/music educators with the components of effective literature, (b) new findings revealed in this literature related to the leadership competencies participants gained as musicians and music teachers, and (c) current empirical research on the components of effective educational leadership. Results of the study strongly supported these links and established a robust connection between what the data revealed to be leadership related competencies the participants had amassed as musicians and

music educators, and the known qualities and competencies of effective, transformative leadership.

In terms of individual impact, the overabundance of data relating to the leadership competencies of the teacher reference group under investigation not only has implications for the self-perception of music educators as individuals and as a group, but for individual members of other discipline related teacher reference groups that have not yet been studied. The implication that this line of scientific exploration may also apply to other discipline-specific teacher reference groups who have not yet been examined for their potential discipline-related skill sets and leadership competencies is an avenue worth pursuing for other researchers. What Bathhurst and Ladkin (2012) suggested to organizations considering musicians and music educators in leadership roles, might also apply to teachers of other specialized subjects who may possess a “sense of mastery . . . [or] particular talent . . . [that they can] bring to collective action” as leaders (p. 113).

At the organizational level, results of this study revealed that the teacher reference group of music educators has been misunderstood by the educational community in terms of the specific skills sets and well-honed leadership abilities they can potentially bring to educational leadership—skills that they gained throughout their passages from musician to music teacher and eventually to leader and were revealed to have been practiced and mastered well before they received any formal training in educational administration. Implications of perceived leadership ability, therefore extends to a wider community of practice and to a variety of individuals and groups of stakeholders including teaching colleagues in other disciplines, positional educational leaders, leadership trainers, and community members.

Further implications of this study are related to the urgency to answer some critical organizational questions that were reflected upon, but not satisfied in the research findings including: (a) Who holds the power to influence the recruitment, access to leadership opportunities and training, and selection of educational leaders?, (b) What is the social and organizational context within which such decisions are made?, and (c) Are current policies and leadership recruitment and selection structures at odds with the regularly stated need for transformative leadership? (Armstrong, 2012; Bizjak, 2017; Brunner & DeLeon, 2013; Collay, 2006, 2014; Curry, 2000; DuPre, 2011; Fink & Brayman, 2006; Ghaus-Kelley, 2014; Hasson, 2011; Jarmon, 2014; Myran, et al., 2011; Steele, 2015; Zafft, 2013).

The researcher anticipates that this study will be just one among several that will have implications on future policies and practices in educational institutions regarding what is often referred to as the making of a principal (or educational leader) process (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). The findings of this study complement earlier research which supported a transitional process which begins with intentional leadership socialization opportunities and recruitment efforts, and extends to leadership training and hiring practices that will move beyond goals to prepare leaders to manage schools adequately toward the intentional recruitment and development of a diverse group of educators with distinguishable, complementary leadership competencies, and the retention of a diverse pool of high quality leaders. Investigating diversity in terms of a distinct educational discipline, is an important and authentic step toward stemming the current lack of diversity among educational leaders and what Fink and Brayan (2006) recognized as one of the “significant barriers to educational change” (p. 86).

Study results do not imply definitive knowledge about, nor promote or contradict previously documented efforts to identify the exact components of effective educational

leadership. The principal implications, rather, are supported by the continued scholarly efforts to synthesize, organize, and advertise the known practices of effective educational leadership (Glatter, 2006; Hallinger, 2003, 2005; Hitt & Tucker, 2015; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2008; Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Marks & Printy, 2003; Nedelcu, 2013; Printy, 2014; Robinson, 2008; Spillane, 2005; Timperley, 2005). Implications also reflect the researcher's determination to embed what is known about effective leadership paradigms and inspiring leadership practices into this new body of research which has extended the scope of previous studies by examining the leadership potential of one discipline-specific teacher reference group, music educators.

Further, study results do not imply that all music educators possess the competencies, relationship-building skills, or values related to change action that lead to effective educational leadership and were shown to be in evidence by the seven participants in this study. Interviewing a different pool of music educators who have transitioned into leadership roles might produce different, contrasting, or opposing results. This line of thinking would also apply to members of other teacher reference groups. The researcher recognizes that membership in any particular teacher reference group or participation in a shared phenomenological experience related to a transition from teaching to educational leadership does not allow the assumption that their lived experiences, self-initiative, desire to lead, or success as educational leaders should be viewed as expected or replicable.

And although it was not by intent or design of the study, the researcher did not interview music educators who have made the transition to leadership and have failed in their efforts to lead educational organizations successfully. The positive results in this study, in fact, may consequently encourage other scholars and researchers to: (a) critique the study along the

vantage point of its positive results related to the evidence of the seven participants' ability to exercise effective leadership, (b) review existing literature for negative associations with teacher-to-leader transitions experienced by music educators or members of other discipline related teacher reference groups, or (c) conduct new research that gives voice to members of discipline related teacher reference groups who have attempted to make the transition to leadership and have not been able to execute effective leadership in their schools, districts, or educational organizations.

Taken together, the overall findings will inform and quite possibly enlighten a variety of educational stakeholders, including a broad spectrum of education associations and leadership training programs as well as teachers themselves regarding the importance of the phenomenon studied and experienced by one group of educators. Results will also contribute to and extend the practical and theoretical conversation regarding the recruitment and training of leaders and add strength to the collective goal of advancing effective leadership and transformational change in the nation's schools.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The researcher recognizes that there is considerably more research that will need to be conducted to verify and substantiate the preliminary findings in this study. In order to address the current studies limitations and delimitations, discover or expand upon important new elements related to the findings, and remain open to the possibility of new outcomes or variations on the findings, the researcher supports a deeper scientific inquiry or series of inquiries into the central premises of this research study, including the three conceptual frames that informed all aspects of the investigation.



Additional research would serve to strengthen or challenge the findings, would potentially enhance the transferability and significance of the findings to a larger population of educators, and would bring to light a number of issues and related themes that arose during the many phases of this investigation. The researcher is confident that Wheatley's (1999) premise that within the domain of leadership, what is learned from one genre of leaders will very often apply to another, holds true for this and future studies in the area of educational leadership (as cited in Vaillancourt, 2007). In making these recommendations, the researcher first and foremost invites other researchers and scholars to consider how music educators and other discipline related teacher reference groups experience a variety of teacher-to-leader transitional involvements and practice leadership in a multitude of distinct educational environments.

### **Effective Educational Leadership**

As a result of this study, the researcher makes just one focused recommendation that expands, rather than replicates the already significant quantity of extant literature on the effective components of organizational leadership and educational leadership. The researcher suggests that a natural progression of this work would be an investigation into the pattern and practice of leadership exercised by principals and educational leaders who have already been determined to be effective based on their ability to meet or exceed progress toward goals (Day, Gu, & Sammon, 2016).

The significance of the information garnered from this study was enhanced by the finding that each of the seven participants showed personal determination to effectively exercise transformative leadership. If these findings were used as a starting point for extended research or for new research on other leaders known to be effective, it would continue to test Day, Gu, and Sammon's (2016) assertion that the results of such a studies can be construed as immediately

applicable and thus provide a highly operative way to gain understanding of and immediately capitalize on a known, complex range and combination of competencies, strategies, brokered relationships, behaviors, and actions that can and have led to effective educational leadership and transformative change.

Importantly, the researcher recognizes that while effective leadership has been associated in the literature with high levels of student achievement, the researcher did not attempt, nor was it the purpose of this study to evaluate or demonstrate that the schools, districts, and regions in which the seven participants have been employed as leaders have experienced high levels of student success (as determined by ongoing state and district benchmark assessments, graduation rates, and other multiple measures of achievement). Measuring student success and its relationship to leadership has been a topic undertaken by researchers in the past, and ongoing research in this area would continue to inform the recruitment, training, selection, and retention of high quality leaders (Armstrong, 2012; Fullan, 2001; Glatter, 2006; Hallinger, 2003, 2005; Hitt & Tucker, 2015; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2008; Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Marks & Printy, 2003; Nedelcu, 2013; Printy, 2014; Robinson, 2008; Spillane, 2005; Timperley, 2005).

### **Music Teachers Who Take the Lead: Their Potential to Lead Effectively**

The researcher recommends both replications and expansions of this type of study, focusing on the teacher reference group of music educators and developing a transferable theoretical framework of what is known about the phenomenon experienced in their unique transition toward leadership. Such studies would provide additional scientific evidence and important new information for positional leaders and those directing the recruitment and selection of future leaders. This includes the extension of extant research on musicians and

artists and their capacity to lead organizations effectively and transformatively to additional studies focused directly on music educators and arts educators within the educational sphere. This educationally focused research would help key educational leaders and policy makers to truly conceptualize and envision how the study of discipline related teacher reference groups, and in particular, the study of music and arts educators, might support positive leadership outcomes in their institutions. Recommendations include:

- Using a variety of qualitative methodologies such as ethnography, narrative, phenomenological, grounded theory, or case study (including those that involve the investigative procedures of interviewing, surveying, conducting focus groups, and other means of giving voice to both small and large participant groups) to determine if there are existing parallels in the findings with regard to transitional impediments and challenges they may have encountered and/or possible attributes and skill sets that members of this distinct teacher reference group might bring to their roles as educational leaders.
- Enlisting as study participants, music educators who are making the transition to educational leadership positions in a variety of geographic regions of the United States and internationally in both public and non-public educational organizations, including those who are seeking or have obtained leader certifications vested by a variety of state education departments.
- Conducting quantitative studies to: (a) seek published statistical information about the actual number of music educators who have transitioned into leadership roles, (b) formally compare this data to any existing data regarding the leadership transition of teachers from other discipline related teacher reference groups, and (c) monitor (over

a targeted period of time) the number and scope of leadership opportunities for teachers from a variety of discipline related teacher reference groups as well as the number of teachers in these groups who become administrators over a period of time as a means of monitoring school districts' inclusionary practices and informing the issues of equity and full access to leadership opportunities.

- Conduct research that does not delimit by type of artist (music educators), but rather, extends new research to participant pools of arts educators in a number of related fields including but not limited to visual arts, movement arts, literary arts, and dramatic arts.

### **Teacher Transitional Experiences and Advancement Toward Formal Educational Leadership Training and Certification**

Armstrong (2012) asserted that “studies that connect the cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions of . . . transitions to administrative passages can provide a more textured understanding of how individuals and organizations strategically manage and deploy these domains in the transition from teaching to administration” (p. 422). Additionally, such studies should consider new possibilities with regard to when and how transitional processes, including life milestones other than leadership training, can stimulate an individual's or reference groups' transformation to leader identity and the procurement of leadership competencies.

Recommendations include:

- Additional research on a variety of teacher reference groups during their transitions from teacher to leader using an investigative process based on lived experiences and a reflective process that hones in on participant self-awareness of their backgrounds and competencies in connection with their potential ability to lead effectively.

Data collected from this study described impediments to leadership faced by participants related to a hierarchy of attitude and leadership opportunity based on content area taught and/or gender. The researcher suggests, therefore, that there is a high need for additional research on the transitional experiences of: (a) discipline related teacher/staff reference groups beyond classroom teachers, and (b) gender related teacher reference groups.

- Expanded research in a variety of leadership contexts and environments to comprehend fully the typical leader recruitment procedures and policies (or lack of procedures and policies) including those of specific school districts and state supported educational collaboratives and support providers.

### **Researcher Policy Recommendations and Conclusion**

Having been an educator for over 30 years, the researcher, like so many of the scholars and social scientists reviewed, and each of the seven participants at the heart of this investigation, understands that the field of education as a whole, and thus the field of educational leadership, rarely remains calm, unfluctuating, and steady in its progression, but rather frantic, ever-changing, and driven by an urgency for positive change. For educational stakeholders, particularly teachers and principals who are at the frontlines of student caregiving, the constant curriculum and instructional shifts, policy changes, state assessments, and department mandates, can present an overwhelming complexity of responsibilities. Demands for excellence and recordable, publicly scrutinized results are also continuous and rapidly fluctuating, and are at times confusing and contradictory.

At its best education is a field that welcomes creativity, innovation, and the power of collective energy and synergy. At its worst education is a field in which the actual lived

experiences and voices of even its most seasoned and successful educators are dismissed as insignificant, ignored as inconsequential, and considered to be without value in the hierarchy of leadership. And yet it is within this reality that effective leadership has been scientifically connected to student success and educational progress, and this has made the recruitment, training, selection, and retention of high quality leaders who can “can build socially just communities, mobilize stakeholders for common purposes and sustain change” (Armstrong, 2012, p. 421), among the most critical educational challenges of the 21st century.

By embarking on this deeply reflective phenomenological study the researcher was guided by her firm belief that the answers to the most challenging issues in education (including the critical shortage of competent, capable, and inspired administrators and the rapid turnover of school leaders) can be revealed through a process of turning inward and redoubling efforts to listen to, systematically reflect upon, and honor the voices of those who have: (a) applied their theoretical and practical knowledge to the myriad of educational tasks and challenges at hand; (b) demonstrated fortitude, drive, and a clear sense of purpose in the face of a myriad of obstacles; and (c) devoted their lives and careers to advocating for the people they serve (Armstrong, 2012; Collay, 2014; Day, Gu, & Sammon, 2016; Fink & Brayman, 2006; van Manen, 1990).

This research is focused on one small group of educators who after many years of serving as educators in a variety of teaching and leadership roles, were at last afforded the opportunity to tell their stories and be listened to. Their stories were based on intense reflections of their lived experiences during the stages of becoming and being teachers, of building on their understandings and their competencies as educational leaders, and of orchestrating leadership

and gaining a profound sense of belonging and self-recognition of their ability to make a difference at the leadership table.

Amidst the overwhelming demands of local, state, and national policy makers; amidst the shifting obligations toward curriculum and instruction, evaluation, and exemplary practices; amidst the struggle to define and carry out their individual and collective mission to help children grow and achieve; amidst the stresses of a job with no set hours, no tangible rules, and no responsibility ever fulfilled or culminated—seven willing participants gave of their time to participate in a lengthy series of phenomenological interviews that asked them to describe their lived experiences as burgeoning musicians, educators, learners, and leaders. In the process, they entrusted the researcher with the task of grasping their meanings, capturing their ideas and insights, and translating the essence of their individual and collective experiences into a sound analysis of the data (using a qualitative scientific process) that has proven to be significant in value.

The researcher could sense during the interviews that participants who responded to the recruitment process and were part of the study, felt bonded by the fact that the study participation criteria focused on their shared roots and common lived experiences, and bonded by the opportunity to synthesize their ongoing reflections and imagine one another at work utilizing the competencies gained as part of the phenomenon of being musicians who became music educators and who have now taken the lead. Participants intrinsically understood that their personal trajectories toward leadership were being considered as part of a larger phenomenon experienced by music educators as a whole who transition to leadership. They strongly regarded their participation as a way to serve other educators and educational organizations through the answers and insights that might be revealed. Charles, one of the seven participants, referred to

this type of bonding with a cohort or group with similar, shared interests as “sacred,” and indeed it has been a sacred journey.

Findings reported in this study revealed a transition to leadership marked by a nonlinear pattern of growth and a dynamic, ever-changing, and often unpredictable continuum toward the formation of leader identity and the purposeful practice of educational leadership. Findings also shed new light on Hitt and Tucker’s (2015) view of educational leaders as the goal setters, creators, and protectors of an inspirational vision and as individuals whose influence commands a high impact on a diverse group of stakeholders and has significant effect on the level of achievement among both teachers and students. Using the framework of the Hitt and Tucker synthesized components of effective educational leadership as a comparative and analytic tool, provided the scientific underpinning for the researcher’s determination (unveiled in detail in the Chapter 4 analysis) that each of the seven participants possessed and utilized their cumulative skill sets, leadership competencies, and ability to orchestrate effective leadership and broker relationships in order to act as positive agents of change within the educational settings that they have been employed. Not only did the data analysis establish that if evaluated for this specific purpose, the educational administrators interviewed would be shown to have the leadership qualities and the level of talent required of educational leaders to be successful in the 21st century, results confirmed that participants have been honing and practicing these competencies since their earliest experiences as musicians and music educators. In essence, the seven participants not only collectively fulfilled, but extended Hitt and Tucker’s vision of educational leadership to include a significant number of highly original, creative, authentic, and transformative contributions to their delivery of leadership.



As the data analysis progressed, it became more and more evident that the combination and type of skill attainment and leadership training the participants described were a match for the type of administrative management and innovative leadership that would be required of them when they transitioned into more formal leadership roles. The data, however, revealed a marked contrast between this clear evidence of leadership skill sets and competencies and the generalized impression and frequent perception (at times expressed both subtly and overtly) that as musicians and music teachers they might not have the necessary attributes and transferable competencies considered necessary to lead effectively outside of the context of their specialized content area.

Based on the results of this phenomenological study, the researcher recommends a greater effort by the educational community as a whole to ensure that such perceptions are challenged. The researcher also suggests several targeted interventions, new directions, and courses of action intended to act as a catalytic roadmap for educational practitioners and scholars as they continue to navigate the creation, implementation, and ongoing assessment and monitoring of a number of important educational policies and practices oriented toward: (a) a shared leadership model with a strong emphasis on developing leadership capacity in individual staff and specific teacher reference groups in schools and districts; (b) the successful recruitment, training, and selection of effective educational leaders; and (c) the retention and maturation of effective educational leaders through active support programs that include formal mentoring structures and programs for administrators at all levels. These recommendations extend to leaders and catalytic agents in schools nationwide and school districts, state education departments and their affiliated regional service organizations, leadership training and development programs, and institutional think tanks for educational scholars and researchers.

## **Future Directions in Educational Policy, Practice, and Related Research**

Many of the recommendations that follow come down to the researcher's high priority on recognizing, utilizing, and honoring the collective human resources that already exist within educational institutions, embracing the possibility and promise of the leadership capacity and expertise within the current ranks, and managing unintentional internal impediments to the formation of a diverse pool of leaders in educational institutions. The researcher is not alone in her thinking. Myran, et al., (2011) called for a shift in leadership recruitment and selection policies that have been historically limited by a lack of ability to identify potential leadership traits and practices in teachers. Jarmon (2014) urged organizations to "capitalize on the skills and talent of a portion of their [existing] workforce" by looking inward and fully exploring the potential of positional staff members (p. 5). The researcher adds to their call to enable the best and brightest—most creative and competent—most energetic and innovative educators to find their own leadership voices and to be sought out and recognized for their leadership potential. She was struck by Chaleff's (1998) warning (two decades ago) that each organization risks their most "creative, energetic, and committed individuals. . . . becom[ing] somewhat cynical and alienated" (p. 38), if they are forced to work with and for leaders who are not able to inspire positive, productive, and empowered school cultures, thus "depriving the organization of the vitality it needs to continually improve or reinvent itself" (p. 38).

Recommendations also reflect the three overriding thematic strands that emerged from the data analysis and the participants' collective supposition that to be an effective leader personal and organizational policies and practices must reflect: (a) a range of observable and well exercised leadership competencies, (b) the ability to relate to and nurture productive,

reciprocal relationships with a wide variety of educational stakeholders, and (c) clearly articulated individual and communal values related to transformative change.

The researcher also stresses the importance of schools, school districts, and leader training programs committing to regularly scheduled opportunities to reflect upon and answer the question that was largely left unanswered following the data analysis: Who is responsible for envisioning, writing, carrying out, and monitoring new or existing policies related to the promotion of shared leadership and the recruitment and selection of a diverse pool of educational leaders? The researcher believes that the answer to this question is critically important, and that the person or persons who carry out the above-named responsibilities have the potential to profoundly affect the success or failure of leader hiring outcomes in educational institutions. The researcher calls for positional leaders, therefore, to designate formal titles and administrative assignments related to these imperative responsibilities as part of the mission of their organizations.

Shared leadership. Researcher recommendations begin with a call for recognizing existing leader capacity and supporting the continued building of leader capacity by extending the opportunities of leadership to all educational stakeholders. She recommends the following organizational strategies and policies that promote realigned structures, intentional leader recruitment, and the open advertisement of leadership opportunities, as methods of building a climate of collaboration and shared leadership in an effort to reach the desired outcome of improving student achievement in the nation's schools.

- Encourage a high degree of distributive leadership at all levels of school community, including frequent, ongoing leadership socialization opportunities for teachers and

other staff members. These opportunities should be formally recognized, written into policy documents, and have the potential of becoming salaried positions.

- Widely disseminate information to all current teachers and staff members about internal and external leadership participation or training opportunities and the different range of formal opportunities and pathways toward leadership that support their progression through formal hierarchy of leadership roles.
- Encourage individual teachers and/or groups of teachers who share similar backgrounds to self-reflect about the leadership competencies that may be inherent to their current professional role or educational background.
- Actively train school and district administrators in the critical role of followership and shared leadership and promote these ideas as evidence-based, realistically-achievable, and personally-gratifying methods of distributing leadership tasks, garnering new perspectives, and achieving effective outcomes.
- Regularly assess and evaluate current policies to determine if there are any roadblocks to shared leadership opportunities beyond the classroom for members of underrepresented discipline related teacher reference groups, including those who teach subjects outside of the core academic subjects (i.e., art, music, physical education, and foreign language) as well as non-classroom teaching staff like counselors, behavioral specialists, and support-service providers including physical, occupational, and speech therapists.

**Extending shared leadership recommendations to the recruitment, training and selection of future leaders.** Within the specifics of the “pipeline for effective [school] leadership” report published by The Wallace Foundation (2013) the researcher recognized an

effort to improve existing policies related to the recruitment, training, and selection of new educational leaders by clearly “defining the job. . . . providing high-quality training. . . . hiring selectively. . . . evaluating . . . and giving them on-the-job support” (p. 16). Yet the researcher noticed a conspicuous gap in this widely recognized document—that is, the lack of discussion or policies related to the intentional recruitment of existing, positional teachers who have been amassing leadership competencies as a byproduct of their work as teachers, have existing, ongoing experience practicing these leadership skills, and exhibit apparent potential for effective leadership in the realm of administration. Based on this gap in this and other reports studied on recruiting and preparing school leaders (Armstrong, 2012; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Collay, 2006, 2014; Hitt & Tucker, 2015; Newton, 2001), the researcher makes the following recommendations toward recognizing and preparing promising leaders for the transition from their current roles as teachers (who have taken on a variety of shared leadership roles and possess a diversity of leadership competencies) to new formally recognized roles as educational administrators.

***Active recruitment of positional staff members.*** Based on the data analysis of this study, the researcher recommends that the policy and practice of leadership recruitment and training include:

- Consideration of the merits of both individual teacher leaders and members of specific teacher reference groups whose common attributes and competencies have been or potentially could be identified as leadership related and have been or potentially should be made visible to policy makers and other educational stakeholders.
- Recognition and reduction of any potential bias or impediments to leadership progression for individuals or members of specific teacher reference groups. This

might include assigning review teams that reflect the diversity of their organizations to: (a) examine current hierarchical structures within their organizations with regard to both subject content area and leader advancement patterns, and (b) analyze any issues that may prohibit or dissuade educational stakeholders from participation in transitional opportunities, leader training programs, and advancement prospects.

***Leader training programs.*** With regard to leadership development and training programs, the researcher recommends the differentiation of such programs in a manner that reflects the full scope of leadership competencies and experiences practicing leadership that some candidates are already determined by self and/or others to possess. This includes leadership attributes that are developed in early childhood and extend through a number of formal and informal experiential leadership experiences.

Recommendations include:

- Examining how the pre-training process of leadership skill development, the ongoing practice of certain leadership competencies, and the pre-training, self-identification as leaders for some participants might inform differentiation in leadership training programs or act as fully satisfied prerequisites to leadership training requirements.
- Utilizing existing empirical research on the topic of recruitment and training of educational leaders in the course design and implementation of training programs with a focus on integrating and differentiating instruction for individuals with and without prerequisite leadership skills.

***Hiring practices.*** The data analysis in Chapter 4 reflects the participants' well-informed suggestions for hiring effective educational staff members at all levels. The researcher

recommends a close review of these strategies as well as other published hiring guidelines and scholarly articles focused on effective hiring practices in the field of educational leadership.

The researcher also recommends that school districts consider creating formal succession plans and policies that will support the post-hire practice of “harmoniz[ing] the new principal’s inbound knowledge with the outbound knowledge of the departing principal” (Fink & Brayman, 2006, p. 85). Fink and Brayman suggested that such written policies are rare, but may be key in establishing confidence and creating an environment focused on setting new administrators up for success.

***Supporting and retaining school leaders for long-term success.*** Based on the results from the data analysis for this study, the researcher has one over-riding recommendation in this area: to promote mentoring:

- Ensure that mentoring programs are a central component and accompaniment to all phases of the leader transition process including opportunities for early socialization toward leadership as teachers, during both the academic training and administrative internships, and at the start and throughout any candidates purposeful practice of leadership.
- Formally design and implement mentoring plans and guidelines in a manner that aligns with the four multidimensional aspects of mentoring described by Nora and Crisp (2008) including: (a) offering psychological or emotional support, (b) helping leaders to set goals and understand a variety of training and career paths toward leadership, (c) enhancing practical and academic growth in an effort to gain and develop leadership competencies, and (d) providing active modeling of effective

educational leader practices and leaders acting as transformative change agents in schools and school districts.

**Fostering the individual and organizational value of diversity at the educational leadership table.** In promoting diversity in educational leadership at all levels and reflecting on both the literature and the analysis of the data collected for this dissertation, the researcher supports research and policy making that helps organizations to set clearly articulated goals that prioritize the diversification of their leadership and administrative pools. Key policy priorities should include language related to:

- The active, intentional recruitment and hiring of leaders from a diverse range of teacher reference groups (including but not limited to discipline-related teacher reference groups) who may have previously experienced marginalization from school leadership roles based on subject discipline, ethnicity, cultural background, race, gender, sexual orientation, and so on.
- The relationship between collective institutional values (related to equity and access to leadership, collaborative participation in leadership, and the preferment of a diversity of competencies, approaches, and perspectives to exercising leadership) and the ability of educational leaders to act as transformative change agents in educational organizations.

### **Forwarding the Possibility of Transformative Leadership**

In order to craft a narrative that forwards the possibility of transformative leadership in the nation's schools, the researcher turned to the individual and collective stories of the seven esteemed participants, whose deep reflections and richly nuanced descriptions of their lived experiences provided the inspiration for a vision of educational leadership that serves students,



colleagues, and educational communities and transforms the progression of teaching and learning in the nation's schools. Having once been musicians and music educators, the participants translated a deep understanding of the power of music and the related musical processes of creating, listening, risk-taking, rehearsing, and performing by engaging musical elements like harmony, tempo, tone, and dynamics to give meaning to several critical aspects of their lives and professions, and to act as fundamental catalysts for their future creative works, continuous learning, and informed leadership.

Well before this study began, many scholars had already begun to examine the use of these processes and elements for their action values in organizational leadership (Adler, 2006, 2015; Asbjornson, n.d.; Bathhurst & Ladkin, 2012; Cimino & Denhardt, 2012; Jagiello, 2015; Kelehear, 2008; Nissley, 2010; Robinson, 2011; Seifter, 2004; Selkrig, 2009, 2011; Vaillancourt, 2007; West, 2008). And yet this study appears to have broken ground and contributed to the educational community by turning directly to the musicians and music educators, not to measure their understanding of the possibilities inherent in music genres and processes, but to introduce and engage them as educational music-makers and storytellers who might be able to help current and future generations of educators to “forward a possibility of leadership” that “is inherently ethical in its relational orientation, as well as participative and transformative in its realization.” (Bathhurst & Ladkin, 2012, p. 115).

On the other hand, the readers, whose contributions to the study have yet to be mentioned, are not simply an audience to the ideas presented, but part of the larger community of practice of which we are all members and whose life performances will engage the creative agency, collective wisdom, and imaginative work that is still to come (Cimino & Denhardt, 2012; Talgam, 2009). While it was the participants' voices that resonated throughout this

dissertation, the lessons learned from their lived experiences being closely studied, interpreted, and translated into written word, will now be handed over and entrusted to an audience of teachers, administrators, scholars, researchers, learners, artists, and community members. It is this group of education supporters who will discern and forward what they perceive as most important and informative from the study and who will employ their own creative impulses and insightful energies to ignite new inquiries and form new connections between arts educators and teachers of all disciplines and their capacity to lead effectively. It will take the collective, sustained energy of many to encourage and support passionate educators to transfer their leader-related competencies, their propensities for establishing and nurturing relationships, and their values that inspire positive transformative change—to the vocation of educational leadership.

### **Final Researcher Reflections**

The researcher was both humbled and inspired by the openness and insightfulness of the participants, the trust they placed in the interviewing experience, and their deeply thoughtful contemplations regarding their lifelong journey to leadership. In gratitude for their profound artistry, storytelling, lessons imparted, and transforming roles as educational leaders, this dissertation will culminate with the return to a commonly shared analogy borrowed from the analysis and transformed into the title of a final poem. In its original 2008 form, this poem supported the researcher during her own journey toward leadership. The researcher strives in this 2018 re-embodiment to encapsulate the essence of the participants' collective lived experiences as musicians, music educators, learners, and leaders.

## **To Conduct is to Lead: An Aesthetic Cadence**

In search of melody to transform the silence,  
conductors were composed of humanity.

First tones simple arpeggios,  
illumination, not dissonance their guide.

Conductors composed of humanity,  
discovered melodies of perplexity,  
and illumination, with dissonance, an able guide.  
Collective tones held together, chromatic motion, rhythmic time.

Welcoming harmony, embracing perplexity, they become  
poised, reflecting colors, each canvas modulating.  
Airs collectively held together, chromatic motion, rhythmic time.  
Exploring, not placated, aesthetic cadence by design.

And still new tones reflecting colors, each canvas modulating.  
With senses vigilant, they risk cadenza, all rings clear.  
Transforming, at times placated, aesthetic cadence shifts design,  
searching melody, reaching harmony, poised to lead.

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## Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

**Research Study Title:** Music Educators Who Take the Lead: A Phenomenological Study of School Leaders with Formal Backgrounds in Music and Experience as Music Educators

**Principle Investigator:** Ms. Jeanne Porcino Dolamore

**Research Institution:** Concordia University Portland

**Faculty Advisor:** Dr. Marty Bullis

**Purpose of the Research:** This research study will explore the experiences of individuals who share a background in music and experience as a music teacher, and who have transitioned to the role of a practicing educational administrator. You have been invited to participate in this study because you are or have been a practicing educational administrator and your perspectives and reflections regarding how your background as a music educator has contributed to your understanding and practice of leadership will contribute to a broader understanding of the recruitment, selection, and practice of educational administrators in the 21st century.

**Procedures:** Your participation in this study will ideally involve three 60–90 minute semistructured interviews. The first interview will focus on your background as a musician and music educators as well as how you view these experiences in relationship to your role as educational leaders. The second interview will concentrate on exploring your transition from music educator to educational leader. During the third interview you will be asked to discuss your leadership style and your approach to the practice of educational leadership. Interviews will be scheduled at your convenience and will be conducted face-to-face and/or by phone and/or by Skype or an alternative on-line video-conference site. With your permission, each interview will be audio-taped to ensure accuracy of the information collected for the study's data analysis. You will also be invited to provide other forms of data that you believe will support your interview reflections regarding your experiences transitioning from being a teacher to an educational administrator and/or the experiences that guide your practice as an educational leader. These forms of data may include personal artifacts, reflections, written statements or accounts of your work as an educational leader. This data, like all information collected during the interviews, will remain confidential. Audio recorded files will be destroyed after transcription and all other files and notes related to the interviews will be stored on a password-protected laptop for security and will be destroyed after 3 years.

### **Risks:**

There are no known risks to participating in this study other than providing your information. However, this information will be gathered in strict confidence and protected. Any personal information you provide during the survey and interview process will be coded so it cannot be linked to you personally. Any name or identifying information you give will be kept securely via electronic encryption. None of the analyzed data will have your name or identifying information, but rather, a participant selected code or pseudonym will be used during all data analysis, as well as in any reports or publications.

**Benefits:**

There are no known benefits to participating in this study, but information you provide for this research study may help increase the understanding of the process by which teachers’ transition to positions of leadership and how educational leadership is practiced by educators who share a background in music and experience as music educators.

**Confidentiality:**

All information recorded or provided for this study will be kept private to ensure participant confidentiality. A participant selected pseudonym will replace your given name as well as the names of the schools or districts you are or have been employed by. Audio tapes will be fully erased after transcription and all other documents will be stored in a locked file cabinet available only to the principle investigator and will be destroyed 3 years after the study concludes. Information provided will not be distributed to any other agency and will be kept private and confidential. The only exception to this is if you inform us of abuse or neglect that makes us seriously concerned for your immediate health and safety.

**Right to Withdraw:**

Your participation is greatly appreciated, but we acknowledge that the questions we are asking are personal in nature. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. You are free at any point to choose not to participate and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time. Should you choose to withdraw from the study, you will not be penalized in any way.

**Contact Information:**

You will receive a copy of this consent form. If you have questions you can talk to or write to the principle investigator at [Researcher email redacted] or call [Researcher phone redacted]. If you want to talk with a participant advocate other than the investigator, you can write or call the director of our institutional review board, Dr. OraLee Branch (email obranch@cu-portland.edu or call 503-493-6390).

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information. I asked questions if I had them, and my questions were answered. I volunteer my consent for this study.

Participant’s Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## **Appendix B: Interview Protocol and Questions**

### **Interview # 1—Welcome and Introduction: Purpose of Study**

“Good afternoon. Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview today. As we discussed, this interview is the first of three 60 to 90 minute interviews for the purpose of gathering information for a research study that is seeking to gain a deeper understanding of the transition from teacher to educational administrator and the eventual practice of educational leadership as experienced by administrators with a background in music and experience as a music educator. Study participants will include educational administrators who are or have been employed by a nationally recognized school system and who are formally certified in school and/or district administration by a nationally recognized department of education.”

### **Confidentiality**

“All information that you share in today’s discussion will be used for research purposes only. I will be audio recording each interview simultaneously on the iPhone and an iPad. These interviews, including all audio files and any researcher notes taken during or after the interviews, will be treated with strict confidentiality, and will later be transcribed for analysis. While the purpose of the multiple interviews will be to aggregate the results, written comments will not reveal any particular person. Personally identifying information, including name, age and position, will not be used in any document or any published or public reports. Audio recorded files, transcriptions and notes will be stored on a password-protected laptop for security. Audio recorded files will be destroyed immediately after transcription and member checking has been completed. Transcriptions and all other notes and files will be destroyed after 3 years.”

## **Informed Consent**

The *Consent to Participate in Research Form* will be available for signed consent at \_\_\_\_\_ (secure web address), or can be mailed upon request. Forms will be collected and reviewed by the researcher and each participant on or before the first interview.

## **Contact Information for the Principal Investigator and Faculty Advisor**

“The principal investigator is Jeanne Porcino-Dolamore. Please contact Jeanne if you have any concerns or questions regarding the study or interviewing process and/or your rights as a research participant.” Telephone: [Researcher phone redacted] Email: [Researcher email redacted]

“You may also contact the faculty advisor, Dr. Marty Bullis through the *Doctorate of Education* program in *Educational Administration* at Concordia University.” Email: mbullis@cu-portland.edu

## **Interview Overview**

The first interview will establish the context of the participant’s experience, including both an historical narrative of their backgrounds as musicians and music educators and how participants view these experiences in relationship to their role as educational leaders. Question categories will include questions regarding the participants (a) earliest career aspirations and decision to become a music teacher, (b) development of a new role conceptualization oriented toward leadership, (c) understanding of leadership, and (d) connection between these experiences and their role as an educational leader.

The researcher will state the following to the participant before commencing the first interview: “During the first interview, I will be asking for detailed descriptions of your background as a musician and music teacher from your student days through your current

position today. I will ask questions about your early career decisions, about choosing to become a music teacher, and about your views on leadership and educational leadership. During the interview, I may ask for clarification or further detail to more fully understand the meaning of your answers. Do you have any questions before we begin?"

### **Personal Artifacts**

"As the interview concludes, I will invite you to provide any other information, including personal artifacts, documents, written statements, reflections, and/or accounts of your work as an educational leader that have meaning to you and are related to your role as an educational administrator. I may request copies or photographs of these documents and with your consent will use these artifacts as informational data during the analysis phase of this investigation. The documents or photos provided will not be included in any written reports and all identifying features will remain confidential."

### **Interview Questions Session 1**

#### **Questions about early schooling as a musician:**

1. How old were you when you first began learning a musical instrument?
2. How old were you when you first joined a music ensemble?
3. What is your primary instrument or musical orientation?
4. At what age did you begin to identify as a musician?

#### **Questions about early career aspirations and becoming and being a music teacher:**

1. I would like you to tell me about your earliest career aspirations and why you made the decision to become a school music teacher.
2. How did your early schooling as a musician influence this decision?

3. I would like you to recall (which people), or what (event, experience), played a significant role in influencing your decision to become a school music teacher.
  - a. Which people?
  - b. What district policies or recruitment programs?
  - c. What key events?
  - d. What experiences?
4. In what ways did these people and experiences help to shape your values and practices as a music teacher?

**Questions about role conceptualization:**

1. Why and when (at what stage of your teaching career) did you decide to advance from the role of teacher to administrator and formally pursue this career pathway?
2. I would like you to recall who (which people), or what (policy, event, experience) played a significant role in influencing your decision to become a leader?
  - a. Which people?
  - b. What district policies or recruitment programs?
  - c. What key events?
  - d. What experiences?
3. In what ways did these people and experiences help to shape your values and practices as an educational leader?

**Questions about leadership:**

1. What does the term *leadership* mean to you?
2. How would you define *educational leadership*?



**Summarizing questions:**

1. Which of the early musical or career experiences that you have described, influenced your decision to begin the process of formal training to become an educational leader?
2. Which, if any, of the early experiences you have described today would you link to your approach to practicing as an educational leader?

**Closing**

“Before we end today’s interview, I would like you to ask if there is anything else that you would like to share. Is there anything you wanted to say about your experiences that you did not have a chance to? If there are any significant experiences that you recall after our interview that you would like to share, you may contact me, and I will include this new information in the data used for research analysis.”

**Post-Interview Debriefing**

“Thank you very much for participating in the interview today and for sharing your experiences. I want to remind you that everything you have shared with me is confidential, and that all audio files, notes, and artifacts will be treated with strict confidentiality. This was the first of three planned interviews. I look forward to our second interview which is scheduled for the following date, time, and location.”

## **Interview # 2—Welcome and Introduction: Purpose of Study**

“Good afternoon. Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview today. This interview is the second of three interviews for the purpose of gathering information for a research study that is seeking to gain a deeper understanding of the transition from teacher to educational administrator and the eventual practice of educational leadership as experienced by administrators with a background in music and experience as a music educator. Study participants will include educational administrators who are or have been employed by a nationally recognized school system and who are formally certified in school and/or district administration by a nationally recognized department of education.”

### **Confidentiality**

“All information that you share in today’s discussion will be used for research purposes only. I will be audio recording each interview simultaneously on the iPhone and an iPad. These interviews, including all audio files and any researcher notes taken during or after the interviews, will be treated with strict confidentiality, and will later be transcribed for analysis. While the purpose of the multiple interviews will be to aggregate the results, written comments will not reveal any particular person. Personally identifying information, including name, age and position, will not be used in any document or any published or public reports. Audio recorded files, transcriptions and notes will be stored on a password-protected laptop for security. Audio recorded files will be destroyed immediately after transcription and member checking has been completed. Transcriptions and all other notes and files will be destroyed after 3 years.”

### **Interview # 2 Overview**

The second interview will concentrate on exploring the details and nuances of the participant’s process of becoming and being an educational leader, and focus on what

participants have actually experienced with regard to their transition and role identity transformation from teacher to educational leader. Question categories will include questions regarding the participants (a) initial socialization toward leadership, (b) role identity transformation, (c) level of support and challenges encountered during the transition, and (d) connection between these experiences and their role as an educational leader.

The researcher will state the following to the participant before commencing the second interview: “The first interview was focused on your background and experiences as a musician and music teacher and how you view these experiences in relationship to your role as educational leader. During the second interview, I will be asking for detailed descriptions of your experiences as you transitioned from a teacher to an educational administrator, including the positive factors that have influenced your transition as well as any challenges or obstacles you may have faced. I will also ask you to consider how these experiences connect to your current practice of educational leadership. During the interview, I may ask for clarification or further detail to more fully understand the meaning of your answers. Do you have any questions before we begin?”

## **Interview Questions Session 2**

### **Questions about initial socialization and role identity transformation:**

1. Describe any experiences you had as a music educator that helped to advance your leadership abilities?
2. How did your leadership roles and responsibilities change or increase over time during your work as a music educator?
3. Did you receive any type of leadership mentoring when you were a music teacher?

4. What would you describe as the most important stepping stones or experiences during your transition from teacher to leader?
5. How were these experiences influenced by other people and events?
  - a. By people?
  - b. By district policies or programs?
  - c. By what key events?

**Questions about other factors including positive support and/or challenges encountered:**

1. How did other people respond to your decision to pursue training in educational administration?
  - a. Music educators (your peers).
  - b. Teachers in other disciplines.
  - c. School and district administrators.
  - d. Family and/or community members.
2. Was there ever a time during your path to leadership that you felt that your background in music education was an advantage in the eyes of others?
3. What obstacles, if any, involving people, policies and/or events, did you encounter during your transition into an administrative role?
4. Was there ever a time during your path to leadership that you did not feel accepted because of your background in music education?
5. Was the process of transitioning from a teacher to an educational administrator easier or more difficult than you expected?

6. Do you recall a moment that you began to think of yourself as an administrator rather than a teacher?

**Questions about administrative positions held:**

1. Please describe the process of obtaining your first job as an administrator, and what type of leadership position you held.
2. Please describe your current (or final) role as an educational leader and why you choose this specific role in this particular district?

**Summary question:**

1. Which, if any, of the transitional experiences you have described would you link most closely to your current role as an educational leader?

**Closing Questions**

“Before we end today’s interview, I would like you to ask if there is anything else that you would like to share. Is there anything you wanted to say about your experiences that you did not have a chance to? If there are any significant experiences that you recall after our interview that you would like to share, you may contact me, and I will include this new information in the data used for research analysis.”

**Post-Interview Debriefing and Closing**

“Thank you very much for participating in the interview today and for sharing your experiences. I want to remind you that everything you have shared with me is confidential, and that all audio files, notes, and artifacts will be treated with strict confidentiality. This was the second of three planned interviews. I look forward to our third and final interview which is scheduled for the following date, time and location.

### **Interview # 3—Welcome and Introduction: Purpose of Study**

“Good afternoon. Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview today. This interview is the third of three interviews for the purpose of gathering information for a research study that is seeking to gain a deeper understanding of the transition from teacher to educational administrator and the eventual practice of educational leadership as experienced by administrators with a background in music and experience as a music educator. Study participants will include educational administrators who are or have been employed by a nationally recognized school system and who are formally certified in school and/or district administration by a nationally recognized department of education.”

### **Confidentiality**

“All information that you share in today’s discussion will be used for research purposes only. I will be audio recording each interview simultaneously on the iPhone and an iPad. These interviews, including all audio files and any researcher notes taken during or after the interviews, will be treated with strict confidentiality, and will later be transcribed for analysis. While the purpose of the multiple interviews will be to aggregate the results, written comments will not reveal any particular person. Personally identifying information, including name, age and position, will not be used in any document or any published or public reports. Audio recorded files, transcriptions and notes will be stored on a password-protected laptop for security. Audio recorded files will be destroyed immediately after transcription and member checking has been completed. Transcriptions and all other notes and files will be destroyed after 3 years.”

### **Interview #3 Overview**

In the third interview participants will be asked to reflect on the meaning of the experiences described, how they view themselves as purposefully practicing educational leaders,

and how their experiences have influenced their practice of leadership. Question categories will include questions regarding the participants: (a) leadership style and leader qualities, (b) approach to the practice of leadership, (c) significant experiences as a practicing educational leader, (c) connection between these experiences and their role as an educational leader, and (d) views on effective educational leadership and the recruitment and selection of future leaders.

The researcher will state the following to the participant before commencing the third interview: “During the third interview, questions will focus on your experiences as an educational administrator and on your actual practice of educational leadership. Questions will seek concrete details of your practice of leadership. To conclude, I will ask you to reflect on your background as a music educator and how you see it in relation to your practice of educational leadership and leading change and reform efforts in our nation’s public schools and districts. During the interview, I may ask for clarification or further detail to more fully understand the meaning of your answers. Do you have any questions before we begin?”

### **Interview Questions Session 3**

#### **Questions about leadership style and leader qualities:**

1. How would you characterize your leadership style and the personal qualities you bring to your leadership role?
2. What leader qualities do you view as most important in an educational leader?

#### **Questions about leader approaches to the practice of leadership:**

1. How would you describe your approach to the following aspects of educational leadership:
  - a. Creating a mission for or vision of leadership in your school/district.
  - b. Advancing student learning.

- c. Building capacity among teachers and staff.
  - d. Making school/district decisions.
  - e. Developing policies and programs.
  - f. Involving community in the educational process.
2. What tasks/practices in your everyday work do you consider to be most important?
- a. How do you prioritize them?
  - b. How are they connected to your understanding of effective educational leadership?

**Questions exploring the connection between the participant's background and his/her style and practice of leadership:**

1. How would you describe the connection between your qualities of leadership, leadership practice, and your background as a music educator?

**Questions about significant experiences as a practicing leader:**

1. Tell me about one or more of the most significant moments you have experienced as a leader?
2. Tell me about one or more leadership practices you have used to initiate change in your institution?
3. What practices of educational leaders do you view as most effective and/or ineffective?

**Summarizing question:**

1. What would you identify as the most important issue(s) in the recruitment and selection of future educational administrators?



## **Closing Questions**

“Before we end today’s interview, I would like you to ask if there is anything else that you would like to share. Is there anything you wanted to say about your experiences that you did not have a chance to? If there are any significant experiences that you recall after our interview that you would like to share, you may contact me, and I will include this new information in the data used for research analysis.”

## **Post-Interview Debriefing and Closing**

“Thank you very much for participating in the interview today and for sharing your experiences. I want to remind you that everything you have shared with me is confidential, and that all audio files, notes, and artifacts will be treated with strict confidentiality. This was the last of the three planned interviews. After I have transcribed the interviews, you will have an opportunity to review them for accuracy. You will be able to share any missing information and/or to make corrections and/or to provide comments regarding the transcriptions. Thank you. I look forward to being in contact with you when the interviews have been transcribed.”

## **Appendix C: Researcher Reflections of Semistructured Interview Process**

### **Researcher Reflections: Semistructured Interviews**

The in depth semistructured interview questions outlined in Appendix B served as an important guide to the researcher. The interview questions and clear protocols enabled the researcher to be responsive, but not too rigid, monitoring the conversation by asking for clarification, prompting deeper descriptions, and/or adjusting order and follow-up questions to retain a natural flow of conversation (Seidman, 2013; Williamon et al., in press). At times, the participants answered questions well before a specific ask, and at other times the conversation detoured from the line of questioning intended, or continued after the audio tapes were shut off. Both scenarios were not unexpected, but required that the researcher use the interview protocols established quite closely, and take notes after the interview if needed to follow-up on unofficial conversations related to the research question at the next interview (Seidman, 2013). The researcher found other unprompted, but natural conversations, served to build a more relaxed and trusting relationship between interviewer and interviewee.

Although the three phone interviews were marked with the same degree of seriousness and respect for both participant and process, face-to-face interviews allowed the development of a more comfortable relationship and therefore more in-depth sharing. From the point of view of the researcher, the most successful interviews were conducted on the campus of the administrators, in the districts and schools in which the participants were employed. It was an added enhancement to hear the participant stories within the environs that they were speaking so passionately about. The onsite face-to-face interviews also allowed the researcher to stay closely attuned to the interviewee's non-verbal cues, observe their occasional interaction with a

member of the school staff, view documents or tour hallways, and check in on the energy level and comfort of the participant (Seidman, 2013).

Of the social group identities that Seidman (2013) wrote about in connection to the interviewing relationship, the researcher experienced a mild difference in the area of gender, with women delving deeper into some aspects of their experiences than the men, and the interviews with women generally lasting longer. But while the researcher also expected some imbalances between the researcher and the participant with regard to the positions of power some of the participants held (i.e., the school superintendents), she found all seven participants to be equally and sincerely interested in the topic, enthusiastic about fully exploring their experiences, and more than generous with their time.

The researcher was both humbled and inspired by the process, the openness of the participants, and the trust they placed in the experience. The researcher fully agrees with the sentiment that “it is a gift for both the speaker who is heard, and for the listener who learns something from the investigation” (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012, p. 11).

## **Appendix D: Interview Transcription Overview and Researcher Reflections**

### **Interview Transcription Process**

**Step one.** The interview transcription process began informally immediately following each interview. Between interviews, the researcher listened to the interviews, took notes, recorded reflections, considered ways to hone her interviewing skill, and prepared for the next interview. Listening to the interviews, with no pressure to transcribe, was extremely helpful to the researcher, enabling her to improve upon each interview and to gain a closer understanding of each participant. Informal exploratory and holistic coding also began during this period, with the researcher noting common ideas that were emerging across multiple participants. The researcher also found that participants were pleased to know that their recordings had been listened to and responded positively to follow-up questions and/or to any mention of what they had shared at a previous interview. Williamon et al. (in press) confirmed that “qualitative analysis . . . often begins during data collection as the researcher notices and documents emerging insights, and it continues as the research is written up and the researcher refines their understandings and conclusions” (Chapter 9, p. 2).

After each interview, the audio recordings were uploaded to Dropbox and/or iTunes on a desktop computer (this generally takes 10–15 min. per recording), and from there were uploaded to one of the approved transcription services described in the following section (this process generally took 15–25 minutes per recording).

**Step two.** After careful consideration and IRB approval, the researcher decided to employ a transcription company to complete the first-round verbatim interview transcriptions. Two agencies, *TranscribeMe*, which has a number of trained transcribers, and *Trint*, which is a computer generated transcription service, were researched by the main investigator and approved

for use by Concordia University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). *Trint* offered a new technology in transcription and was far less expensive, but also far less accurate. The personal attention to detail and superior accuracy that the *TranscribeMe* agents afforded proved to be extremely important. Fourteen interviews were transcribed using *Trint*, and 17 interview transcripts were completed by *TranscribeMe* agents. It should be noted that several interviews originally recorded on *Trint*, which is a computer-generated transcription service, were not of adequate enough quality to use, and so were transcribed again by a *TranscribeMe* agent.

**Step three.** At this stage of the process, an original verbatim copy of each transcribed interview was downloaded from the secure *Trint* and/or *TranscribeMe* internet site to a Microsoft Word document saved in secured folder on the researcher's desktop computer. The researcher then reviewed and carefully edited the transcripts while: a) listening to the audio transcription on *TranscribeMe* or *Trint* internet sites, and b) editing the Microsoft version into a clean verbatim copy for member checking. *Trint* recordings were able to be prepared for Member Checking at the rate of 5–10 min. of tape for each 30 min. of editing. The quality was poor, but using the audio feature was very user friendly. *TranscribeMe* audio transcriptions were edited at the rate of 10–15 min. of tape for each 30 min. of editing (approx. 4 hours for each 60–90 min transcription). In order to create clean verbatim copies for member checking, the researcher carefully edited the transcription for accurate words and non-verbal interpretations, and phrase and paragraph punctuation. This was done in order to structure both the verbal and non-verbal material into precise and carefully prepared clean verbatim documents that would support ease of member checking and data analysis. Seidman (2013) noted the researcher's responsibility to be "respectful of the content" (p. 125), while understanding that participants do

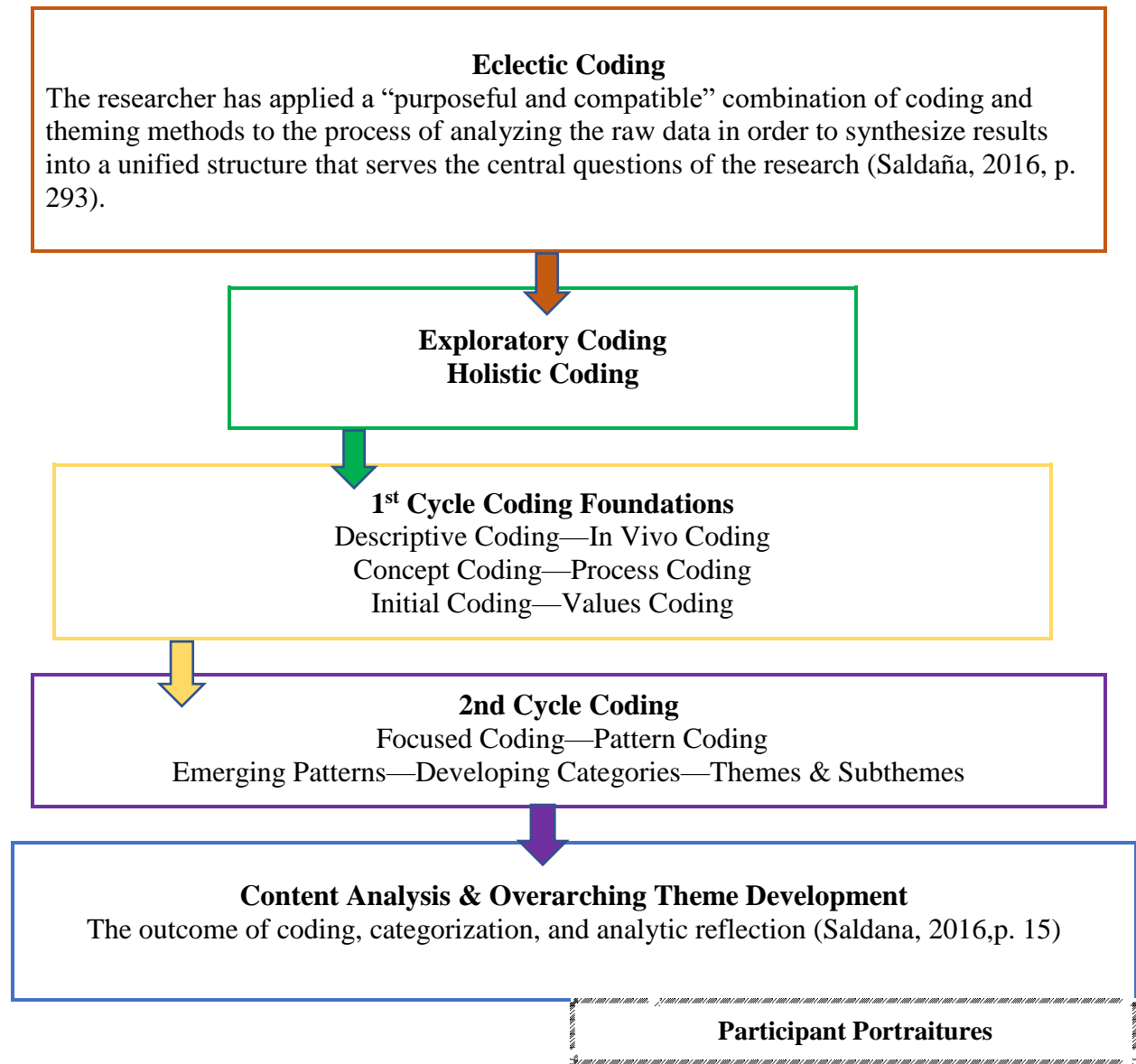
not necessarily speak clearly or in paragraphs. As such, clean verbatim transcripts were presented to the interviewees free of some of the repetitions and unintended grammatical errors.

### **Member Checking**

Following the preparation of a clean verbatim copy of each transcript, the researcher edited, made corrections, and sent PDF copies of the interview transcripts via email to each participant with guidelines for member checking (see sample emails below). All seven participants completed the member checking process, and responded with notes via email. These emails served as documentation that clean verbatim copies of all transcripts were reviewed by participants.

## Appendix E: Coding Process Overview and Codes Defined

### Figurative Overview of Coding Process Utilized (Saldaña, 2016)



## **Coding Methods Defined (Saldaña, 2016)**

**Exploratory and holistic coding:** Preliminary assignments of codes applied to larger units of data before detailed coding or categorization of cycle 1 and cycle 2 coding.

### **1st Cycle coding foundations: Elemental and affective methods.**

- ***Descriptive Coding:*** Codes generated by assigning labels to summarize short participant phrases.
- ***In Vivo Coding:*** Codes generated from words and short phrases in participants' own words/language.
- ***Process Coding:*** Codes that utilize gerunds (“ing” words) to represent conceptual and identifiable actions in text.
- ***Concept Coding:*** Codes representing “bigger picture” ideas rather than specific observable actions.
- ***Initial Coding:*** Codes used to break data into discrete parts for examination and comparison.
- ***Values Coding:*** Codes representing participants' values, attitudes, beliefs, perspectives, worldviews.

### **2nd Cycle coding foundations: Emerging patterns, categories, themes, and subthemes.**

- ***Focused Coding:*** Codes categorized for similarity, frequency, and significance.
- ***Pattern Coding:*** Codes organized into themes, data sets based on range of patterns, conceptual, and humanistic connections and processes.



## Appendix F: Poetry Notes

### Researcher Notes

The Pantoum form of poetry originated in Malaysia, where it has been traced back to Malay literature of the 15th century (Brannon, 2011; Nesyoly, 2010). In general, the pantoum is a form of poetry that is frequently adapted in ways that differ from the original “scheme of traditional Malay influence” (Brannon, 2011), and reflect artistic and poetic discretion (Brannon, 2011; Pantoum, n.d.). The researcher’s adaption of the pantoum form might be referred to as an “imperfect pantoum” (Pantoum, n.d.) in which, the artistic freedom exercised has resulted in: (a) the decision to use four stanzas, as is typical of the poetic form, (b) using an unrestricted number of words within each line of poetry throughout, in a manner that converts what is typically one line of poetry into a phrase or paragraph, (c) using a variation of a typical pantoum pattern within the final stanza, and (d) naming the poems using the musical terms of *chromatic motion* and *aesthetic cadence* to reflect the participants’ backgrounds as musicians (Brannon, 2011; Pantoum, n.d.).

The researcher’s adaptation of the pantoum form has also incorporated other known poetic elements such as *cento* and *free-form excerpting* and *remixing*, in which the researcher used lines from the participant transcripts to make new arrangements (*cento*), and excerpted words and phrases from the original participant transcripts, and rearranged them in poetic form (*free-form excerpting* and *remixing*) (Poetry Foundation).

## **Pantoum Form: Poetic Pattern**

The poetic pattern of lines most frequently used in the pantoum form is:

### **Stanza 1.**

A

B

C

D

### **Stanza 2.**

B

E

D

F

### **Stanza 3.**

E

G

F

H

### **Stanza 4.**

G

I (or A or C)

H

A (or C or J) (Pantoum, n.d.).

## **Appendix G: Statement of Original Work**

The Concordia University Doctorate of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners, who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically-informed, rigorously-researched, inquiry-based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy. This policy states the following:

### **Statement of academic integrity.**

As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.

### **Explanations:**

#### ***What does “fraudulent” mean?***

“Fraudulent” work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one’s own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate’s final work without full and complete documentation.

#### ***What is “unauthorized” assistance?***

“Unauthorized assistance” refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Use of unauthorized notes or another’s work during an online test
- Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
- Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
- Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the work.

## Statement of Original Work

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University-Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.
2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*

*Jeanne Porcino Dolamore*

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Digital Signature

Jeanne Porcino Dolamore

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Name (Typed)

August 14, 2018

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Date