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PERCEPTIONS OF RURAL MIDDLE SCHOOL BAND DIRECTORS REGARDING STUDENT RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES: AN INSTRUMENTAL MULTIPLE CASE STUDY

Kaitlin Callihan

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2020

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CASE STUDY

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DISSERTATION

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
College of Fine Arts
at the University of Kentucky

By
Kaitlin Marie Callihan
Lexington, Kentucky
Director: Dr. Michael Hudson, Professor of Music Education
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2021

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

PERCEPTIONS OF RURAL MIDDLE SCHOOL BAND DIRECTORS REGARDING
STUDENT RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES: AN INSTRUMENTAL MULTIPLE
CASE STUDY

The purpose of this instrumental multiple case study was to learn about middle school band directors' perceptions of successful recruitment strategies. Specific areas of focus included insight on why middle school children choose band, successful recruitment activities/events, involvement of directors in the recruitment process, and advice for support in situations where an individual may be the only band director in the district. Six participants, two from Kentucky, two from West Virginia, and two from Virginia, were selected using purposive sampling criterion. Criterion for selecting participants at the time of the study were: (a) they were middle school band directors, (b) had taught at least three years, (c) taught in a rural county school system in Kentucky, West Virginia, or Virginia, and (d) were willing to participate fully in this study. The interviews occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic resulting in conversations pertaining to recruiting for middle school band when school is not in session.

Data included six semi-structured interviews, a researcher journal, and documents, such as: recruitment brochures, flyers, notes and handouts sent home to families, and written documents from the teacher explaining their recruitment strategies and success rates. Data collected were organized and coded using MAXQDA (VERBI Software, 2019) software. Data were coded initially into categories by research question then further by broader theme. Five primary themes emerged: (1) factors that influence recruitment, (2) recruitment events, (3) documentation and communication, (4) sources of support, and (5) COVID-19.

This study should be used to assist educators teaching in a rural community. Educators can and should use this document as a resource to grow their respective program and share the joy of making music with others. Directors may take the ideas presented here and adapt them to fit the individual needs of their programs.

KEYWORDS: Middle School, Recruitment, Band, Rural, Music Education

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03/05/2021
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DEDICATION

To Kevin, for your unwavering support and to Katherine, may you never give up on your
dreams.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER 1.   INTRODUCTION

A musical ensemble is formed through successful recruitment efforts and continual recruitment aids in the long-term growth of band programs; therefore, recruitment is a high priority for the ensemble director (Abeles, Hoffer, & Klotman, 1984; Bayley & Bazon, 2009). Both middle school and high school band directors spend considerable time and energy to identify factors that influence recruitment and discover more effective recruitment techniques. As music teachers face obstacles such as budget cuts, it becomes more and more important to make the instrumental program relevant (by growing and maintaining solid numbers) to school administrators and community members (Vasil, 2013). Additionally, with the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic leaving schools closed for months, many directors had to learn how to teach and recruit in a new online format with the help of national organizations at local, state, and national levels, such as the National Association for Music Education (NAfME). Learning new ways to connect with students to encourage their participation in large music ensembles was imperative as directors fear budget cuts and the loss of programs.

Athletic programs and instrumental ensembles seek participants who can contribute successfully on and off the court. Sports recruiters look at the results of specific assessments and attributes when identifying talented young players, such as ball handling skills, coachability, listening skills, attitude, and motivation (Larkin & O'Connor, 2017). These factors were not only judged during simulated games, but also during drill sessions in an informal way. Band directors also conduct events such as petting zoos that place students in a position to demonstrate skills or attributes that directors find desirable in future ensemble members.

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Gifted and talented programs are implemented in schools throughout the United States in the form of in-class enrichment and/or the removal from the core class and placed on an accelerated track. Students selected to participate in the gifted and talented program are often children who are high achieving in many facets of education including academics, the arts, and leadership (National Association for Gifted Children, n.d.). Common recruitment methods used by teachers were identified with results indicating IQ and achievement tests to be the most successful in determining gifted and talented participation (Pegnato & Birch, 1959). In opposition, Ford, Grantham, and Whiting (2008) argue the sole use of standardize testing could limit the inclusion of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Are band directors implementing recruitment methods that limit the involvement of diverse students?

Motivation was one of the traits established by Larkin & O'Connor (2017) that determined if an athlete may be successful as a part of the team. Band directors have also developed many ways to motivate students in hopes to encourage students to join the ensemble (Neirman & Veak, 1997). In order for teachers to create experiences structured around motivating students to enroll in an instrumental ensemble, it is imperative to know how the experiences will affect motivation. Cognitive evaluation theory suggests that when an individual has met the innate needs of competence; the need to experience mastery, autonomy; the need to feel ownership, and relatedness; the need for human connection, intrinsic motivation is heightened (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Attribution theory essentially explains a student's need for achievement by the desire to avoid failure (Asmus, 1989). Self-determination theory, derived from Deci & Ryan (2000), is the idea

that children are naturally motivated by existing social constructs and individual differences result in either intrinsic or extrinsic motivation.

Specific studies focusing on motivation as it relates to music education have been conducted. Parent's attitudes, parent involvement, support of a school system (teachers, principals, community), social factors, and socio-economic status all had an effect on a student's motivation to participate in a beginning instrumental ensemble (Corenblum & Marshall, 1998; Maehr, 1983; Mawbey, 1973; Vasil, 2013). Instructional activities may also have an influence on a student's desire to participate in a middle school ensemble (Neirman & Veak, 1997).

In addition to developing recruitment events that motivate students to participate in ensembles, band directors may assess both musical and academic aptitude to determine a student's future success in the program. The use of musical aptitude tests such as Gordon's Intermediate Measures of Music Audiation, as well as standardized tests such as the SAT's have been used by researchers to determine what skills and abilities correlated best with performance achievement in the band classroom (Klinedinst, 1991; Young, 1971.)

Socio-economic status is a factor that influences students' participation in instrumental ensembles. Studies by Klinedinst (1991), and Corenblum & Marshall (1998) have focused on the effect of socio-economic status on recruitment and retention in instrumental ensembles, believing socio-economic status to be the strongest predictor of student participation and retention in instrumental ensembles. Instruments, music, and supplies such as valve oil and reeds all come with a price tag. How directors

communicate the costs associated with participation in an ensemble could affect a parent's willingness to commit or continue participation in the ensemble (Vasil, 2013).

Parental support is a topic central to motivation, student's musical aptitude, and their initial decision to enroll in a band program. McPherson (2009) asserted that "parents are strongly influential in shaping the emotional climate in which a child acquires musical skill, ideally creating a loving, supportive atmosphere where high but realistic aspirations are encouraged" (p. 101). Parental involvement can have both a positive and negative effect on a student's intentions to enroll in an instrumental ensemble. Middle school band students are frequently involving families by practicing at home, requiring rides to and from after school for rehearsals, and asking for funds to pay for supplies and performance events. Many students are also influenced to join band due to the previous involvement of parents or siblings (Custodero & Johnson, 2003; Vasil, 2013).

Specific research on effective recruitment strategies suggest the use of recorders and other demonstration methods such as live performances and the use of video (Hoffer, 1989; Bradley, 1970). Very little research has been conducted on successful recruitment methods implemented by middle school band directors.

In addition to the lack of research concerning recruitment methods implemented by middle school band directors, there is also a substantial lack of literature assisting teachers in rural schools (Isbell, 2005). Rural music educators face significant challenges that teachers in other geographic areas may never encounter including but not limited to: too much emphasis on athletic bands, lack of teacher and administrative support, spill over work time, poor administrative rapport, a fishbowl effect within the community, differing job requirements (e.g., coaching a sport, leading a club, and driving a bus), as

well as the challenge of often being isolated from other professional colleagues (Causby, 2019; Hunt, 2009; Isbell, 2005; Kuntzelman, 2017; VanDeusen, 2016). Often the challenges rural educators face, especially poor rapport with administration, leads to the decision to leave the job in search of a different position (Kuntzelman, 2017). Rural teachers may feel as though their job is at stake if proper advocating and recruitment practices are not successful.

Statement of Problem

Successful ensemble recruitment in middle school leads to retention in high school resulting in studies featuring high school ensemble retention but rarely recruitment. Urban and rural areas struggle finding effective recruitment techniques as compared to suburban areas. The studies that do exist are largely about urban schools. There is a need to focus on middle schools in rural areas. Where do rural teachers look for answers to guide decision making for recruitment in the classroom? There seems to be a gap in the research regarding recruitment procedures employed by middle school band directors, especially schools in rural communities.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

There is very little research on specific recruitment strategies used by middle school band directors in rural areas and the factors that influence their decision making when choosing recruitment methods. Therefore, the purpose of this instrumental multiple case study was to discover recruitment methods used by band directors in rural Kentucky, West Virginia, and Virginia middle schools.

The research questions were:

1)   What strategies do middle school band directors use to attract students?

2)   To what extent do factors within the school or community influence the effectiveness of the recruitment methods used by middle school band directors?

3)   To what extent does the surrounding area/type of school have on the effectiveness of the recruitment method?

4)   Why do middle school band directors believe their students choose to join the ensemble?

Definitions

Middle School: For the purpose of this study, the researcher defines middle school as grades five through eight consisting of students ages ten through thirteen. Middle school band directors and programs were the focus as this is the age when students typically join a band ensemble.

Recruitment: Merriam-Webster (n.d.) defines recruitment as the process of adding new individuals to a population or subpopulation by growth. For this study, recruitment methods were defined as any activity or resource used for the purpose of attracting future students to enroll and participate in middle school band.

Outline of Dissertation

For this study, the researcher was not limited to certain years of research; the sources used were written between 1965 and 2019. Recruitment research was found to remain relevant over time; therefore, a time scope for this project was deemed unnecessary. The researcher was limited to specific terminology (e.g. middle school, ensemble, instrumental, band), as it assisted with narrowing the pool of sources. The literature review was organized by topic. First, studies on sports recruitment are highlighted, followed by studies discussing common recruitment methods used to identify gifted and talented students. Studies concerning student's motivation to join instrumental ensembles followed by studies concerning academic achievement are examined. Ensuing articles involving socio-economic status are discussed as they relate to student's intentions to join band followed by studies that highlight families' influence on music participation. The review concludes with studies that contain specific recruitment strategies that, when employed, are successful in student's future enrollment in music ensembles as well as studies that focus on music education in rural communities. Chapter three consists of a detailed explanation of the methodology implemented by the researcher to conduct the study. Chapter four will present the results of the analysis. Chapter five will consist of a discussion of the results as well as examine the impact of the study on music educators as well as limitations and ideas for future study.

CHAPTER 2.   REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sports Recruitment Methods

"Recruiting is the lifeline to an athletic program" (Dailing, 2002, p.24) Sports recruiters look for attributes when identifying talented young players, not limiting themselves to the results of specific assessments (Larkin & O'Connor, 2017). When looking for potential recruits, athletic recruitment staff are aware of certain qualities that support success in the sport but are unsure of adequate methods to measure these qualities. Larkin and O'Connor used simulated games to allow coaches to see the ability of the athlete to perform technical skills under pressure as well as their decision-making skills. Factors beyond ball-handling skills were deemed important in the athlete's success on the team and included coachability, willingness to listen, positive attitude, motivation, commitment, confidence, resilience, and growth mindset. Not all these factors could be identified in one simulated game but were more evident than when only drills and simple assessments were administered (Larkin and O'Connor, 17).

In a study by Schneider and Messenger (2012), researchers investigated the impact of athletic facilities on the recruitment of student-athletes to play Division-I hockey. Results indicated three primary reasons that ultimately influenced students' college attendance decisions: the perception of being able to play immediately, receiving athletic-based financial aid, and perceived future professional playing opportunities. The state of college athletic facilities was determined not to have a significant role in the recruitment of student-athletes.

Drop-out from youth sports has been a recent topic of concern, according to Lavallee, Sheridan, Coffee, and Daly (2019). In a study investigating the effect of social

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support on student-athlete drop-out rates; Lavallee et al. (2019) demonstrated that the higher perceived support from peers resulted in lower drop-out rates. Similar results have been determined in a music education context, determining the influence of peers could have more influence in a student's participation and retention in an ensemble than school music activities (Neirman & Veak, 1997).

Gifted and Talented Program Recruitment Methods

Gifted and talented education in the United States consists of a broad group of special practices, procedures, and theories used in the education of students who are identified as gifted or talented (National Association for Gifted Children, n.d.). The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) defines giftedness as "students, children, or youth who give evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who need services and activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities" (n.d., para.25). These services typically occur in the form of enrichment; students are pulled out of regular classroom settings for additional instruction or acceleration (i.e., students are pulled out of core classes and placed in accelerated classes to progress through the curriculum at a faster rate).

Not unlike school sports and music programs, teachers are responsible for recruiting and retaining students to participate in gifted and talented programs. Pegnato and Birch (1959) compiled seven methods that teachers use to screen students for gifted ability: teacher judgement/referral, honor roll listing, creative ability in art or music, student council membership, math ability, group intelligence test results, and group

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achievement test results. Of the seven recruitment methods identified, the combined

results from the IQ test (administered by a psychologist) and the Achievement test

correctly targeted 88 of the 91 gifted and talented students (Pegnato & Birch, 1959).

Recruitment screenings such as honor roll listing, music or art aptitude, math ability, and

student council membership were deemed unreliable in targeting gifted students even

though the definition of gifted and talented specifically mentions students with superior

ability in academics as well as non-academic skills such as leadership, creativity, or the

arts (National Association for Gifted Children, n.d.; Pegnato & Birch, 1959). These

findings suggest that band directors should look beyond musical ability and teacher

referral when recruiting future students into instrumental ensembles.

Since the study by Pegnato and Birch (1959), research concerning standardized

tests and culturally diverse groups has emerged. Ford, Grantham, and Whiting (2008)

argued that gifted and talented programs are and remain segregated by means of culture,

language, and socio-economic status. One underlying cause of the bias towards white

middle class students is the use of standardized tests such as IQ tests and aptitude tests to

determine placement within the programs. Are there other methods of identifying gifted

students beyond the use of standard forms of IQ and aptitude tests? Ford et al., (2008)

suggested the use of non-verbal forms of assessment, implementing multidimensional

assessment strategies, and developing broader definitions and theories of giftedness. A

common thread running through the article is the idea of deficit thinking which, regarding

gifted and talented recruitment, results in behaviors relying on traditional testing, teacher

screening practices, a lack of commitment to teacher training in gifted education, and a

lack of preparation by administration to designate specific teachers to work specifically with culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Motivation

Beginning band instructors often strive to motivate students to join performance ensembles by providing live performances, video demonstrations, and "trial" petting zoos where students gain experience on the instrument (Neirman & Veak, 1997). In their 1997 study, Neirman & Veak used strategies based on cognitive theories of motivation such as cognitive evaluation theory and attribution theory when determining the effect of attitude, instrument introduction method, and the effect of socio-economic status on fourth-grade students' attitude towards playing an instrument. The idea is that before instrumental music experiences can occur for a student, that student must be motivated to begin study on that specific instrument.

2.1.1   Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

In order to understand what motivates students to participate in an instrumental ensemble, we must first define extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. The American Psychological Association defines extrinsic motivation as "an external incentive to engage in a specific activity, especially motivation arising from the expectation of punishment or reward" (APA, n.d.). Students who are extrinsically motivated exhibit a desired behavior to receive a desirable reward or to avoid an undesirable punishment. Compare intrinsic motivation, which the APA defines as "an incentive to engage in a specific activity that derives from pleasure the activity itself rather than because of any external benefits that might be obtained" (APA, n.d.). Students exhibit extrinsic

motivation when they engage in an activity solely for pleasure and not to avoid punishment or receive an award. Cognitive Evaluation Theory, Attribution Theory, and Self Determination Theory are outlined followed by implications of motivation in music education.

      Cognitive Evaluation Theory. Intrinsic motivation is defined as the motivation to perform an activity solely for the individual's inherent satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Cognitive evaluation theory explains how an individual's social environment can influence their intrinsic motivation and involves three psychological needs: competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). When an individual has fulfilled the needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness, intrinsic motivation is heightened (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

      Competency derives from an individual's successful experiences, which result in the formation of positive feelings associated with said experience. Children are naturally motivated by a desire for competence (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Children also continually test their comprehension of a topic by incorporating ideas already understood with new stimuli, which creates new challenges for themselves (Piaget, 1952, as cited in Riley, 2016). This idea that one can take on challenges based on their own sense of competence assists with the development of intrinsic motivation. On the other hand, any negative stimuli during this process can undermine one's intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Situations in which a child can feed the need for competence include receiving positive feedback from teachers, growing up in a home environment that supports music education, or having prior positive experience playing an instrument in an elementary music setting (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Autonomy combined with competency allows for an individual's intrinsic motivation to thrive (Riley, 2016). A key factor in autonomy is the concept of choice, the prospect for self-direction, or an acknowledgment of feelings. The role of parents and teachers is crucial in supporting a child's motivation to learn by supporting the child's sense of choice and being responsive to the child's ideas and questions (Kasser & Ryan, as cited in Riley, 2016). Teachers and parents should structure learning activities in a way that considers a child's interests by providing that child with a choice in the subject or activity being presented. Only then will true intrinsic motivation begin to grow (Cordova & Lepper, 1996).

Relatedness strongly complements autonomy in the realm of education. Parents and teachers who develop meaningful relationships with students are more likely to have highly motivated children (Deci & Ryan, 2000). These students are engaging in safe environments that encourage them to experiment and explore without fear of making mistakes. Relatedness occurs outside of the academic world as well, as one's intrinsic motivation is likely to increase when there are feelings of security and relatedness present (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Rewards are a form of extrinsic motivation; the use of them are debated amongst cognitive evaluation theorists, as their use can have both informational and controlling aspects. Rewards can provide information about an individual's ability (e.g., an "Outstanding Musician" award); however, rewards can also have controlling results (e.g., an overall class reward for good performance) (Matosic, Cox, & Amorose, 2014). The view of rewards as a form of extrinsic motivation is one that permeates culture and education today (Kohn, 1993, as cited in Riley, 2016). Educators must be aware of how

awards affect the individual and strive to use them in a way that fosters the development of intrinsic motivation.

Attribution Theory. Attribution theory is used to explain the reasons that an individual provides to justify both success and failure (Graham & Williams, 2009). Weiner (2010) argued that a person's deductions regarding to why they were offered a reward or punishment would decide what action that person would take in the future. As a result, teachers regularly and often indirectly feed a student's belief in their perceived ability (van der Putten, 2017). This concept aligns directly with Bandura's idea that social context has a substantial influence on a person's self-belief and, ultimately, their level of motivation (van der Putten, 2017).

Self-Determination Theory. Self-Determination Theory is used to examine how social contexts and individual differences result in either intrinsic (autonomous) or extrinsic (controlled) motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Intrinsic forms of motivation within the Self-Determination Theory include integrated regulation (e.g., participating in an activity because it is self-defining) and identified regulation (e.g., participating in an activity because the benefits of participation are valued). Integrated regulation and identified regulation are both possible in music ensemble participation. Extrinsic forms of motivation include introjected regulation (e.g., participating in an activity to acquire feelings of accomplishment or to avoid feelings of guilt) and external regulation (e.g., participating in an activity for social or physical reward) (Ryan & Deci 2000). Introjected regulation in music education occurs in students who feel pressure to participate in an ensemble from peers, parents, or the need to be active for a stronger college application presence. External regulation in music education also occurs frequently when students

join band to have fun with friends or go on proposed trips outside of school. Individuals are more inclined to have positive outcomes within the activity when experiencing intrinsic forms of motivation versus extrinsic (Matosic et al., 2014).

Motivation in Music Education

Factors that influence student's motivation has been a topic of interest for researchers in the field of music education: student attitude or interest, the attitude of principals, teachers, and other students, extrinsic motivators, and the effectiveness of recruitment strategies. Corenblum and Marshall (1998) found that students attitudes towards studying music in schools were directly correlated with extracurricular musical involvement and parents' attitudes towards that involvement, not necessarily their perceived musical ability. Students were more likely to have good attitudes toward studying music when their interest in music was supported both at school and at home. Beyond parent support, there could be a connection between students' innate interest in music and their attitude towards participation. Mawbey (1973) found that students who expressed an initial interest in music or displayed a desire to learn how to play an instrument independently were more likely to continue musical instruction.

The attitude of principals, teachers, and other students toward studying music can also have a profound effect on students' motivation and attitude for studying music. Corenblum and Marshall (1998) found that if students believed that their parents, teachers, and school system supported and encouraged the study of music, that support became infectious, and was ultimately mirrored in the students' attitudes towards the study of music. Teacher support regarding motivation is consistent with many theories of

motivation that indicate that students will pursue activities that are valued (Corenblum &

Marshall, 1998). This idea is echoed by Maehr (1983) and Skinner (1971) who posited

that people will be motivated to do well at activities that they believe to be respected.

Continuous evaluation by the music teacher throughout the year could prove to be

influential in a student's motivation towards joining an ensemble. Corenblum and

Marshall (1998) and Neriman & Veak (1997) emphasized the role teachers provide in

supporting students by expressing their expectations and sharing their evaluations of

student's musical achievement. In their study, the more positive feedback a student

received from their music teacher, the more likely that student will take band the

following school year.

Student's extrinsic motivators for joining a beginning instrumental ensemble were

analyzed in a study by Vasil (2013). Six elementary instrumental students were

interviewed in hopes of determining what extrinsic motivators affected students' decision

to enroll and remain in the ensemble. Results were consistent with Corenblum &

Marshall (1998) indicating that family, environment, social factors, and finances all

affected a student's decision to enroll and remain actively involved in the ensemble.

In a study investigating the effectiveness of recruitment strategies on beginning

instrumentalist decisions to participate in a large ensemble, Neriman and Veak (1997)

proposed students must be motivated to want to begin the formal study of a musical

instrument before that instruction can begin and begin successfully. Results suggested

instructional activities may have a strong influence on students' intentions to participate

in an ensemble. Students who have had success when experimenting with instruments

such as the recorder prior to band enrollment are more likely to find band, a similar experience, to be attractive.

Academic and Musical Achievement

Does a student's academic achievement have an impact on their success in a band rehearsal? Should directors consider a students' academic achievement when recruiting band students? Some researchers investigated this topic with varying results. McCarthy (1980) suggested that a student's academic ability could predict their musical achievement. Klinedinst (1991), also interested in methods of predicting student's musical achievement, investigated the ability of selected factors to predict achievement and retention of beginning instrumental music students. Measurement instruments such as Gordon's Intermediate Measures of Music Audiation, the Otis-Lennon School Ability Test, and the Stanford Achievement Test were used to determine student's musical aptitude and academic ability. Results suggested that reading achievement, math achievement, and scholastic ability had the strongest relationship with performance achievement.

In a similar study by Young (1971), three standardized tests were used to predict success in an elementary music program. The tests used included the Musical Aptitude Profile, Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Test, and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Young determined that the identification of students most likely to succeed in music is best facilitated by the use of one or more MAP scores together with either an achievement or intelligence score, and directors should be using a combination of tests to determine

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which students will be most successful in their programs (e.g.; higher scores equaled greater success in the program).

Socioeconomic Status

Socio-economic status (SES) has consistently emerged as a relevant extrinsic factor to student enrollment and retention in middle school music (Kinney, 2010; McCarthy, 1980). SES is a factor that influences students' participation in instrumental ensembles due to participation fees, instrument rental and maintenance costs, and travel expenses which include transportation to and from school as well as formal trips taken by the ensemble. Providing students and parents with information about affordable instrument rentals and financial support could eliminate SES as a factor that causes students to decide not to enroll or continue with band (Kinney, 2010; McCarthy, 1980, & Klinedinst, 1991) . Klinedinst (1991) identified SES to be the strongest predictor of retention in band, even more so than academic competency or musical aptitude. Students with a higher SES remained enrolled in band longer than students with a lower SES (Klinedinst, 1991). While investigating recruitment and retention in Cincinnati schools, Wolfe (1969) discovered that fewer students from low-income families enrolled in instrumental study. Corenblum and Marshall (1998) found that SES influenced students' decisions to remain in music instruction. The lower the SES, the less likely it was that a student remained in the ensemble due to financial strain.

Family Influence in Music Participation

Other researchers have found that a significant factor in successful student recruitment for any music program is parental support (Zdzinski, 1996). The No Child Left Behind Act (2002) defines parental involvement as the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities. Woody (2004) described parents as the first and most important factor in motivating young students. But Pitts (2009) insisted that much of the influence on young people lies beyond teachers' control, as parental attitudes, home environment, and cultural consumption shape young people's musical lives in complex and unpredictable ways. Research shows that the home environment parents create is extremely influential in the musical development of the student (Howe, Davidson, Moore, & Slobada, 1995; McPherson, 2009).

Woody (2004) described parents as the first and most important factor in motivating young students. Research indicates that parental perceptions and expectations become fact; parental expectations will result in a self-fulfilling prophecy regarding their child's success in music (Borthwick & Davidson, 2002). If parents value music and encourage their child to participate in music, students will be more likely to value music themselves and continue studying music (Sichivitsa, 2004). In addition, Corenblum and Marshall (1998), as well as Asmus (1990), found that parental support was a significant factor in predicting retention of middle school students in music ensembles. Similarly, participants in Vasil's (2013) study investigating why fourth-grade students chose to enroll and stay in band described a home environment rich in music, including parents who participated in music by singing, playing an instrument, dancing, or "mixing CD's".

Custodero and Johnson (2003) suggested that parents who have previous music education experiences will be more likely to provide music in the home for their children. Custodero and Johnson (2003) described musical parenting as singing lullabies to children, listening to classical, jazz, or world music, and encouraging music lessons. Pitts (2009) surveyed 71 musically active participants in her study of the impact of home and school influences on lifelong interest and involvement in music. Parents were considered to be musical role models for their children via their enjoyment of music in addition to providing financial and moral support. In Paterson (2008), the parent's musical background is considered an important motivational factor in choosing to join a music program. Parents discussed their exposure to music in a positive manner and wanted their children to have the same opportunity since it was such a valuable part of their pasts.

In a survey study based on students enrolled in music and parents of students enrolled in music, Ponka (2005) asserts, "Seventy percent of the parents have sung or played in a choir or musical group, and 73% have taken music lessons. Sixty-seven percent of the parents said their parents encouraged them to participate in musical activities" (p. 9). The results from the Siebenaler (2006) study of students involved in high school choral music showed that 52.3% of the parents of student participants also participated in a music ensemble, while 33.9% of the parents of the non-participants were involved in music. Possible reasons to participate in school music were discussed by Siebenaler (2006), including that 13.5% of the non-participants named family as a reason while 41.1% of the choir students responded that "family wants them to participate" (p.4).

In contrast, parents' past regrets due to not playing an instrument in their youth were considered a factor that influenced students to join a musical ensemble (Adderley, Kennedy, & Berz, 2003). In this study, researchers interviewed 60 music students from a large high school in the northeastern part of the United States. Students were asked questions that gave insight into the world of the high school music classroom. One participant explained in their interview: "Like, my parents told me mostly to do it because when they were young they didn't play, so they wanted me to just learn more how to play an instrument" (p. 195). Gallagher and Coche (1987) explained that some parents use their children as symbols of their own achievements as a way to compensate for their feelings of inadequacy and guilt or to fill an internal void.

While parents clearly have a strong influence on students, other people who interact with students can also influence them. For example, siblings can also be influential. In a study that surveyed 500 first- through sixth-grade students and their mothers, researchers (2005) found that sibling experience was a factor that influenced children's decisions to participate in particular activities including music (Jacobs, Vernon, & Eccles).

People outside of the family also influence students' desire to begin musical instruction. Many students interviewed by Adderley, Kennedy, and Berz (2003) had strong views on how outsiders perceived the ensemble. These students took a considerable amount of pride in their ensembles and the quality of performances. Most stated that their concerts were well attended by the school community as well as the outside community. A considerable number of students inside the ensemble believed that students enrolled in band were perceived to be talented, because the broader school community felt that the musical ensembles were of high quality.

Specific Recruitment Methods

The recruitment of students is vital to the success of the middle school band program. Band directors are continually attempting to identify factors that influence recruitment and discover more effective recruitment techniques. Hoffer (1989) identified the use of recorders and demonstration methods via video and live performances as the most common recruiting strategies. Bradley (1970) suggested using instructional media such as film and recordings could have a positive effect on student's intentions to enroll in band. Vasil (2013) suggests extrinsic motivators such as family, environment, finances, and social factors attract students to join band. In addition to traditional recruitment events, teachers should strive to strengthen the relationship with families by including favored genres and pieces in the classroom, inviting musical families to be guest artists, and to form band parent associations to support the program (Vasil, 2013). Teachers should also be cognizant of financial burdens and offer scholarships or collect an inventory of use instruments to lend to students in need. and musical genres that reflect the interests of students' home environments.

Rural Music Education

There is a substantial lack of literature about music teachers in rural schools (Isbell, 2005). Rural music teachers struggle with the expectations to build a successful band program with limited resources, the stress of teaching grades K–12, while also participating in service positions in the school, district, and community (Bates, 2011). Researchers have investigated how rural music educators overcome challenges to create a successful program.

One challenge many rural music educators face is the expectation to fulfill a myriad of potential job responsibilities. In addition to teaching music classes, rural teachers may also be expected to drive a school bus, advise student clubs, or coach a sport (Isbell, 2005). Rural schools are often understaffed resulting in the need for music teachers to help out in other areas like study hall and arts and humanities. It is not uncommon for rural music educators to teach K-12 music resulting in much time spent planning, preparing, and traveling from school to school (Isbell, 2005). Time spent repairing instruments, communicating with parents, organizing fundraising events and advocating for their program often occurs after school hours (VanDeusen, 2016).

Many rural music educators consider involvement in the community to be an unofficial job expectation in addition to school responsibilities (Causby, 2019; Hunt, 2009; Isbell, 2005; VanDeusen, 2016). Community leaders expect rural programs to perform at local events and parents of rural students strongly value the participation of local school programs supporting community events (Hunt, 2009). School music programs have the potential to influence a rural community's identity (VanDeusen, 2016). Directors must strive to maintain a positive perception of the school music program to maintain support from the community.

The involvement of the community within the rural music program is not always a positive one. In a study investigating the perspectives of rural and urban music teachers, one participant expressed that it was challenging to balance community involvement while maintaining a sense of privacy, referring to the feeling as a fishbowl effect (Hunt, 2009). If the educator is new to a rural area, it is often shocking to discover everyone in town knows their name, which could put pressure on a director to feel as though they are

under a microscope every time they leave their house. A new teacher in a rural area may have to spend considerable time rebuilding bridges based on the history of the school music program within the community which is essential for program support (VanDeusen, 2016). Past director's values, the history of openness to the community, and the musical ability of the ensemble all affect how a community perceives a musical ensemble.

Administrative support was also cited as a strong predictor in the success of a rural music program (VanDeusen, 2016). Lack of administrative support was frequently listed as a factor that inhibits the success of a school music program (Causby, 2019; Hunt, 2009; Isbell, 2005; VanDeusen, 2016). While the administration serving a rural school district may be more accessible to teachers given the smaller number of schools under direct supervision, this often resulted in more time to impose personal values onto the program and scrutinize teachers' decisions more closely (Isbell, 2005). Teachers cited poor rapport with administration, specifically regarding the overemphasis of athletic bands and lack of support of the concert band as a reason for leaving their job (Kuntzelman, 2017).

In addition to the challenges of classroom preparation, instrument repair, community involvement, and possible lack of administrative support, rural teachers also often felt isolated from colleagues in the field (Samplings, 2011). In a study by Kuntzelman (2017) investigating job attrition in rural K–12 schools, music educators identified professional isolation from living in a remote community attributing to young teachers leaving rural positions for urban/suburban schools. Causby (2019) asserted that in a rural music program, skills necessary to successfully advocate for the program were

more necessary for the success of the band program than pedagogical skills. This ability

to advocate for and grow the music program provided the rural instrumental director a

sense of job security. Hunt (2009) quoted a rural administrator who said, when

addressing the band director under her supervision, "You know, job security is expanding

your program, what can we do to get more kids involved?" (p. 41). There is very little

research on specific recruitment strategies used by middle school directors in rural areas

and the factors that influence decision making when choosing said recruitment strategies.

CHAPTER 3.   Methodology

The methodology identified for the study was an instrumental multiple case study. The case study design uses "prose and literary techniques to describe, elicit images, and analyze situations" (Merriam, 1988, p. 13). The case is a single person, program, group of people, or specific policy that is of interest to the researcher (Merriam, 1988). In an *instrumental* case study, the researcher focuses on one central issue or concern and then selects one or more bounded cases to illustrate the issue or concern (Creswell, 2013). A *multiple* case study helps provide multiple perspectives as each case is unique from one another in location, age, gender, and years of experience (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995; Merriam, 1988). For this study, six people (cases) were selected to illustrate the issue of recruitment for middle school band programs in rural areas. A case study must be pluralistic; suggesting to the reader how to react in a specific situation, descriptive; isolating a certain situation in order to illuminate a broad issue, and heuristic; allowing for an author's prejudice to theoretically have an influence on the study (Merriam, 1988). This study was pluralistic by providing the reader with best practices in recruiting for rural middle school bands; descriptive in that rural middle school band recruitment studied resulted in uncovering unique situations rural music teachers encountered; and is heuristic—the researcher has previous experience recruiting middle school band students in a rural public school.

I followed Merriam's (1988) case study methodical design, which begins with a literature review in order to identify the research problem, develop research questions, and select participants using purposive sampling techniques (Merriam, 1988). This study

was approved by the Institutional Review Board affiliated with the University of Kentucky.

Participants

The participants for this study consisted of two middle school band directors teaching in rural Kentucky, two middle school band directors teaching in rural West Virginia, and two middle school band directors teaching in rural Virginia. The participants were selected using purposive sampling, where the researcher strived to produce a sample that is assumed to be representative of the population (Merriam, 1988). Purposive sampling produces participants who are unique from one another in their age, gender, and race, each having different educational backgrounds and years of teaching experience. The location of each participant's school system was different either by state or location within that state, which resulted in teachers who live and work in communities of varying sizes.

The U.S. Census Bureau (2010) reported that 64.4% of the total rural population lives east of the Mississippi River. Forty-six point seven percent of the total rural population of the U.S. resides in southern states of Kentucky, West Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas. Thirty-one point two five percent of the rural population living in the Southern Region reside in Kentucky, West Virginia and Virginia. See the images below to see the county by county population density maps for Kentucky and Virginia (Census Bureau, 2010).

Figure 3.1
2010 Kentucky Population Density Map
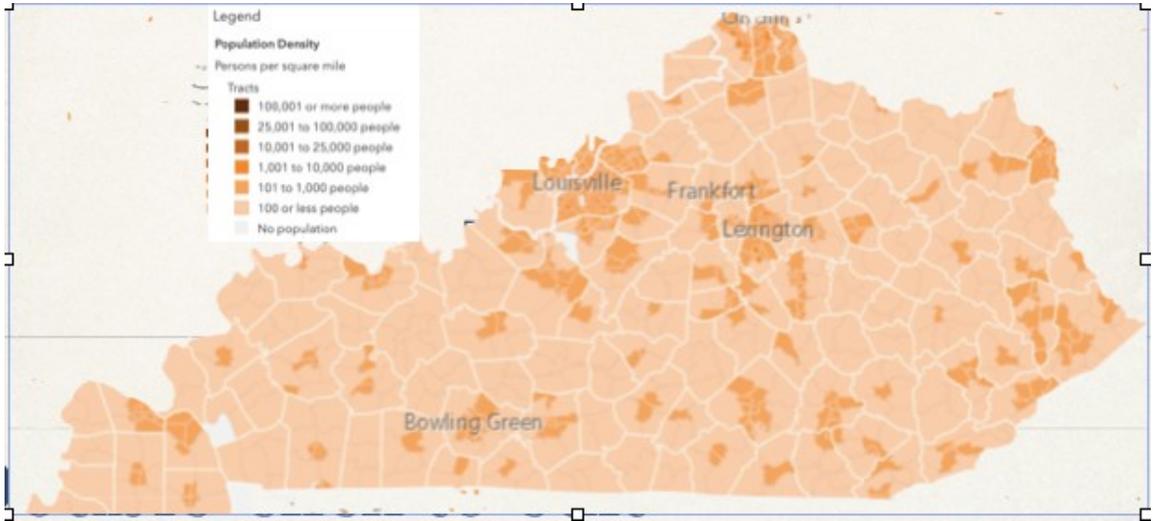
Figure 3.2
2010 Virginia Population Density Map
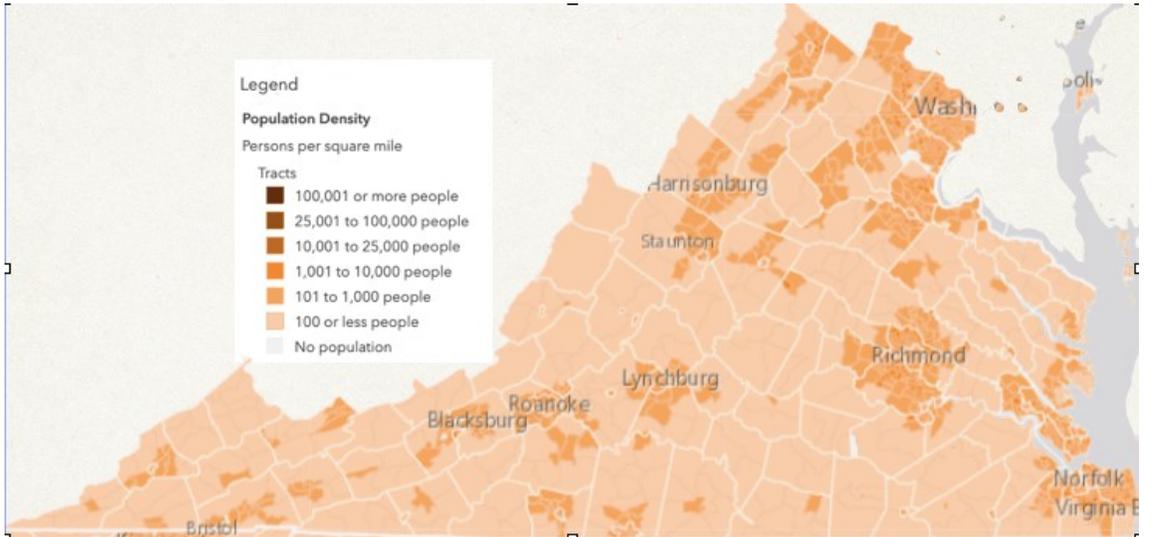
Figure 3.3
2010 West Virginia Population Density Map
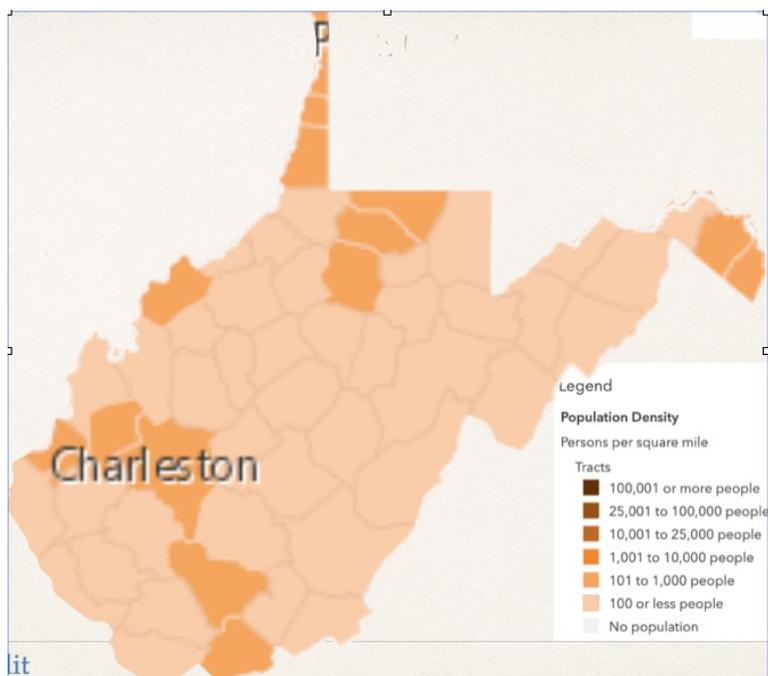
Purposive sampling also includes a process for selecting participants who are unique from one another in their age, gender, and race, each having different educational backgrounds and years of teaching experience. In order to select participants who are unique from one another, participants must meet criterion predetermined by the researcher. Criterion for selecting participants at the time of the study were: (a) they were middle school band directors, (b) had taught at least three years, (c) taught in a rural county school system in Kentucky, West Virginia, or Virginia, and (d) were willing to participate fully in this study. The criterion of three years was decided due to the results of a pilot study I conducted, which revealed that teachers with less than three years of teaching experience lacked the necessary experience to fully answer the research questions. Three years of experience is also a requirement in the state of Kentucky and West Virginia in order for a teacher to serve as a cooperating teacher to undergraduate pre-service teachers (Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board, n.d; West

Virginia State University, 2019). The state of Virginia requires student teachers to be placed with an educator who "has demonstrated effectiveness in the classroom" (Virginia Law, 2018, para. 7). It is understood by educators across the state that students are not placed with cooperating teachers until the educator has graduated from a probationary teaching license to a full license after three years of service. Therefore, teachers from rural communities in Kentucky, West Virginia, and Virginia were contacted due their classification as southern states east of the Mississippi River.

An initial list of 16 cases was formed by consulting Kentucky, West Virginia, and Virginia music teacher educators via social media and email who are well connected throughout their state and referring to the 2019 editions of journals released by Kentucky Music Educators Association (*Bluegrass Music News)* and Virginia Music Educators Association (*vmeanotes*), and a newsletter released by West Virginia Music Educators Association where performance assessment results are published. In an effort to follow Merriam's guidelines to produce a sample that is assumed to be representative of the population, the 16 identified candidates were contacted via e-mail, which is a communication method easily accessible to both parties and a quick method of communication. Fourteen of the 16 candidates responded to the initial request. The researcher compiled the list of candidates and reduced it further, using purposive criterion sampling, to nine candidates. A consent form was submitted to the remaining interested candidates. Eight candidates responded to the researcher stating that they were ready and willing to participate in the interviews. Participant diversity was attempted in terms of gender, age, and years of experience resulting in a final list of six participants who were

middle school band directors teaching in rural areas in three states: two in Kentucky, two

in West Virginia, and two in Virginia.

As shown in Table 1, participant diversity was achieved in terms of gender, age,

and years of experience. The participants were given pseudonyms: Kyle, Brent, Alex,

Joe, Kent, and Randy.

Table 3.1
Description of Participants

Pseudonym	Kyle	Joe	Alex	Brent	Kent	Randy
Age	34	23	35	32	36	52
Gender	M	M	M	M	M	M
Years Teaching	12	3	11	10	14	27
Education	BM, Music Ed.	BM, Music Ed.	BM, Music Ed, MM, Music Ed.	BM, Music Ed.	BM, Music Ed, MM, Music Ed.	BM, Music Ed, MM, Music Ed.
State	Kentucky	Kentucky	Virginia	Virginia	West Virginia	West Virginia
School Location	Rural	Rural	Rural	Rural	Rural	Rural
School Type	Public	Public	Public	Public	Public	Public
Teaching Level	Middle	Middle/ High	Middle/Fine Arts Coordinator	Middle	Middle	Middle

Data Collection

In a qualitative case study, the researcher is the primary instrument used to gather

and analyze data (Merriam, 1988). Qualitative case studies rely on data acquired from

interviews and/or observations and documents. Data were from three semi-structured

interviews per case (a total of 18 interviews), documents (e.g., recruitment brochures,

flyers, notes and handouts sent home to families, and written documents from the teacher

explaining their recruitment strategies and success rates), and a researcher journal.

3.1.1 Semi-structured interviews.

An interview is a time for direct researcher-participant interaction (Glesne, 2006).

Merriam (1988) suggests case study researchers maintain a tolerance of ambiguity, which

is an important skill required of a qualitative researcher as case study design lacks formal

procedures to follow on a step-by-step basis as compared to a quantitative study. This

freedom allows researchers to adapt to unexpected occurrences that may arise during an

interview. One example of an unexpected occurrence in an interview was with participant

Alex, who is also a fine arts coordinator for his school system. I was able to deviate from

the pre-selected interview questions and find out more about Alex's experience recruiting

from an administrator's perspective. I was unaware that Alex was also an administrator in

his school, however, since I maintained a tolerance of ambiguity I was able to understand

recruitment from Alex's perspective more extensively. Merriam (1988) also suggests the

researcher remain sensitive to the context of the interview as well as maintain constant

quality communication, maintain rapport, and listen intently. Interview questions were

created and piloted with the understanding that new questions may be added to follow-up

occurrences within the interview that the researcher did not anticipate (Glesne, 2006). To

pilot the research questions, the researcher contacted three colleagues who are actively

teaching in rural public schools who fit the participant requirements outlined above, but

who were not participating in the study. The researcher interviewed each volunteer with

an initial list of interview questions. Following the interview, the researcher consulted

with each volunteer to make sure each question was clear, concise, not leading in nature,

and asked for suggestions for questions to add or remove, resulting in the revision of two questions that tended to lead the participant to a desired response. The final list of questions is included in Appendix B.

3.1.2   Artifacts.

Artifacts substantiate the researcher's observations and interviews making the findings more reliable (Glesne, 2006). Stake (1995) explained that collected documents serve as a substitute for records of activity that the principal investigator cannot directly observe. For this study, the activities in question were elementary school performances, recruitment visits to schools, instrument audition nights, and many other events that the I was not able to attend. Therefore, artifacts were collected and included notes sent home to students concerning their interest to join middle school band, band handbooks outlining the first year of instruction, guardian consent forms, and informational brochures and recruitment documents. These documents were modified by removing any identifying information to ensure the privacy of the participants and are included in Appendix C. Names of participants and their schools were changed to pseudonyms.

3.1.3   Researcher journal.

The researcher journal, or data storage system (Stake, 1995), is an important tool for the qualitative researcher (Glesne, 2006). The researcher journal provides a platform for the principal investigator to organize thoughts, jot down ideas, and brainstorm throughout the research process. At times the researcher journal provided me a safe location to vent frustrations and to work out emotions, derive more questions pertaining to the study, or create new strategies for continued productivity within the research process (Glesne, 2006).

Procedures

The procedure for conducting the semi-structured interviews was a direct replica of the procedure outlined by Merriam (1988), which is a similar approach as Creswell (2013). First, each participant was contacted via email (see Appendix A), where I outlined the purpose of the study and the expectations I had for the participant. Once potential participants responded that they would like to participate I reduced the list further using purposive sampling criterion. The week of July 13th, eight participants were then contacted to complete consent forms and six participants responded. Interviews were then scheduled over the course of one week (July 20–July 28, 2020) at the convenience of the participant and conducted online using Zoom Video Communications (Zoom Video Communications, 2020). See table 3.1 for the dates of the interviews. The length of the interviews varied with a minimum length of 56 minutes to a maximum length of 100 minutes averaging out to 69.8 minutes.

Table 3.2
Semi-structured Interview Dates

Participant	Kyle	Brent	Alex	Joe	Kent	Randy
Date of Interview	7/23/2020	7/23/2020	7/20/2020	7/21/2020	7/28/2020	7/28/2020
Length of Interview	100 minutes	60 minutes	56 minutes	68 minutes	62 minutes	73 minutes

The decision to use an online platform such as Zoom (2019) was solidified as the interviews occurred during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. Interview questions were sent to each participant before the interview for reference and are available in Appendix B.

A printed interview guide was used for each interview, where the researcher recorded the time of the interview, date of the interview, and location. The interview guide included a brief description of the project, as well as printed interview questions with space between for the researcher to write notes.

Within a few hours of the interview, the researcher began the process of transcribing the interview in full to preserve the memory while it remains fresh (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995). The recordings of the interviews were uploaded into a secure cloud storage provider on the researcher's password-protected computer. Interview recordings were transcribed in their entirety with MAXQDA (VERBI Software, 2019) a qualitative research computer software program that allows researchers to transcribe, code, and organize themes for qualitative research all in one location. Important identifying information such as participant name and the name of their school were changed at this time. Between interviews, the researcher planned time to record and transcribe all data from the previous interview fully. Once the interviews are transcribed and the initial draft of paper was completed, the researcher sent the participants transcription and portion of the paper to them via email on August 3, 2020. Responses were all affirmative with exception of Alex, who corrected the interpretation of his class schedule, which he acknowledged was confusing and easily misunderstood.

Data Analysis

According to Merriam (1988), data analysis is the process of making sense out of the data. This involved combining, diminishing, and deciphering the three forms of data gathered for this study. First, all data collected from interviews and artifacts were

organized and managed in computer files with the exception of the researcher journal. I

read, memoed, reflected, and wrote notes on all collected data promptly following its

collection, which also aligns with Merriam's (1988) view that all data should be collected

and analyzed simultaneously. Transcriptions and coding occurred following the

individual interviews. Coding the data is a method used by qualitative researchers to

reduce the data into meaningful categories, naming the categories, and then comparing

the codes into broad themes (Creswell, 2013). Merriam (1988) refers to the coding

process as data clustering. The data for this study were first coded into categories that

aligned with the research questions, which allowed for many forms of data to be

organized by its genre (e.g.; recruitment event, documentation, parental involvement,

etcetera), a form of data analysis Merriam (1988) labels content analysis. Following the

initial coding phase, the researcher analyzed the data further by organizing the codes into

broader themes to make more sense of the data collected. For example, the original codes

of sports, distance, cost, scheduling/electives, and advanced/AP courses was eventually

condensed down to one single code—factors that influence recruitment. A total of 5

themes emerged as a result of data analysis. I then represented the data using a narrative

account that included quotes from participants, general descriptions of their community

and school, vignettes that illustrated their recruitment events and interpretive commentary

in the discussion section to provide a framework for understanding the findings

(Merriam, 1988).

Trustworthiness

Collecting multiple forms of data (i.e., semi-structured interviews, artifacts, and a researcher journal) or data source triangulation, gave this study greater validity (Glesne, 2006; Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995). Member checks were also conducted by sending the written interview transcripts and sections of my final write up to the participants to check for accuracy. Member checks provide an opportunity for the participants to ensure that the researcher interpreted their thoughts accurately and without bias, and thus helps to increase the validity of the data (Stake, 1995). Throughout the data collection process, I was reflective and aware of my own biases and predispositions, using the researcher journal to organize my thoughts. Researcher reflexivity allows for a more trustworthy interpretation of data (Glesne, 2006).

Role of the Researcher (Subjectivity Statement)

As a former middle school band director, I understand how important recruitment is for building a band program. With budget cuts increasing in public schools, directors are tasked with improving upon the size of their programs in order to justify their positions. I have been questioned frequently on the rationale for implementing specific recruitment strategies, with minimal resources at my disposal for defending my choices or even knowing if the strategies chosen would be successful. When speaking with other middle school band directors, I often find the conversation turning to struggles with recruitment. When in this position myself, I would actively search for research of effective middle school recruitment techniques, so I would be able to defend my choices to my administration as well as my colleagues. Any helpful information discovered from

this informal research process often did not translate to my specific teaching situation, as many of the studies and articles found revolved around large, urban school systems. The urban programs in question typically had more resources at their disposal, including but not limited to; additional band directors employed within the district, fine arts coordinators to assist in advocating for the program, and additional arts opportunities throughout the community.

While conducting this study, I was well aware of possible conflicts of personal bias that could occur. Glesne (2006) suggested that researchers monitor their subjectivity by increasing awareness of the way's subjectivity may distort the researcher's awareness of what is occurring. It is suggested that the researcher write a set of "subjective I's"; which are simply personal reflections about how different research situations engage different subjective lenses (Glesne, 2006). "Subjective I" statements allow the researcher to strengthen the basis for the story being told as this activity allows the researcher to increase their awareness of the specific subjectivity (Glesne, 2006). When thinking about my personal bias (subjectivity), I took the advice of Glesne. I wrote "subjective I" statements to draw my attention to my bias and to assist in working through said bias during the completion of the study.

My first "subjective I" concerned my personal opinion of what should be considered a good recruitment technique. As a band director myself, I have had experience recruiting band students and over time have solidified my own opinions on what band directors should be doing while recruiting students. I had to remind myself that my opinions are just that, my opinions. The participants I interviewed are experts in the field and have experience successfully recruiting students into their music ensembles.

Whenever I found this bias emerging, I would record my thoughts in my researcher journal so that I would not express them to my interviewee. I also began every interview reminding my participants that they were the experts and that there was no wrong answer to any question.

The second most prominent "subjective I" statement involved my past experience with recruiting students. I was not always successful in my recruitment efforts as a middle school band director inducing a fear that I would lose my job as a result. I did not want to project this insecurity onto my participants as not everyone had the same experiences that I had. I took to my researcher journal to express my frustrations that not everyone faced the same roadblocks when recruiting as I did.

CHAPTER 4.   FINDINGS

Findings extrapolated during data collection are presented in this chapter. First,

readers are introduced to the individual cases. Unique characteristics specific to each case

are outlined in the introduction as to allow readers to better interpret further findings.

Second, a detailed description of the themes which arose from the data will be

incorporated, including factors that influence recruitment, recruitment events,

documentation and communication, sources for support, and the effect COVID-19 had on

recruitment for the 2020–2021 school year

Alex

Alex is a middle school band director who teaches in the same rural community

where he was raised. He attended the school where he works and has made it his goal to

grow and maintain the band department. His school employs a seven-period day, and his

teaching responsibilities include a sixth-grade band that meets daily for 45 minutes, and a

seventh- and eighth-grade band that meets three times a week for 90 minutes. He also

serves as the orchestra director for the middle school, teaching both a beginning orchestra

class and an advanced orchestra class. His school implements an enrichment period

where Alex has the opportunity to teach a symphony orchestra during the first semester

and a select wind ensemble during the second semester. On top of his middle school

teaching duties, Alex assists the high school band after school and on the weekends and

serves the district as their fine arts coordinator.

Alex considers himself fortunate that he is able to have assistance during his busy

teaching schedule. The high school director is able to team teach at the middle school

during the sixth-grade band class. Alex also has an assistant director at the middle school who teaches percussion classes as well as assists with beginning sixth-grade band class. He realizes how rare an opportunity it is for a rural middle school band director to have the opportunity to co-teach and does not take it for granted.

Alex describes the community where he lives and works to be extremely rural with the unique benefit of being a 45-minute drive from a large suburban/urban community. The school division is classified within the state as 2A, with the high school maintaining around 1,400 students and the middle school maintaining around 1,000 students. Alex currently has 280 students enrolled in middle school band classes. The other elective courses offered in his school include orchestra, chorus, music technology, gym, Spanish, French, and career and technical education.

Recruiting responsibilities primarily fall in Alex's lap with limited involvement of the high school program. On top of recruiting for band, Alex is also responsible for recruiting for his new orchestra program, often combining events to serve both ensembles. The high school band becomes involved when the school division hosts their annual band night, which is a performance that features the bands grades six through twelve.

Kent

Kent began teaching at Centerville Middle School right out of college 14 years ago. His daily schedule revolves around a six-period day where he teaches two sixth-grade bands divided at random (not by instrumentation), two seventh-grade bands divided by woodwinds and brass with percussion in both, and an eighth-grade band. When Kent

first started teaching in the district, he was also responsible for teaching general music, however, the course was removed from his schedule and replaced by band classes due to the growth of the program. Kent is solely responsible for teaching his courses without any assistance from the high school director associated with the program. He also develops and schedules his own recruitment events without any outside assistance.

Kent's community is a largely rural with a small "downtown" area, which is where his school is located. He explains that he is able to look outside the window of his classroom and see the main street that runs through town. The recent districting changes allows for both "town" kids and "county" kids to attend the school, a decision the current superintendent implemented to make the schools more equitable. Kent's school feeds a West Virginia 5A high school and currently has around 600 students enrolled. The county district is sizable, consisting of two high schools, one located in the northern end of the county fed by three middle schools and one located in the southern end of the county fed by two middle schools. Kent's district is the largest of the participants interviewed in this study, consisting of 11 elementary schools, five middle schools, and two high schools.

Kent's middle school offers an array of elective courses outside of band including gym, choir, general music (taught by the choir director), art, and a STEM course. His principal made it possible, within the seven-period schedule, for students to take both band and choir or band and another elective, which is an opportunity the students have not always had during Kent's tenure. While band is not the only musical ensemble offered at the school, Kent is solely responsible for developing and implementing his recruitment events separate of choir and the high school.

When Kent first began teaching, he was responsible for band and general music courses. He explained that having to plan six separate preparations a day was quite difficult. A colleague, who also worked in the district, told Kent to focus on recruitment and growing the numbers in his band program. The recommendation to grow the program was suggested to increase the average class size, resulting in an increase of the number of band classes offered, eventually replacing general music on Kent's schedule. Kent did just that and it was successful. He does admit having a larger percentage of the student body has had a negative effect on his fellow elective teachers, as students not enrolled in band may end up taking the same class twice in their elective rotation. Kent expressed, on multiple occasions, how lucky he is to teach in a county that is highly supportive of the arts. He knows many of his colleagues are not as fortunate and remain in fear of their job security.

Randy

Randy is the veteran teacher of the participant group having taught middle school band in a rural community for a total of 27 years and 16 years in his current position. His situation is unique from the others because Randy is the primary band director for two middle schools within his West Virginia school system. Randy teaches sixth through eighth-grade band in the morning at one school, and sixth through eighth-grade band in the afternoon at another. Due to the commute between the two schools and his already large teaching load, Randy is not responsible for any sections of general music. Randy is fortunate to have the high school band directors for each respective middle school

available to co-teach during all the band classes except the last period of the day, which coincides with the high school band class.

Randy describes his community as rural with a large sense of community fostered by hosting events such as Trail Days where the community gathers around the spot where the Appalachian Trail runs through the county in celebration of the hikers who travel past yearly. The middle schools where Randy teaches are very small. Middle school 1 contains 191 students and middle school 2 has 293 students. Given the size of the community and the size of the respective schools, Randy has an impressive percentage of the student bodies enrolled in middle school band with 104 students enrolled at the middle school 1 and 149 students at middle school 2. The schools offer an impressive array of elective courses for students to choose from including band, choir, computers, Spanish, art, PE, agriculture/FFA, and a STEM class. Randy has been able to maintain high numbers in band.

Randy does not have any involvement from the high school directors or the choral department when planning and implementing his recruitment events. He explained that his motivation for recruiting such a large number of band students is to maintain the history of strong middle school programs unique to each middle school. Randy takes a lot of pride in showcasing the middle school band programs throughout the community and works hard to continue their success resulting in more than half of each school's student body participating in band. Randy does not feel as though low recruitment numbers would threaten his job security, as the choral programs have been progressively failing and the program and directors remain funded and intact.

Brent

Brent is the only participant who teaches both middle and high school band in his rural community. He begins his day teaching middle school with two sixth-grade beginning band classes that alternate between an A and B day. The classes are divided between woodwind, brass and percussion. He also teaches a seventh-grade combined band and an eighth-grade combined band before traveling to the high school to resume his duties teaching concert band classes. Brent is the only instrumental ensemble director in his district and does not collaborate with a co-teacher at any point in his busy schedule.

Brent describes his community as rural, with one middle school and one high school serving the county. The middle school fluctuates between 350 and 400 students which he explains is a typical school size in rural Virginia. Brent has around 75 or 80 students enrolled in band at the middle school. Other elective classes offered include chorus, art, FFA/agriculture, technology, and a state mandated keyboard class and a state mandated PE class. Brent clarified that students in Virginia have to take PE all three years that they are enrolled in middle school which limits the amount of choice a student has when selecting their elective courses.

Brent is unique as compared to the other participants because his father was a band director. He has been collecting and revising recruitment events over the years beginning with several years of observing his father teaching as a child. Brent is responsible for recruiting for his program without assistance from others. He explains that being in such a large, rural community is a challenge, as sometimes he has to "travel the world" to get instruments or information out to students. He maintains that recruiting

is not about getting a superior rating at concert festival, it is about the kids and creating an environment where they will thrive and have fun.

Joe

Joe is the youngest of the six participants in both age and years of experience. He recently finished his third year in his current position in the rural community of Kentucky where he lives. Joe starts his school day with something called "tiger time", which is a thirty-minute enrichment type class for students to get extra assistance in math or language courses. If additional assistance is not needed, students have the opportunity to take an additional elective. During tiger time, Joe teaches a traditional percussion ensemble course during the fall semester and a bucket drumming course featuring students performing on pots, pans, and gallon size buckets during the spring semester. The remainder of Joe's day is spent teaching band courses. Joe has a concert band that is mixed with both seventh- and eighth-grade students and a beginning band. Concert band and beginning band are split by instrumentation (e.g.; woodwinds in one class and brass and percussion in another). Joe spends time after schools and on the weekends serving as the assistant director at the high school helping teach marching band and helping out during football games and Saturday competitions.

In previous years, Joe was able to co-teach with the high school director throughout the day. This past school year the high school director was reassigned to a credit recovery course, a time for high school students to make up missing work or acquire extra help on a difficult assignment, during the time she would usually teach at

the middle school. The director duo articulated to the administration this change in schedule would negatively affect the growth of the band program without results.

Joe grew up in an urban/suburban community outside of Georgia, so moving to and teaching in rural Kentucky has been quite an adjustment. Joe's school is quite large, averaging around 1,100 students. He is proud of maintaining 151 students in band class as students have several other elective options to choose from. These elective choices include game design, French, choir, coding, PE, orchestra, general music, mock trial, drama, graphic design, career explorations, life skills, art, and Future Farmers of America. Joe explained that as long as a student (who wishes to leave band) remains involved in music (either in choir or orchestra) he is satisfied.

Joe has very little control over the planning and implementation of recruitment events. Due to an administration with differing values and opinions, Joe is not allowed to travel during the school day with students to visit elementary school music classrooms or to perform with the large ensemble for the student body. Joe is not permitted to travel to the elementary schools during his planning period to discuss band with the music classes or incoming fifth-grade students. He maintained throughout the interview that the dynamic from the administration is not conducive to building a large thriving band program.

Joe concludes that his young age and friendly personality is what attracts students to his classroom. He is involved with other programs in the building and randomly drops into other classrooms to greet students. Joe believes that word of mouth and seeing how fun his class can be peaks students' interest and motivates them to enroll in band.

Kyle

Kyle is a middle school band director in rural Kentucky who also assists with the high school after school and on the weekends with the marching band. He teaches five band classes, however, not all five band classes meet the entire year. Kyle's school schedule revolves around trimesters, not semesters, and each day begins with an enrichment period. During the first trimester enrichment class, Kyle provides a mentor program to beginning band students consisting of sixth-grade students and eight to ten eighth-grade mentors. During the second and third trimesters the enrichment period is a jazz band class. The early morning enrichment block often gets interrupted by special meetings, announcements, or assemblies. Kyle is also responsible for teaching sixth, seventh, and eighth-grade concert bands, sixth and seventh-grade general music, and eighth-grade guitar.

Kyle's schedule is built in such a way to allow for the high school director and a handful of student aids to co-teach beginning band at the middle school. Kyle believes this involvement from the high school director and students has a positive impact on retention between middle and high school. The school system is currently experiencing a substitute teacher shortage, and the high school director is responsible for acting as an emergency substitute teacher during his planning period when needed. As a result, the high school director is only able to come to the middle school one or two days a week. This makes planning for instruction a difficult task for Kyle, as he never knows what assistance he will have from day to day.

Kyle's community is rural and driven by the many horse farms in the area. Due to employment opportunities on the horse farms there is a larger percentage of Latino

students in the community than Kyle expected. The horse farm culture has created a unique socio-economic situation, with students who have horse money representing the upper class and students whose parents work on the horse farms representing the lower working class, with very little middle class represented.

Kyle's school has around 600 students and those students can choose from band, choir, general music, guitar, Spanish, health, PE, art, and technology. Students are allowed to choose two electives and can take both band and choir at the same time, which allows the respective directors to share talented students.

Kyle is solely responsible for choosing and implementing recruitment events with occasional input from the high school director. Kyle's primary motivating force behind recruiting band students, at this point in his career, is marching band. In his small community, the success of the marching band, not the concert band, is what is valued. He believes his role as a middle school band director is to support the high school program and the marching band. Kyle explains the emphasis on marching band is not necessarily his personal philosophy, but the school's, resulting in a goal to grow numbers in support of the marching program.

Beyond recruiting for marching band and helping with marching band after school, Kyle's middle school program makes up for almost half of the marching band program, as 47% of the marching band consists of seventh- and eighth-grade students. The overwhelming success of the marching band attracts students, yet Kyle is hesitant to use marching band as a recruitment tactic. He wonders if overpromoting marching band deters students who are athletes, who may assume they cannot do both band and a sport.

Kyle prefers not to recruit with marching band because, in his opinion, middle school band and marching bands are not one in the same.

Kyle does not believe his job would be at stake if he had an "off" year recruiting band students at this time. His administrators are all former band students and understand the intricacies of running and maintaining a band program. Kyle has considered that if he consecutively failed to recruit large numbers that his job security would ultimately wane. The middle school director preceding Kyle struggled recruiting and retaining large numbers, starting 80 students in beginning band yet retaining 17 students. Due to the declining in enrollment, the director was let go. Kyle believes large numbers and supporting the high school marching band provides a sense of job security.

Five themes arose from the data: recruitment events, factors that influence recruitment, documentation and communication, sources for support, and the effect COVID-19 had on recruitment for the 2020–2021 school year.

Recruitment Events

4.1.1   Elementary School Tour

Elementary school performances were the preferred recruitment event for all six participants. The events are structured as a way to expose incoming fifth-grade students to the instrumental ensemble course available the following year by performing light-hearted music, demonstrating instruments, and providing pertinent information. While all six participants were unanimous in their preference for using an elementary tour as the primary method of recruitment, each structured the event in a different way.

Kent, Randy, and Brent travel to the elementary schools so their middle school concert bands can perform for them. These performances occur in the spring and typically include a 45-minute presentation featuring short musical offerings, instrument demonstrations, and speeches advocating for the program. Joe expressed the desire to tour the elementary schools with his band program, however, this method of recruitment is not supported by his current administration.

Kyle and Alex share their recruitment performances with other musical ensembles within their schools. Kyle is responsible for coordinating the event every year but is expected to share the performance with the choir. Kyle shared,

> Well, the choir teacher likes to hop on my bandwagon. Due to lack of conflict of interest in scheduling it's not a huge deal. We go on tour together to the elementary school. It is challenging when you only have 45 minutes to pitch both programs.

Alex teaches orchestra and band, so it makes sense for the ensembles to share the recruitment performance. Due to school division changes, where the district transitioned to a traditional K–5 elementary school, scheduling elementary school performances have become more challenging. As a result, the directors approach recruitment as a year-long event.

Alex and Brent are unique as they often include additional ensembles beyond the middle school concert band. In the past, Brent has toured the elementary schools in the fall with the marching band and drumline. "Drumline is always something that kids really love," Brent explains when discussing the fun, pep-band nature of the performance. Alex works closely with the high school band director to coordinate and plan multiple

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performance events for the elementary schools. In the fall, the marching band tours the elementary schools, performing for the entire student body. In the winter months, Alex travels the elementary schools to perform with the middle school jazz bands. Additionally, during the spring semester, the incoming sixth grade students visit the middle school where they view a joint concert by the middle school band and orchestra. During this performance Alex strongly advocates for the program and demonstrates the instruments available to the students the following year.

While participants agreed elementary school tours method for recruiting band students, they disagreed on the most effective age group to take on tour. Kyle, Alex, and Kent tour the elementary schools with their eighth-grade ensembles, however, Randy and Brent strongly suggest recruiting with the sixth-grade ensembles. Brent and Randy suggest fifth-grade students relate on a more personal level to younger students than older students. The year before, the fifth graders shared a hallway or a bus route with the students they now see performing in front of them. As a result, the fifth graders are able to picture themselves performing on an instrument in just one year. Brent shared,

> I used to recruit with my high school symphonic wind ensemble, you know, a grade 5 band, and the students did not care at all, but when I took current beginning bands to recruit, one year below them, it just exploded the growth.

4.1.2 Instrument Petting Zoo

Instrument petting zoos or mouthpiece testing demonstrations were the second most mentioned recruitment event among the participants. As with the elementary performance tours, the implementation of an instrument petting zoo looked different for each participant. Brent, Kent, and Randy implemented a variation of an instrument

petting zoo during the elementary school tour performance. At a predetermined point in the performance, Brent and Randy ask the middle school students to demonstrate the instrument, showing the reed or mouthpiece, playing a brief excerpt, explaining how the instrument produces sound, and allowing elementary students to come touch the instrument and ask questions. Kent, depending on the school year, will incorporate a variation of an instrument petting zoo during his elementary school tour depending on the instructions given from administration. Depending on the school year, elementary school administrators may shorten or lengthen the duration of the performance, resulting in either performance-only concerts or concerts that offer more of a hands-on experience for the fifth-grade students. Kyle had intentions of launching an after-school petting zoo event for incoming fifth-grade students that was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the past, Randy has visited elementary school music classrooms to demonstrate instruments for incoming students. He declared the experience to be a failure, explaining that the event "was a big flop. No one wants to watch an old man play a flute." Due to restrictions from the school administration, the main recruiting event Joe implements each year is an instrument petting zoo. Each spring, the middle school hosts all incoming fifth-grade students to attend an elective fair set up in the gym. During this time, Joe and a few selected eighth-grade students demonstrate instruments, allow visitors to make sounds on instruments, and provide an experience for students to ask questions and meet the band director on a one-on-one basis. Time at the booth is limited, as the space in the gym is shared with other courses such as choir, art, PE, robotics, and others.

Several participants mentioned additional events beyond instrument petting zoos. For example, Joe expressed a desire to include additional events such as an ice cream social for beginning band students to occur over the summer. At this event, he would audition students on mouthpieces to determine the proper instrument choice for each student. Kent and Kyle have attempted mouthpiece testing events in the past with little success. The directors currently spend the first two weeks of class testing students on instruments to determine the right fit. Kent thinks timing could be a factor prohibiting the success of mouthpiece testing in his area. After sending home various forms of communication including a letter and a school one call, "only 5–10 students showed up." He explained that parents and students in his community do not begin to think about the next school year until a few weeks before the school year begins.

4.1.3 Orientation Events

[you need a topic sentence here before you jump into examples] Joe's main method of recruitment is the fifth-grade orientation event/elective fair. Joe's school hosts an orientation fair where incoming students rotate from table to table learning about potential elective choices they will have the following year. Kyle's school also hosts an orientation event which occurs a few days before the school year begins. This event provides an opportunity for students to receive their schedule for the year and proceed through an abbreviated school day to meet teachers and locate classrooms. Kyle pulls out all the stops for this event, displaying all the fancy instruments, setting up tables with colorful tablecloths, and a T.V. monitor to play concert videos and picture slide show presentations. He also assembles a table for cake, cookies, and soft drinks, as Kyle's goal is to make students and parents feel welcome during their visit. Rolling out the red carpet

for his students does not go unnoticed by the remainder of the student body and has resulted in additional band students joining the ensemble at the last minute.

Factors that Influence Recruitment

All six participants indicated that there were factors beyond their planning and implementation of recruitment events that had an influence on recruitment success. Six factors arose from the interviews: common misconceptions, community and parental support, collegial support, job security, funding, and scheduling and elective offerings.

4.1.4 Common Misconceptions

There are many common misconceptions regarding involvement in middle school band that regularly deter families and students from considering band as an elective option for middle school students. The first misconception is that if a student plays a sport, then they cannot also play in band. All participants mentioned the need to actively dispel information regarding the ability to participate in sports and band. Joe and Alex have and/or plan to create a poster to hang in the elementary school music classrooms that will feature current middle school band students wearing their team uniform and holding their band instrument. Alex has produced similar posters in the past resulting in a high school band that currently has around 25 varsity athletes. Joe intends to create a similar poster for his program next year, as sports participation is the number one excuse to not enroll in band. Being new to a rural community, Joe was unaware of the importance sports can have in a small town stating, "It's all about sports-ball here." There are roughly 40–50 band students at his middle school who participate in sports. In smaller schools, Joe explained, activities share students. Brent has lived in his rural community

for several years and understands the draw to play sports. The football team at the high school is extremely successful recently winning multiple state championships. Brent, a student athlete himself, understands the draw to be a part of something successful and supports sport involvement within his band program.

The second misconception is that required marching band will prohibit a student from participating in other activities. Kyle is concerned that requiring marching band participation in high school will impact student enrollment and retention in the band program, as students and families will feel pressured to choose between band and another activity which is often not the case, as the directors, coaches, and group leaders work together to create a schedule to share students. Sports and horse farming represent a broad segment of the community. Kyle has witnessed the marching band requirement require students to make a tough decision early in their band career to discontinue their instrumental music education.

> I had a French horn player call me last night to let me know she wasn't going to continue with band next year. Her excuse was because of Houdini and Scooter. I was like who or what are they? She told me they were her horses and she was going to go to nationals next year. She thinks she can't do band because of marching band. It takes time away from her doing her professional horse-riding competitions.

Kyle also believes that the tradition his program has of beginning marching band participation in seventh-grade puts stress on the band program. Forty-seven percent of the 2020-2021 high school marching band consisted of middle school students. He expressed

a conflicting desire to use marching band as a recruitment tactic knowing how the ensemble impacts students involved in sports.

A third misconception was that participation in band would cost too much. Many families rightfully assume that participating in band requires the purchase of an instrument, supplemental materials, uniforms, fees for trips, etc. Each participant fielded these questions in a different way. During calls to families over the summer, Kent informs each parent to not worry about financial investment. If the need is present, the school is able to provide students with an instrument. He says most parents have no idea that is an option.

4.1.5   Community and Parental Support

All six participants referenced the role the community and parental support had on their recruitment success. First, most participants believed that families and the community choose to support the band program due to the program's success. Alex's position within his community is unique since he has lived there his entire life. He admits he wouldn't have connections and support within the community had he grown up elsewhere. Randy credits his recruitment success to the community as it is "easy for kids to want to be a part of something successful."

Second, half of participants said that "word of mouth" was a contributing factor to community and parental support for the band program. Kent suggests the community sees the band program as a positive group of learners with the same goal in mind; to create music together. Parents view middle school band as a positive experience support their child's wish to participate. The participants described a scenario where parents actively advocated for the program when speaking to their friends with school aged children.

Once a family member has participated in band, the remaining children follow. Kyle believes that "if you reach one kid, you reach the whole family," a sentiment echoed by Alex, Kent, and Joe when discussing the importance of "legacy" students within their programs. A legacy student is a child, or younger sibling, of a former band student. Often these students have grown up in an environment that values music education, watching their older siblings participate in the ensemble, traveled with the band, and understanding that their eventual participation was inevitable. Alex and Joe understand the value of the legacy band student, as they were both legacy students themselves.

Third, two participants mentioned that the character of the music teacher affected support. For example, Brent believes rural communities look at the character of the band director and the culture of the program more than urban/suburban communities. Families aspire for their children to participate in an activity lead by someone of good character who is visible in and contributes back to the town. Kyle agrees, referencing the unique value system innate in a rural community. Band programs in small towns have a sense of family and community. When the band director is spotted eating or shopping in town, families often stop to talk, or even join the director for a meal. That wholesome culture is attractive and invites families to feel comfortable leaving their child in the directors' care.

4.1.6 Collegial Support

Along with parental and community support, directors could not accomplish their recruitment goals without support from their colleagues. For example, participants mentioned the importance of the school guidance counselor for band recruitment. Alex strives to maintain a positive relationship with the guidance office in his school, going out of his way make them feel valued, including bringing them lunch during national

school counseling week. In return, the counselors keep him informed when new students move to the area and work closely with Alex to set and maintain appropriate schedules for the arts department in the middle school. Brent, who struggles to adequately advocate for his band program as the only director in the division, claims guidance counselors have ultimate control over who enrolls in band class. One major role of a school guidance counselor is to maintain the school course schedule and assign students to their preferred pre-selected courses. Kyle's counselors annually request projected future band enrollment before the majority of recruitment events have occurred. Joe's guidance team refuses to release final rosters more than five days before school starts. This creates a situation where Joe is unable to plan for class sizes or instrumentation in advance, resulting in the inability to contact families prior to the start of school or check the roster for accuracy. This past year Joe received his beginning band roster and it was 30 students short of his projected number. Guidance counselors had reassigned band students to alternative elective courses in efforts to lower Joe's class size and to more evenly distribute students between alternative electives offered. Joe expressed his frustration stating

> This could have been avoided when there was time to fix it, not during crunch time right before school started. I was livid. Why do I provide them (guidance counselors) with a list of students divided into their specific classes for them to mix it up without contacting me?

Last, Randy believes the success of the middle school band program, the "spotlight" of his school, has an impact on the level of support offered by the administration. Randy coordinates his recruitment tours in conjunction with the guidance counselor and invites her to attend the program with the band. The pair have worked

together for years to create a recruitment event that successfully advocates for the band program, seamlessly enrolling students in the course for the following year.

The support of administration, especially administration who understand what running a successful band program involves, greatly improves the recruitment experience for the instrumental director. Alex, a fine arts coordinator, feels his unique relationship with the elementary school music teachers (as a colleague and an administrator), and the elementary school principals (as a fellow administrator) greatly improves the success of his recruitment events. He works closely with the teachers and principals at the elementary school level to coordinate several recruitment opportunities for students throughout the school year. Kyle also believes having someone on the administrative team who has experience with band either as a former band student or director greatly helps when advocating for the program. Kyle's current principal is a former band director, and the high school principal was an active band student in high school. Both administrators understand the impact band involvement has on the students, schools, and communities, and supports the programs to the best of their ability. Kyle frequently mentioned his appreciation for the administrators support when coordinating four, 45-minute elementary school tours that occur during instructional class time every spring. Joe was the only participant who had a multitude of recruitment ideas without the support to implement them fully. He believes that administrative support has more of an effect on recruitment strategies than a school's geographic location. Joe has repeatedly been denied the opportunity to take the music ensembles on an elementary school tour. Joe believes the lack of opportunity to advocate for his ensemble is a direct reflection of the district's values.

4.1.7   Job Security

Start with a topic sentence that sets the reader up for this section "Four participants spoke about recruitment in relation to job security." Something like that. Every section you have needs to have a topic sentence.

As an administrator as well as a music teacher, Alex understands first-hand how small class sizes determine a positions value within the school. Alex does not believe his job would be at stake if he had a recruitment season resulting in low numbers. He does, however, recognize the difficulty in justifying a full-time position when a sufficient number of students are not enrolled. That full-time position could be used in a more efficient manner, with administration often saying, "Hey, that could be a reading specialist position, that could be something to support this program, we can make one band director position for middle school and high school."

When asked if he felt his position would be at stake if his numbers fell below a certain level, Brent said, "Absolutely!" He elaborates further expressing the communities desire to feel like they are investing in something successful. Kent agrees that the success of the high school program has created an environment of job security, as the school and community value and support the program. He does, however, know of several colleagues who have found themselves in the position to use recruitment to justify their job. Kyle feels like the success of the high school program puts more pressure on recruitment, as it is his job to support the high school marching program. The director at the middle school before Kyle let the numbers slip and was eventually let go for that very reason.

Only one participant felt secure in his position regardless of student enrollment, and that was Randy. Given the success of the band program, with an average of 55% student involvement, Randy believes his job is safe. Regardless of the low numbers, the district continues to support the program, supplementing the choral directors course load with additional music appreciation classes.

4.1.8   Funding

Concerns involving funding were discussed by half of the participants. Alex and Randy mentioned the incoming sixth-grade class was born during the 2008 recession and how that impacted students' interest in band, as their families are still recovering financially. Randy attributes a recent drop in enrollment to the economy with Alex believing next year's numbers will reflect downward as well. In addition to the recession of 2008, Kent believes current job loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic will negatively impact his future enrollment.

Funding is an issue for Brent in terms of student enrollment. When asked if he had a maximum limit for student enrollment he said no, however, "outfitting those students with instruments could be an issue." Over the years Brent has collected used instruments from flea markets and is afraid the program would run out of instruments if too many students enrolled in the program.

Kent and Kyle articulated feelings of frustration regarding the need for fundraising due to the time involved in planning and implementing fundraising events. Kent spends an inordinate amount of time organizing fundraising events to raise money for his ensembles. So much time that he often finds himself placing recruitment events on the back burner in order to raise funds for the band program. Kyle echoed Kent's

frustration with the attention fundraising events often demand of the band director. He added that he finds that students become overwhelmed with the amount of fundraising that is expected of them as well deterring students from remaining in the ensemble. Once students reach eighth-grade, Kyle spends as much time motivating students to participate in the fundraiser as he does planning the fundraising events. Kyle, having previously taught in an urban area, was surprised at the amount of fundraising necessary to maintain a middle school band program.

4.1.9   Scheduling and Elective Offerings

All six directors indicated that daily course scheduling plays a significant role in their motivation for recruiting students. First, directors indicated how the number of students enrolled in band effected how many sections of band class were offered. The ability to offer more than one section of beginning band allows the directors to divide the class by instrumentation resulting in individualized instruction for each student. Alex, Joe, Kyle, and Kent all expressed the need to grow the numbers in beginning band in order to justify the desire to have multiple sections of beginning band. Of those four participants, only one has the ability to regularly co-teach (Alex), and splitting the beginners into smaller groups by instrumentation greatly improves the productivity and quality of instruction the beginning students receive.

Another motivating factor influencing directors to grow their program was the responsibility of teaching general music. Both Kent and Kyle expressed their disdain for teaching general music, due to the difficulty of planning for a performance ensemble and a core lecture course. Planning for general music courses that interested and engaged students was a difficult task on top of all the other job responsibilities inherent in being a

band director. Early in Kent's career, a mentor coached him to grow the program to avoid teaching general music classes: "The (former) high school director told me that if I didn't want to teach general music anymore that I needed to make my band classes bigger so that I couldn't teach it. It worked." Kyle also saw first-hand how class size controls scheduling and he intentionally recruits a minimum of 80 students to divide his beginning band class in two. This growth creates a more manageable beginning band class and eliminates the space in Kyle's schedule for general music courses. Due to the nature of their schedules and the requirement to travel between schools, Randy and Brent only taught band classes. The choral directors at their respective schools were responsible for teaching general music.

Daily scheduling affected more than the number and variety of courses offered. Kyle and Kent described situations where general music classes created extra course planning throughout the day, taking away time that could be spent planning recruitment events or visiting elementary schools. Kyle also discussed how the lack of predictability present in the high school director's schedule created a planning nightmare. For several years, Kyle's high school director had been able to come to the middle school during beginning band and bring student aid's along with him. Due to a shortage of substitute teachers within the school district, the high school director was often called upon to serve as an emergency sub during that time. Kyle explained that the high school director was often only able to visit the middle school one or two days a week. Kyle was often left creating two lesson plans per day, one if there is assistance available, and one if there is not, as the high school did not notify the directors of the change of schedule until that day.

Scheduling can also have an effect on recruitment activities as expressed by Joe and Kyle. Kyle's planning period does not align well with the elementary schools' schedule, prohibiting him from being able to regularly visit to get and know the teachers or promote his ensemble with the students. Joe's administration will not allow him to leave the building during the day to travel to elementary schools and visit. Both directors feel as though the reduction in face time with elementary school students puts them at a disadvantage regarding band recruitment.

Elective offerings at each school differed greatly. Three participants' schools (Brent, Randy, and Kent) offered a small selection of courses such as PE, choir, band, general music, art, Future Farmers of America (FFA) or Agriculture, and a STEM-related class. Alex, Kyle, and Joe's schools offered the same selection but also presented courses in foreign language, career explorations, orchestra, guitar, game design, coding, mock trial, drama, graphic design, and life skills. Despite the drastic differences in the number of courses offered, the participants were thankful that their school systems allowed students to take a minimum of two electives, including a combination of band and choir. The participants believed the other elective teachers supported their programs. Elective offerings, as a whole, did not have a negative influence on the participants ability to recruit successfully.

Brent, however, explained that Virginia music teachers are in a distinct situation when it comes to elective choices, because PE and keyboard classes are mandated throughout the state. Beginning in sixth grade, every student is required to take both courses throughout the remainder of their public-school career. Brent expressed his disdain for the mandate stating, "What we are competing with in Virginia is the mandated

classes that take up the elective time slots…We are fighting that every day, I mean we're about one more mandated class away from arts being obliterated in Virginia." Thankfully, his students currently have two elective choices, so band is still an option for students.

Documentation and Communication

Participants used many forms of documentation and communication when advocating for their band programs. First, all six participants mentioned a form of documentation that is either sent home or filled out and collected by elementary teachers or guidance counselors for students to complete in order to express interest in joining band. Brent has a brochure he passes out during his recruitment tour that has a section for students to indicate their desire to join band, their top two instrument choices, and requires a signature from a parent or guardian. Kent sends a survey to the elementary music teachers, as the elementary school teachers are the "number one contact for the incoming sixth grade students." Elementary teachers are responsible for administering and collecting the surveys which indicate a student's interest in joining band. When Kent collects the documents, he gifts each teacher with a five-dollar Starbucks gift card as a token of his appreciation. Kent compiles the names collected from the survey and spends the summer calling each student and their families to answer any questions they may have regarding band participation. He says it is time consuming but well worth it as there is no substitute for human contact. Joe asks students to sign up on the spot during his instrument petting zoo event hosted during the school's elective fair. The compilation of names is then submitted to the guidance counselors to be enrolled in the course. The only

information sent home to families comes in the form of a band handbook administered to students at the start of the school year.

Half the participants used and advocated for the use of social media when contacting parents and students. Brent and Randy did not use those mediums, as their current methods remained successful. Joe expressed a desire to begin using school approved forms of social media to promote his program, however, communicating via social media platforms are not currently supported by his administration. Alex, Kent, and Kyle used diverse forms of social media approved by the school district to broadcast student and program achievements as well as important dates for concerts or fundraising projects. At the time of the study, Kyle was building a portfolio of concert recordings and pictures of band students on the band's Instagram page. The social media account is easily linked to the band's website for students to investigate the program before enrollment. Kyle suggested finding a parent who is willing [to do what?] and has the necessary equipment to photograph band events to ensure there is a large supply of media to use when advocating for band programs.

Kyle discussed multiple methods of communicating with students and families that revolved around the use of his band's newly developed website. In addition to any in-person recruitment events, Kyle developed and mailed a postcard to the home of each student currently enrolled in fifth grade. This postcard contained current pictures of band performances and trips, as well as a prominent picture of the band director. Along with generic "Join the Band" rhetoric, both sides of the postcard featured a QR code that when scanned takes the student directly to the frequently asked questions section of the band's website. Kyle prefers this information to be readily accessible and not on a paper

document that the student or parent could lose. Once on the website, families will notice that there is a "Join the Band" icon on every page. When a student selects this icon, they are redirected to a Google document allowing them to enroll in band for the next school year. Enrollment information is automatically generated into a document at his disposal, eliminating the need for a large paper trail or multiple email notifications.

Sources for Support

Participants offered their advice to new teachers for places to go for help when implementing recruitment practices in their own job. Specifically, the researcher wished to learn what resources were frequently used by participants during the planning phase while developing new recruitment events. All six participants admitted that their methods came from a "hodge podge" of resources including online research, and collegial help.

4.1.10 Collegial Help

When searching for resources to assist in developing recruitment events, participants often turned to colleagues or mentors. This was a tactic Alex employed frequently, as he wanted to know what the "best people are doing." Kent and Randy often turned to colleagues regarding recruitment. Randy urged young teachers to turn to fellow teachers and mentors when in need, wishing that he had done the same early in his career.

> When I was young, I was just cocky enough that I knew more than the old guys that I was the real deal, and that I was going to show them how to do it. It took me three years to realize, holy cow, there's just no replacement for experience, so I will go hunting for experience. (Randy)

Brent suggested that teachers create mentorships early in their career. The mentor(s) can be colleagues, directors met at professional development conferences, or former college professors. Brent knew the difficulties of being the only band director in a rural community and felt that these professional relationships helped combat the "isolation effect" common with rural directors. Kyle and Joe readily admitted to turning to fellow directors when in need, and often contacted former professors, college friends, or area teachers for help.

4.1.11 Multimedia Resources

Alex, Kent, and Kyle implement various forms of online research when looking to revamp recruitment events. Alex and Kent frequently reference the Midwest Clinic's website for recruitment inspiration. Kent searches the website for previous clinic presentations, looking at handouts and slides to gain ideas to improve improvement. Alex uses the website in a different way, isolating middle school band programs who are invited to perform at the clinic, then traveling to the specific band's website to gather information. Kyle simply searches the Internet to find articles and other sources that reference recruitment in hopes to gather helpful information for later use.

Kyle and Kent have used an online video series developed by Scott Lang called *Be A Part of The Band.* The series consists of a compilation of videos, sample handouts, and other items for band directors to modify and use in conjunction with other recruitment events. Kyle was encouraged to use the series in his previous position but hesitates to implement it at his current school as it is dated and "doesn't really relate to kids now."

Brent supplements ideas gained from talking with and observing colleagues with a book titled *Habits of a Successful Middle School Band,* by Scott Rush, Jeff Scott, Emily Wilkinson, and Tim Lautzenheiser. The text mentions several broad tactics involving recruitment, some of which Brent has found informative. Kent is on the opposite end of the spectrum, trading traditional text for a podcast titled *After Sectionals.* He listens to the podcast regularly as the resource discusses topics important to band directors' job requirements outside of the classroom.

COVID-19

The spring of the 2019–2020 school year changed in unprecedented ways due to the sudden presence of the novel coronavirus known as COVID-19. The disease spread quickly, requiring schools to close to in-person instruction around the middle of March. This sudden closure interfered with directors' intended recruitment events, prompting creative thinking among middle school band directors. Participants discussed the variety of ways they responded to the pandemic—they held virtual recruitment events, engaged in digital learning formats, and discussed additional considerations.

4.1.12   Virtual Recruitment Events

A majority of instruction implemented by schools during this time of closure occurred on-line. Directors had to adapt their instruction to meet the needs of the time, including how to digitalize their recruitment events. Alex typically hosts a pyramid concert with the orchestra, middle school band, and high school band every spring. A pyramid concert is typically a variety show style performance that features small ensembles (e.g.; clarinet choir or percussion ensemble) performing one right after the

other. This year's performance could not take place live, so Alex adapted and hosted a virtual Spring Showcase featuring original student compositions, solo and ensemble performances, student research presentations, student advocacy statements, and a senior spotlight.

Kyle, Joe, Kent, and Randy intended to create a recruitment video. Kyle was already in the process of creating a video featuring large ensemble performances, student-led instrument demonstrations, and interviews of current eighth-grade students discussing their favorite aspects of being a part of the band. Joe, Kent, and Randy are flexing their creative chops and plan to create a recruitment video in their individual homes, demonstrating instruments and answering frequently-asked questions about participation in band. These videos were intended to be shared on individual elementary school social media sites and/or shared by elementary school teachers on their individual Google classroom portals.

4.1.13   Digital Tools

The use of digital tools off during the school closure period as a result of the pandemic. For the purpose of this study, digital tools consist of websites, applications, and communication platforms used to contact, teach, and assess students. All directors expressed the need to utilize digital learning formats to implement instruction and to communicate with students during the separation period. Participants found themselves relying on various digital tools to contact families including social media such as Instagram and Twitter, e-mail, the schools one-call system, a program that allows an administrator to send an automated message to a large group within the student body via phone, the band website, and Remind-101, an application used by classroom teachers to

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easily contact families via text message without sharing personal phone numbers. Flip-Grid, and Smart Music and Google Classroom were digital tools directors mentioned implementing to instruct and assess students

4.1.14   Additional Considerations

When discussing teaching and recruiting in the COVID-19 world, the participants were beginning to re-think how recruitment should look in their programs in the future. Alex referenced the desire to change the timeline for recruitment in the future to include more activities in the fall. His school starts in late September and he intends to watch what directors are doing in August. Alex believes band recruitment will become a "twenty-four/seven, 365" process resulting in band directors actively recruiting students all year round, not just in the Spring. Brent considers himself lucky, as he was able to sneak his recruitment tour in right before the school closures. He is concerned that guidance counselors will "toss out" his recruitment numbers, though, as he is afraid administration will consider his recruitment efforts to be unequitable due to the fact that he was the only related arts teacher able to recruit before the COVID-19 closures.

All participants are concerned that virtual recruitment events will not reach all students, as many families in their community do not have the resources or availability to check in on-line. If the new recruitment techniques executed due to COVID-19 produce successful results, the participants agreed they would consider applying them again in the future. The participants believe that there is no suitable substitute for in-person recruitment events, as it is difficult to create and build relationships on-line or over the phone. Randy concludes it "is hard to replace one-on-one contact in a subject like band."

CHAPTER 5.   INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to discover recruitment methods used by band directors in rural Kentucky, West Virginia, and Virginia middle schools. In this instrumental multiple case study, the recruitment strategies implemented by middle school band directors in rural communities were investigated. Furthermore, the effects of factors within the school or community and the influence of the surrounding area were examined. Finally, the perceptions of the participants pertaining to the rationale behind a student's decision to enroll in band was discussed.

This instrumental multiple case study was designed to fill the gap in literature related to ensemble recruitment in rural areas. A series of interviews were conducted to gain an understanding of the four research questions:

1)   What strategies do middle school band directors use to attract students?

2)   To what extent do factors within the school or community influence the effectiveness of the recruitment methods used by middle school band directors?

3)   To what extent does the surrounding area/type of school have on the effectiveness of the recruitment method?

4)   Why do middle school band directors believe their students choose to join the ensemble?

The following discussion of results will align with each research question, then I will discuss the implications for music education and offer suggestions for future research.

Research Question 1: Recruitment Strategies

Research question one was "What strategies do middle school band directors use to attract students?" Middle school music educators in Kentucky, West Virginia, and Virginia successfully implemented several different recruitment events throughout the school year. Large events such as elementary school recruitment tours featuring performances by beginning bands, eighth-grade bands, middle school jazz bands, and high school marching bands and orientation events such as middle school elective fairs proved fruitful for the participants. While each participant expressed the importance of in-person elementary school performances, the reasoning supporting the decision of what ensemble (e.g., beginner vs. eighth grade vs. high school) differed. These events went above and beyond the use of recorders and demonstration methods outlined by Hoffer (1989).

Participants implemented various digital tools in their recruitment process such as posters featuring musician-athletes, postcards linking families with the band website, and demonstration videos to share with students. The use of websites and other online recruitment resources proved helpful in the process of fielding frequently-asked questions (e.g., the affordability of band, what to do about sports conflicts, or how to select an instrument), especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. This finding is supported by Bradley (1970), who suggested that the use of instructional media, such as film and recordings, could have a positive effect on student's intentions to enroll in band.

The participants used the success of the band program, especially the high school marching band, to their advantage during the recruitment process. Participants successful marching bands frequently travel to competitions throughout their states. Band was

presented as an elective that would offer students the eventual opportunity to travel the state and the country. Brent confirmed the attractiveness of travel in a rural setting, as "Kids around here don't get a lot of chances to travel, and they see the band traveling to different states or all around our state competing; they just love that opportunity to travel to get out." This revelation suggested that, perhaps, band directors are not the only members of the rural community who suffer from the feeling of isolation as described by Kuntzelman (2017).

McCarthy (1980), Klinedinst (1991), and Young (1971) supported the combined use of aptitude tests and student achievement rankings when identifying potential recruits. One participant heavily relied on a combination of aptitude test scores and student achievement scores in the form of math and language grades to determine student's potential success in the band program. However, Ford, Grantham, and Whiting (2008) cautioned over-reliance on forms of testing in determining a student's success, as the use of such tests could unintentionally seclude students of culturally different backgrounds from participating in the ensemble.

Research Question 2: Factors that Influence Recruitment Success

Research question two was "Are there factors within the school or community that have an influence on the effectiveness of the recruitment methods used by middle school band directors?" Prior researched revealed that many rural music educators consider involvement in the community to be an unofficial job expectation in addition to school responsibilities (Causby, 2019; Hunt, 2009; Isbell, 2005; VanDeusen, 2016). Factors that influence recruitment success include community and parental support,

support from the administration, and common misconceptions inferred by families that could deter student ensemble participation. Community and parental support were mentioned by participants 47 times throughout the interviews. The participants echoed VanDeusen's (2016) observation that directors must strive to maintain a positive perception of the school music program to maintain support from the community. It is these community events such as football games, parades, or Fourth of July concerts that solidify the ensembles' places in the community. When community and parental support is established, the bands success spread through word of mouth, allowing family support via participation from legacy students. If new to an area, time spent rebuilding bridges within the community could reduce the amount of time spent planning and implementing recruitment events.

Similar to community and parental support, the support from the administration was key in allowing participants to effectively recruit future band students. Guidance counselors worked hand-in-hand with band directors in forming rosters, setting schedules, and determining the yearly recruitment timeline. Participants suggested forming a relationship with administration early and providing a token of gratitude such as a simple lunch delivery or gift card.

On the other hand, participants shared that a lack of administrative support could inhibit the success of a school music program, which is corroborated by the literature (Causby, 2019; Hunt, 2009; Isbell, 2005; VanDeusen, 2016). For example, Joe's administration prohibited the implementation of commonly used recruitment methods and incorrectly assigned 30 incoming band students into other elective courses.

Another barrier to recruitment was the abundance of misconceptions revolving around band participation. For example, participants were frequently asked questions regarding instrument rental, travel expenses, and sports participation (i.e., if students can do both band and sports). Families often assumed that a student was not eligible to participate in an ensemble due to financial issues or conflicts with other activities. Relatedly, Corenblum and Marshall (1998) suggested that socio-economic status directly influences students' participation in instrumental ensembles due to participation fees, instrument rental and maintenance costs, and travel expenses, which include transportation to and from school as well as formal trips taken by the ensemble. Providing students and parents with information answering commonly-asked questions has the potential inform parents and encourage student enrollment. Kleindinst (1991) suggests providing students and parents with information about affordable instrument rentals and financial support could eliminate SES as a factor for student's decision to not enroll in band.

Research Question 3: Rural Influence on Recruitment Effectiveness

Research question three was "What kind of influence does the surrounding area/type of school have on the effectiveness of the recruitment method?" Directors in rural communities can be the only band director employed by their school district which was the case for two participants interviewed for this study. Following an internet search of middle school band programs in Lexington, KY, Charleston, WV, and Richmond, VA, it became evident that many urban public middle school band programs had a band director and an assistant director. As evident by the participants in this study, many rural

directors do not have assistants and are required to teach, plan, and recruit on their own. Therefore, recruitment events cannot be overly elaborate and must be an effective use of time. Two participants taught in two school buildings each day, increasing their workload and reducing time spent on other job responsibilities, such as recruiting. Due to the nature of a band director's schedule, time spent repairing instruments, communicating with parents, organizing fundraising events, and advocating for their program often occurs after school hours (VanDeusen, 2016). Having more than one director to share duties could allow directors to allocate more time and attention to recruitment preparation and planning.

Rural schools are often understaffed, resulting in the need for music teachers to help out in other areas like study hall and arts and humanities (Isbell, 2005). Kyle's colleague from the high school was often reassigned as an emergency substitute during the time typically spent assisting with beginning band. He found himself spending the time allocated for recruitment instead on planning or instrument repair. He often found himself creating two lesson plans; one plan where he could count on assistance from the high school band director, and another plan that does not include any assistance.

Rural communities tend to have strong values, and members of the community are expected to have good character and uphold those values. Brent believed that in rural communities, "people look at your character for your programs more than they do in any other place." Brent elaborated further, explaining that rural community members have a desire to know that an upstanding citizen is leading the band? program. Families want to know who their children are going to be spending so much time with and to know that they are in good hands. Brent decided to become involved heavily in the community by

helping plan city fundraisers and directing the choir at the local Methodist Church. He strongly believed that being involved in the community, meeting people, and creating relationships will allow a rural band program to flourish. He stated, "character is everything in the rural parts of Virginia."

When asked what advantages urban schools have regarding recruitment that rural schools lack participants referenced partnerships with professional musical groups and local universities. Five of the six participants location prohibits effective collaboration with professional organizations such as symphony orchestra's or musical theater groups. One participant, Kyle, has frequently contacted state universities within an hour of his community, asking them to come work with the band program. To this day he hasn't had an offer accepted due to the location and size of his community.

Research Question 4: Participants' Perceptions of Student Motivation

Research question four was "Why do middle school band directors believe their students choose to join the ensemble?" None of the participants provided a definitive answer to this question. They were collectively unsure of the deciding factor that ultimately influenced the student to enroll in the program. Participants believed the combination of familiarity with the director due to face to face interaction in the elementary school, the fun nature of the performances, and lack of elective conflict to all be contributing factors that lead to enrollment.

However, multiple motivating factors such as a program's success, peer support, and subject novelty were discussed by the participants. Participants agreed that a program's success, whether it be at the middle or high school level, attracted students to

participate in the program. All six directors referenced a student's desire to be a part of something successful, thus motivating a student to enroll in band. Peer support was referenced by three participants as a possible motivating force resulting in a student choosing to participate in band.

Subject novelty was the most surprising response derived from participant interviews. Alex believed students become attracted to band because "it presents an opportunity for a genuine community of learners… it's still a new challenge that is completely different from everything else that they have done before." Brent agreed, implying that students are attracted to the idea of learning something new. Kent elaborated further, explaining that band is the only aspect of public schooling that differs from their elementary experience—while students would have had music class before, the opportunity to choose and learn a band instrument was new.

The motivating factors listed above—peer support, novelty, and program success—reflect the research regarding intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, specifically Self-Determination Theory. These motivating factors reflect common forms of extrinsic motivation including introjected regulation and external regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Introjected regulation occurs when students join an ensemble due to pressure applied by peers or parents. External regulation occurs when students join an ensemble to participate in trips out of school or to have fun with friends (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Implications for Music Education and Music Teacher Education

This study revealed multiple implications for K-12 music education: the importance of face to face interactions with elementary schools, the necessity of attaining

and maintaining positive community and parent perception, maintaining consistent communication with families to answer commonly asked questions, and the importance of seeking help from peers and mentors when needed. Elementary school performances are a fun way to expose students to the many opportunities available through the middle school band program. Participants found success in increased face to face interaction with elementary school students. The familiarity between students and the band director builds a bridge of trust between the elementary school and middle school. This bridge of trust extends into the community, conveying the importance of community perception within a rural band program. School band programs in rural communities are expected to support community events such as parades, patriotic events, football games, and historical celebrations. This supports the research, asserting that community leaders expect rural programs to perform at local events, and parents of rural students strongly value the participation of local school programs supporting community events (Hunt, 2009).

Once positive community perception is attained, positive parent perception and support follows. Word of mouth travels quickly through a small town, and the reputation and values of a rural band director will be a topic discussed among families when weighing the decision to allow their child to enroll in band. Once you hook one child, you have hooked the entire family. Rural band directors rely on legacy students and families to support the band program.

Communication to families is key to answer frequently-asked questions and teachers can use a myriad of methods to do so: high-tech postcards, informative websites, and school-supported social media accounts. Teachers should use judgement when

deciding the best method of communicating to families and adapt the methods discussed in this study to fit their specific program.

During the school year teachers should seek help and guidance from peers, mentor teachers, and friends. Having a sounding board of trusted music educators and mentors to turn to is a tool that directors should turn to when seeking successful recruitment techniques in rural areas. Directors can utilize web resources such as conference websites and popular music education podcasts to further their education and stay on top of current trends involving recruitment.

Implications for music teacher education include: a focus on the recruitment process, holistic music education practice, fostering "soft skills", and digital tools for the post-pandemic music class.

Music teacher education programs should spend time in class discussing possible recruitment strategies and stressing the importance of recruitment for the success of the band program. Music programs who are not successful recruiting student participation run the risk of being de-funded entirely.

Many teacher education programs teach students to focus on their area of experience (e.g.; elementary, middle, or high school). A holistic approach to music education teaches future middle school ensemble educators the "bigger picture". A middle school ensemble director must be involved at the elementary school to foster relationships with the teachers and students to successfully recruit future musicians. A middle school ensemble director must also understand their role with the high school band program. Middle and high school directors should communicate needs and goals for the program and recruit students together.

Next, music teacher education programs should focus on developing "soft skills", teaching students the importance of building strong relationships with administrators, parents, and the community. The support from these institutions within the community is imperative to the success of the band program.

Finally, universities should include relevant music technology software now in use in public schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Preparing students to teach music digitally is now a necessary skill for future music educators.

Further Research

Future research is needed to determine if there are other successful recruitment techniques beyond elementary performances, instrument petting zoos, and orientation events. Replicating the study from an urban/suburban perspective could be helpful in identifying the core recruitment tactics which are successful in rural communities. It may also be beneficial to replicate the study to include rural orchestra and choral directors in efforts to locate what recruitment factors motivate rural middle school students to commit to a musical ensemble. Studies including interviews from current beginning band students within rural communities could further reinforce the body of research regarding rural band recruitment tactics. Including interviews by current students, parents, and administration could provide a more complete narrative when investigating recruitment tactics frequently implemented by rural directors.

Studies focusing on elementary music offerings such as choir, and orchestra programs and their effect on student enrollment in instrumental music ensembles could further contribute to this field of research. Lastly, research focusing on retention efforts

utilized by middle and high school band directors to bridge the gap between middle and high school are necessary. Continued focus on music education in rural communities is imperative to help foster the success of rural music educators.

Limitations of the Study

This study examines recruitment techniques successfully implemented by rural middle school band directors throughout the states of Kentucky, West Virginia, and Virginia. While this will provide useful information for rural instrumental teachers in Kentucky, West Virginia, Virginia and beyond, it cannot provide a complete picture on this subject. Replicating the study on a larger scale (i.e., interviewing more participants in rural communities throughout the country) could make the results more applicable to middle school directors. The researcher attempted to include participants of differing ages, educational experiences, and genders, however, invitations to participate in an interview were only accepted by male participants.

APPENDIX A. PERMISSION REQUEST

IRB Approval 8/3/2020 IRB # 59856 NMED

Dear Music Educator:
Researchers at the University of Kentucky are inviting you to take part in an interview for a study titled Perceptions of Kentucky Middle School Band Directors regarding student recruitment strategies: An instrumental case study. I am researching instrumental ensemble recruitment methods with the hopes of sharing successful practices with other music educators, and thus being able to share more music with more students.

Although you may not get personal benefit from taking part in this research study, your responses may help us understand more about the recruitment of students into instrumental music programs. Some volunteers experience satisfaction from knowing they have contributed to research that may possibly benefit others in the future.

The interview will take about 90 minutes to complete (in 3 parts, occurring on different days agreed upon by the researcher and the participant). There will be a total of 6 participants, and you have the right to skip any interview question for any reason if you wish. The interviews will be conducted via ZOOM. In order to gather information, the interview will take place at a later date to be determined. The interviews will be audio and video recorded in the zoom application in addition to field notes taken by the observer.

There are no known risks to participating in this study.

Your response to the interview will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law. When we write about the study you will not be identified. No names will appear or be used on research documents or be used in presentations or publications. The research team will take great care in removing any identifying verbiage from documents and will assign a pseudonym in the document.

Due to the use of Zoom for the interviews: Please be aware, while we make every effort to safeguard your data, the interview is being conducted via an online medium, as with anything involving the internet, we can never guarantee the confidentiality of the data while still on the company's servers, or while en route to either them or us. In addition to the online interviews, participants will also be asked to provide additional materials associated with band recruitment such as band handbooks. These documents will be provided by the participant.

Your information collected for this study will NOT be used or shared for future research studies, even if we remove the identifiable information like your name. Privacy is a great concern of mine. Research records will be retained for at least 6 years following the completion of the IRB approval period before being deleted. Your privacy will be

fervently protected at all times during the period of the study and thereafter. The study has been designed so there are no foreseeable risks or ill effects for the participants. However, you may discontinue the study at any time before or after the study has begun.

If you have questions about the study, please feel free to ask; my contact information is given below. If you have complaints, suggestions, or questions about your rights as a research volunteer, contact the staff in the University of Kentucky Office of Research Integrity at 859- 257-9428 or toll-free at 1-866-400-9428.

Thank you in advance for your assistance with this important project. I hope to complete the interview within the next two weeks. Please respond within the next few days as to schedule the interview.

Sincerely,

Kaitlin Callihan
Doctoral Student, Music, College of Fine Arts, University of Kentucky PHONE: 606-923-8240 E-MAIL: kaitlin.callihan@uky.edu

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Michael Hudson Music Education University of Kentucky Lexington, KY 859-218-1476 michael.hudson@uky.edu University of Kentucky Survey/Questionnaire Cover Letter Template [F1.0355]

Follow Up-Email:

Dear Middle School Band Director,

During the Month of July 2020, you have the opportunity to participate in a research study through the University of Kentucky. This letter will describe the study, provide contact information for any questions you may have, and give you the option of participating.

The study is entitled: Perceptions of Rural Middle School Band Directors regarding student recruitment strategies: an instrumental case study.

Understanding the phenomena of recruitment strategies of middle school band directors is the purpose and central focus of this study. This study will examine the perceptions of middle school band directors regarding the recruitment of students. Through an interview, effective recruitment strategies will be revealed.

In order to be eligible to participate in this study, you must be a middle school band director in a public Kentucky, West Virginia, or Virginia middle school with a minimum of three years teaching experience.

In order to gather information, the interview will take place at a later date to be determined. The interviews will be audio recorded in addition to field notes taken by the observer.

All data collected will be securely stored on a password-protected computer in a secure google drive file that only I can access. The information collected will be held with the greatest degree of confidentiality. At the conclusion of the study the results can be made available to you upon request. Privacy is a great concern of mine. After a period of no more than six years the information that has been gathered will be deleted. Your privacy will be fervently protected at all times during the period of the study and thereafter. The study has been designed so there are no foreseeable risks or ill effects for the participants. However, you may discontinue the study at any time before or after the study has begun.

The main benefit of this study will be to find out which recruitment strategies are most effective. Overall it is my hope that with better recruitment strategies the experiences of students and directors will be enhanced for the better.

Your involvement in this project is strictly voluntary. Please feel free to ask any questions of the researcher before signing this informed consent form and at any time before or during the study.

Principal Researcher: Kaitlin Callihan Music Education University of Kentucky
Lexington, KY 606-923-8240 Kaitlin.callihan@uky.edu

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Michael Hudson Music Education University of Kentucky Lexington, KY 859-218-1476 michael.hudson@uky.edu

APPENDIX B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Round One:
    1) To begin, I would like to get to know you and your program.
        a. Describe your teaching responsibilities.
        b. Do you team(co) teach?
        c. Describe the community (rural, urban, etc).
        d. School Size.
        e. Number of students enrolled in band.
        f. Other related arts/elective courses offered in your school.
    2) In your school, how are recruitment responsibilities delegated?
    3) Are they done as a related arts unit, or by specific related arts course?
    4) If you don't recruit with other related arts courses, how do they recruit? Or do they?
    5) What is the primary motivating force in your recruitment practices?
    6) Do you feel your job is at stake if you are not successful in recruiting a certain number of students?
    7) What is your recruitment goal? Your ideal number of incoming band students?
    8) Do you have a maximum number that you don't feel you can cross? A number of students your program would no longer be able to support?
    9) Do you feel your geographical location has an effect on your recruitment strategies? How so?
    10) If you lived in an urban area, what benefits/opportunities/resources in regard to recruitment would you believe to be at your disposal that you don't currently have access to?

Interview Round Two:
    1) How did you choose the specific events to implement?
        a. Self-generated
        b. Implemented and kept by the former band director
        c. Learned at a conference
        d. Learned by another source (book, research, podcast)
        e. Other
    2) Please describe your recruitment event(s).
    3) How successful are your recruitment events?
    4) Are there extraneous factors influencing the results of the recruitment events?
    5) Will you continue to use the same recruitment practices year after year? Why or why not?
    6) Are there other methods that you have considered doing/done in the past with varied levels of success?
    7) If you had to re-imagine your recruitment methods, where would you turn to for help/guidance?

Interview Round Three:

1) Why do you believe your students join band?
2) What is the primary motivating force behind students joining band?
3) Do you think that main motivating force has changed for students today versus the students you taught at the beginning of your career?
4) How have you adapted your recruitment practices/strategies over the years to meet the needs of today's students?
5) How has technology changed how you go about recruiting students?
6) It would be remis if I didn't mention the COVID-19 pandemic that is currently active in our lives. Schools are not in session; many bands didn't have a chance to go to state assessment, have a spring concert, or do any type of live elementary school tour. How are you recruiting this semester?
7) As of now, do you believe any of the changes made in your recruitment procedure due to COVID-19 remain a part of your yearly recruitment process?
8) Any remaining thoughts regarding recruitment that you would like to share?

APPENDIX C. INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Alex Interview:
K: Describe your teaching responsibilities, what do you do what's your day look like, the classes you have, that kind of thing.
A: I teach one section of 6th grade band that meets every day. I teach a section of 7th grade band that meets 3 days a week. We see all seven class periods on Monday for 45 minutes and then we have 2 90-minute blocks with every group as well. So, 7th and 8th grade both meet three times a week, one on Monday for 45 minutes and 90 minutes on Tuesday or Thursday. For 7th grade Wednesday Friday for eighth grade I'm assisted by Nick who is the high school band director. He teaches sixth grade with me and then I have an assistant who has serves as our percussion specialist and he teaches…also has a section of 6th grade band so I'm the lead teacher for that and he assists with things for each of the band classes and then I have two sections of Orchestra one beginning Orchestra section and one concert orchestra.
K: Awesome can you describe your community is it rural or urban or a mix?
A: It is pretty rural. We touch "central Virginia" County which is a very large Suburban School Division and the places that are closer to us remain pretty suburban and there are other places that are fairly rural.
K: So, you have that uniqueness of being semi close to an urban area, but still being kind of a rural County at heart.
A: Yes.
K. So can you tell me about your school size? I know in Kentucky we classify our schools 1A- 5a as far as high school size is concerned.
A- I would say 2A. So, they have about 1,400 students at the high school and we have a thousand students in Middle School.
K: And you're the only Middle School that feeds at High School?
A- Correct.
K: Ok, can you tell me how many students do you have enrolled in band overall?
A: About 280. Well, for middle school, 280.
K: Um, what other related arts classes are offered in your school?
A: Orchestra and chorus we have a music technology section.
K: I am assuming you have the typical gym those things too.
A: Yes, and we have a pretty large offering of CTE and Spanish and French.
K: OK. So, in your school how recruitment responsibilities delegated? Do you do it primarily yourself or does the high school director or assistant help you with that?
A: Yes. The way we handle recruitment has evolved a lot in the last couple of years. So, this is our second year in our new building prior to that nearly impossible to bring 5th grade students to the middle school because there wasn't enough space for the middle schoolers much less anyone else being in the building. About 4 years ago we realized the schools, we had a five-six Middle School which is really an upper elementary and a seven-eighth Junior High. When that was the case we still started band in 6th grade, but they were in the same building 5th and 6th graders were the same building. It was easier because they saw band every day, they rode the bus with them and everything. And now

with three K-5 elementary schools, it is a bit more of a challenge to organize some things, so we look at recruitment as an ongoing year-round activity in the fall. We have high school ensembles that go to perform for each elementary school and then as we get into the winter months the Middle School ensembles like the jazz band will go out to perform and, another thing about her schedule is we have an activity called tribe time. During tribe time I have two jazz bands that meet on alternating days and then I have a symphony orchestra and a select wind ensemble so each of those groups gets like one day of the week. And then for the symphony orchestra and wind ensemble, symphony orchestra is a second semester thing the wind ensemble is first semester class. Going back to recruitment, in January or February we bring all the 5th grade students to the Middle School from each of their individual elementary school's over the course of several days. during that time, we've connected it to a science standard of learning. The sound lessons that they are required to participate in. So, we are able to block that time as their science lesson for their day and their music resource time. So, we get about 2.5 hours with the students. At the middle school and during that time they have the opportunity to watch a performance by one of the orchestras, one of the bands and the chorus. We also talked to them about how the sounds are made so we do some demonstrations with mouthpieces, we do a couple of Music based science lessons like look at Boomwhackers and they have to kind of anticipate what the pitch is going to be based on some things with straws. So, they use straws and cut them and it's like this is exactly half the size of this, and this pitch is G, then this pitch will also be G, and it works very very well.

K: Okay so since you do both band and Orchestra, I am assuming you are in charge of recruiting for both?

A: Yes.

K: Do you also recruit hand-in-hand with the choir or is it more individually ensemble based? I know you said you share that performance when the 5th graders come to visit but other than that is it primarily just Orchestra does their thing and Band does their thing?

A: I take both at the same time because we allow students as 7th graders to take band and Orchestra, so if students are interested in one of those or the other we only start band for 6th grade. We don't have any other opportunities for students to join just based on the way our schedule works, so the goal is if you want to be in instrumental music, if you are thinking about band, you should take band in 6th grade. If you find that it doesn't work for you if it's not a good fit, then you can jump over and take orchestra and join the beginning Orchestra as a 7th grader.

K: So how, other than that 5th grade performance where they come to your school, how does the choir recruit or do they do much beyond that?

A: So, we have an elementary honor choir program with about 25 students from each of the elementary schools and they rehearse regularly throughout the year. They have a pretty strong, there isn't as much need for choral recruitment because they've been singing from kindergarten up. They do a pyramid concert for those kinds of things so they all get to see each other all the time. For the instrumental side of this, every year we do what's called "Virginia High School" Band Night. It's 6- 12 bands and this year we were going to do, it's a Michael story piece with recorder, what's it called….oh yeah *Ancient Voices* we are going to do that piece with the recorder ensemble students so they have the opportunity to play with band, watch the band rehearse, a more intimate

experience but then we got Coronad out of that. But we are looking for ways that we can connect with the students as often as possible as early as possible. Oh, on that Elementary Honor Choir event, the orchestra was going to accompany the choir on a piece for their March concert. Just so those kids that really do represent the strongest musicianship in their individual schools would have an opportunity to see and play, you know, perform with string players.

K: So as far as recruiting is concerned, what is the primary force motivating you to recruit?

A: My professional goal is to make as much music as accessible as possible for as many students as possible. If nothing else if I can't accomplish anything else I can provide them with experiences that I know have been beneficial for me then that's my top priority and everything else... we've been very fortunate that everything else just kind of falls into place. So, we generally get about a third of the grade level for beginning band, so that's the goal to make sure that we can maintain that number. And based on that, we've been able to grow the high school concert bands and the high school marching band and were able to expand course offerings at the high school based on starting about 90 ish between 90 and 100 students. That leads to sustainability at the high school.

K: You mention sustainability and being able to offer various courses, so do you feel like your job is at stake if you're not successful? Also, being an Administrator (Fine Arts Coordinator for the Division), do you see how other directors could feel that way?

A: Yes, I do see how teachers could and do feel that way. We are very fortunate. We offer unlimited number of year-long electives for 6th grade students, so you can be in band, orchestra, or choir as a year-long elective and then everything else is a semester elective. So that works out very well for us because, I've heard this from parents one, we want our kid to be a part of a music program, knowing we have strong elementary music teachers so that's helpful as well because the kids come in with a positive experience with music, so parents are generally interested in their kid being in a year-long elective, to try out one of the music classes, if it works, great, if it isn't for you and you try orchestra or choir, and it doesn't prevent them from doing anything else. Like we offer Foreign language for high school credit for 8th graders and that doesn't impact your ability to do that. So, kids can take language and take band or orchestra or choir and still be good to go for forever. I do understand the pressure of that, because within our program we have some folks who don't have a full-time, who don't have full course loads, that's kind of how my assistant position came to be. A percussion specialist who only taught percussion, His entire course load looks like one of my classes, or like half the size of one of my classes and that wasn't justifiable anymore. So, we were able to utilize the FTE funds to support what we have going on at the middle school and that's that worked out very well. I understand for folks who don't have a large pool to begin with, that when you start looking at course loads are below that of the average classroom teacher, it's hard to justify a full-time position. So I definitely, I've seen that before with colleagues, that's a situation I dealt with in my school division, once it gets below a regular classroom teachers course load, that's when classroom teachers after looking on saying, hey I could be a reading specialist position, that could be something to support this, we can make this one band director for middle school and high school, and if you're not able to justify with numbers know we've all had to play that game before we need this many students to get to this point. Like I was at 199 and the standards of quality for Virginia say 200 so it was

very close which helped to make that a compelling argument that I as an individual was teaching that many students, we can afford to move some things around so that we don't have to go over this state requirement.

K: That's awesome, so you mentioned that you shoot for around ninety to a hundred students in beginning band. Is there a number of students that you feel like you couldn't, like a maximum number you can't cross because you can't support them, whether it's with instruments or room size?

A: Several years ago, we were in the 120s and that was not sustainable for number of reasons. It's taken me quite a while to get to our current schedule of having 6th grade band meet every day. So, we have one 45 min class period that meets every day in our schedule and then 3 block classes in that day, so prior to that we had students, some met for 90 minutes every other day some met every day and it was a really inconsistent experience. Fortunately, I had my French horn players every day, because it's just a lot you need ear training they need time on task more than anything else so when we moved away from that schedule. They were to build a relationship with, with two people. And this is also before we have three people teaching beginning band. It was a lot of kids to sustain and the other part of this that I think was administratively difficult was 126 parents is 126 emails, it's 126 instruments to repair, it's a lot to maintain for anyone. If that were to happen again, and we're kind of on our student enrollment the students that are currently entering 6th grade are the students that were born during the Great Recession. So there, we're kind of in a little bit of a dip for right now with those grade levels. Now our elementary numbers are about to explode but for our current middle school population. We're on a little bit of a dip. Which still have this year we're going to have 99 beginning band students, 30 beginning orchestra students, 280 kids in that grade level, so we are doing really well. It's a number we've figured out how to manage. We can split the 6th grade into three sections of about 30. We can pull them apart and it's manageable. Those are class sizes.

K: So, do you feel your geographic location has an effect positively or negatively on your recruitment strategies?

A: It's very positive because we are able to foster a relationship with a Symphony Orchestra around 45 minutes away from our community. All of our 5th grade students go to see the Symphony in October every year which is great because we start recruiting right after that they know the instruments of the orchestra very well so we're able to program from the beginning of the year with their general music classes for getting them ready. Also, our location is about 45 minutes from Longwood and 45 min from VCU, so we often have folks out to work with the kids, so they have experiences that most students and other places might not necessarily have. I went to Longwood and then I went to VCU and so my teachers are coming out to work with my students so our 6th grade band students have a lot of folks that are working with them and they see College professors and College Band directors and they recognize them so over the course of the time that they are in band we have students that are graduating this year we're headed to Longwood who remember seeing Dr. Kinzer come in and work with them as 8th graders and now they're going to Longwood. That relationship between the two schools that I attended allows for folks to come in and for us to go to concerts when normally we try to go on a bus trip to Longwood or VCU every year.

K: I love that. So, you mentioned some benefits of your location as far as recruitment like Longwood and VCU and the Symphony. My question is if you lived in an urban area, what benefits or opportunities would you have that you don't have now?

A: One of the benefits that we have as well is that you know we're not far away from where people work. So, we have, at the high school, we have several really great folks for marching band instructional staff full-time jobs doing something else, but we don't have to worry about trying to figure out, you know, it's a 15-minute drive for them. I worked with I've been program in Mecklenburg County and he spent his time and energy and money getting people to come out to work band camp because he wasn't able to get anybody else at any other time. Or he might be able to get one person out to come one time since it's a pretty far drive from everywhere. 90 minutes from Raleigh and it's 90 minutes to 2 hours from Richmond so you might be able to get somebody to come out every now and then, so I understand that as a huge challenge. To also consider how far the students are traveling just to get there for after-school things too.

K: Awesome thank you!

K: So, the next section of questions has to do more with your actual recruitment strategies. I just would like to know how you generate these ideas that you have.

A: I try to figure out what the best people are doing and if it's applicable and I'll try to use it. So, I would say I can't pinpoint any individual or any individual circumstance where I learned what I currently use but I picked up a lot of stuff up along the way at conferences and listening to panel discussions and seeing what people do and asking questions. And I am in a unique situation because I went to this school as a kid, I grew up here and went to the schools here, so I have access to people and resources that others might not. The supervisor of human resources, used to be the sub coordinator and you know she's known me for a long time and I went to high school for son so I'm able to ask some questions of love her without having that way when I talk to someone, the superintendent, that I already have my ducks in a row. It's been really helpful. I'd say that probably the research I've done on my own about what other people do in the biggest influence for me so if I see a really great band program that's performing at Midwest I'm going to go look at their website and figure out how did they get here what are they doing right to get a bunch of kids in band, for some places 3500 kids in your high school that means it's a pretty large community especially if you if you narrow that feeder pattern down with how many student you should have the ratio, the numbers are working in your favor. But sometimes there are band programs in the middle of nowhere like, of the best programs in Virginia is Bassett and they are literally in the middle of nowhere it's not a wealthy community, but they believe, they've built the quality of the band to be such that people believe in it people keep want to be a part of it. It's a program to do things that are above and beyond what I think anyone would expect of a Southside Virginia economically disadvantaged place.

K: So, you've kind of giving me a rundown of your recruitment events do you feel that they are successful?

A: The only thing I do differently, so I started the Orchestra two years ago, I would really like to grow that program so that eventually it is sustainable by a full-time person with a full-time job who teaches all of that. We had some plans to do some things in the spring, kind of drawing some of the kids who are the elective wheel with the rotating semester courses because those teachers want the smallest classes. When you're teaching art or

French or whatever they're used to small classes. That works out well for both of us if I can pull some kids out of that pool into an instrumental Ensemble that works out well and for those events that we usually have, like our music technology class students have a piano lab with some composition and things like that so they play some pop songs in there and I've written some parts for the orchestra to play, and they go and play that with them, but that's normally the end of the semester and we won't be able to go this year. This year is kind of an anomaly but if I could do anything better It would be to recruit for the orchestra. The band program is strong and established and is very active in the community, so the goal would be to do the same thing for the orchestra.

K: Are there any extraneous factors affecting the results of your events?

A: The biggest misconception that students have is that they can't play sports and do band. We have like 25 Varsity athletes in the High School Band program, so we've been working on a strategic PR campaign for 5th graders with photos of students in their football uniform and holding a trumpet. It says, "you can do it all". So that's been a big thing. Another thing is we have a lot of folks who think that you have to do marching band because in 1989 in whatever town their mom was in you know if you were in high school band you had to be in marching band and that's not how we operate our program. Trying to help people see longitudinally yes, we want you to be in band classes and that is as much band as you want to do we've got it all for you. If you only want to be in the concert bands then take that, if you only want to be in jazz band as a high school student that's an option as well.

K: Are there other methods that you considered doing or have done in the past with very levels of success that you have done as far as recruitment?

A: No, I mean there's nothing that we tried that hasn't worked. There are some things we may try because they may work better in the future like I'm definitely going to spend more time in the first semester just visiting the elementary schools because there been years in the past where we got snowed out of every event. That wasn't the case this year we know the impact to our schedule is a little bit later so we had a stronger initial recruitment season but that follow up where we pick up maybe another 10 students. We're not going to have the opportunity for that so now we are kind of talking to the elementary teachers to figure out, you know look at this roster are there kids that you know should be in one of our programs that aren't in it right now. There are kids that feel academic pressure that if you don't take a foreign language as a middle school student that you're not going to graduate on time, and we have an advanced College Academy where students can graduate from high school with an associate degree and that schedule is very rigorous and very detailed for those students, so we've had to work on some things. As 5th graders telling them, kids have, I don't know if it's as much as the students for the parents have kind of planned out their lives already, something well my oldest child did this, they didn't do band, how does that work with the band schedule. Are they able to take band for you know all seven years do we need to look at this at the end of 8th grade? Are we not finishing the rental program or what do we do? Just trying to get ahead of those answers as soon as possible.

K: So, if you had to reimagine your recruitment methods such as maybe a covid-19 semester where would you look, turn to for help or guidance? Do you have any resources, podcasts, help from mentors, that kind of thing? Where would you go for help if you had to completely change everything you're doing overnight?

A: I would probably look to folks to start school earlier than us like people who start school in August because it is about this time of year there winding things down to be out in early May ,so what does your schedule of recruitment events look like? if they're starting earlier when do they come to have their cut-offs for like we need to know our schedules by this time, and then from there kind of taking what we currently do and just changing the pacing so that it's the best fit for getting things done earlier in the year or kind of speeding things up a little bit because we really depend heavily on the beginning of the second semester and sometimes that doesn't work out. So, if we start earlier and continue to refine recruitment as a 24/7 365 process, that would be our first step.

K: Why do you believe students join band?

A: In our community, because, the last 6 or 7 years have been very strong for the program and we do a really good job at making sure that it's in the newspaper that's on all forms of social media, it's a thing to do here. We're very fortunate that it's a destination for a lot of students that they want to be apart a band program that is successful that they see this as opportunity for them to maybe travel the country and internationally that they see this as an opportunity to learn an instrument, parents see it as a vehicle for students finding a community very early on and middle schoolers like they're going to they're going to be in a place where they're going to make friends they're going to have the same class with the same people every day. You're going to get that a teacher for 3 years so when our eighth-grade students talk to the 5th graders feel like these people around me or my best friend's I spend a whole bunch of time with them we go to Busch Gardens together and we eat lunch together every day. I didn't have any classes with the people from my elementary school and when I got into band I found new friends and I've been able to keep up with that

K: So, what do you think the primary motivating force behind students ultimately joining band is?

A: I think it presents a new opportunity for them in a way that chorus does not because they've already sung before. Their core classes are you know, and one of the things I talked to students about the first week of band is you guys don't remember how difficult it was to learn how to walk, or how to read, because those are things that are far behind you but now you're going to be able to remember the first time you have to do something what it's like to be a very beginner at something all over again but when you have that conversation it's like you've been reading and writing and doing math find forever this is something that's completely new to you and I think because students see the instruments played frequently and their schools and they go to the Symphony it's intriguing so there's a sense of novelty but there's also a genuine sense of interest in doing something that they've never done before.

K: OK. Do you think that the main motivating force has changed for students today versus the students you taught towards the beginning of your career or is it the same?

A: Kids are different, but I think that they still join band for the same reasons. That it presents an opportunity for a genuine community of learners that it's still a new challenge that is completely different from everything else that they have done before.

K: How has technology changed how you've gone about recruiting?

A: It has benefited our program because some of the technology classes that are offered are redundant for the kids, so they are like I can design a website or code, which is just

crazy to hear from a ten-year-old, but it makes us more intriguing. They don't know how to play the trumpet and they would like to know how to do that. We also were able to make videos for students and that becomes a thing that we share with the elementary music teachers, we have promotional videos or will videotape rehearsal and when they learn the instruments of the orchestra they see people that they're actually going to see again so you know my Wind Ensemble kids recorded the wind videos my orchestra kids recorded orchestra videos and then when the kids came to school their like you're the guy from the trumpet video so that creates a sense of connection earlier. we also have like we utilize social media for parents and so the school pto's all you know when we need to share information in the spring about what's coming up that school pto's are able to put that information out for us on Facebook and then they tag me in those conversation because Mom can be kind of catty sometimes so they're like well I didn't know about this, and I am able to respond directly and they're like Oh wow, that's great.

K: How are you planning to wrap up your recruitment semester (due to the disruption with the COVID-19 pandemic) or do you feel like because of what you've done early in the year that you're in good shape?

A: We are in better shape than I think we anticipated based on the size of the grade-level, so I'm pleased with where we are but it's not necessarily about the size of the band program as it is about offering the opportunity to as many people as possible. I'm sure they're kids out there who still are on the fence about something so we're going to utilize the digital learning formats that we have available to get more info out to folks, now that parents are at home all day making sure that we really hit up those avenues of direct school to parent communication so we can dispel some myths and then they're people who haven't moved into the community yet who would be doing their school registration and we would talk to them so just kind of staying on top of our school counseling departments saying hey if a student comes into our community can you please send me an email so that I know to make contact with them and we have a really strong relationship with the school counseling department. Like I buy them lunch counselors' week and that kind of stuff, so they know that we appreciate what they're doing, and they understand what it takes for us. Like it's I'm always thinking about recruitment and if students move in in august, I hang out in school counseling and I pick up those forms and I give them a call and I say hey, here are some things that could be interesting for you. Here is how our program could be different from where you may have been.

K: Excellent do you think that any of the changes made in your recruitment procedure due to covid-19 will remain a part of your yearly recruiting process?

A: I think more frequent and direct communication with parents earlier on is going to be helpful for us so right now what we've been doing is once we get our registration list, it's my next step is to contact the parents of the registration list. Right now, all of my communications go to every parent, which is great because it may save some souls that are lost right now and don't know what they want to do. You know maybe band or Orchestra could be the place for you. Something that I will definitely continue in the future making sure that all the communications at this stage every 5th grade family so that they know that we're still just because you didn't sign up in January doesn't mean you can't sign up now.

K: Okay any remaining thoughts regarding recruitment that you'd like to share a little nugget of wisdom for newer teachers or anyone new to recruitment?

A: I am in a unique position because I get that kind of tell our Elementary School teachers what they are going to be covering in general I think it's important to understand the feeder pattern and our three elementary schools have three very different cultures, so I communicate with that the music teacher and the principal about everything because principals don't like being blindsided. So, build those relationships and get the performers in front of the potential students as often as possible and as quickly as possible. It's been great for us we play our Veterans Day concert at our neighboring Elementary School, and all the kids see it in November and then we play my Orchestra does a halloweenish concert where they hand out candy in October. it's been good for my kids because it forces them to maintain the traditions, but it also means that we're directly in front of students when they're starting to think about the middle schools for real now which is different when you're in kindergarten when you go from kindergarten through fifth grade in the same building the reality that you're going to go somewhere else and do something different doesn't really settle in until 5th grade when it's like yeah, definitely not going to be here next year.

K: Excellent to the last little thing that I need from you is any documentation, anything you send out to parents, a band handbook that kind of thing. If you are willing to send me copies of those I would appreciate it! It was insightful to have someone who looks at things from two different lenses being more of an administrator and a teacher. You see things differently. You understand why things happen from the other side. Feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions.

Brent Interview:

K: So, the first few questions are kind of about your programming your teaching responsibilities to get a good snapshot of like what your day is so like, what classes do you teach, do you have more than one beginning band, that kind of thing.

B: So, I start the first half of the day with middle school. I have two 6th grade beginning classes alternate between a and b day, so like one day I'll have Woodwinds the next they'll have brass and percussion. The other class that day is either a 7th grade combined band or 8th grade band and then I go to the high school and teach a concert band.

K: So, you do it all. So that answers my question, you don't co-teach with anyone, it's just you.

B: Right.

K: Can you describe the community? Is it rural or Urban?

B: It's very rural.

K: Can you tell me a little bit about your school size?

B: My high school is a 2A and my middle schools probably a 1A. We only have about 400 kids, maybe three between 350 and 400 in the Middle School. Which is pretty typical for VA in rural areas, the schools are typically smaller than the urban areas.

K: Okay so what number of students do you have enrolled in middle school right now?

B: So right now, I have about between 75 and 80 from 6 through 8.

K: what other related arts or electives are offered in your school?

B: We have chorus and art. PE is mandated here so every student has to take it. You know the other Encore classes we have FFA or Agriculture and a technology class, required keyboard stuff.

K: So, they have to take PE both years?

B: All three years of middle school. Yeah that kinda hurt us. They're required all the way through high school.

K: So, since you are alone, this answers my question here but, in your school, how are responsibilities delegated? Do you come up with ideas yourself and do them yourself?

B: It's pretty much just myself. you know sometimes I'll have a music representative from music and arts or something like that and he will go out and help me. But most of the time it's just me. I get a lot of my ideas, they came from the book habits of a successful Middle School band director. I like that book.

K: That's my main go to book too. I actually got to see him do a conference at KMEA and he has some good ideas that are semi-relatable to multiple situations.

B: There is money to be made in someone who can write a recruiting handbook for rural communities. Seriously. Recruiting doesn't always work just because you worked hard at it! Because I've been at one school for so long, I've kinda learned things that didn't work specifically.

K: I'm so how many years have you been there?

B: 10

K: Okay so you've already kind of answered this recruitment is not done at the related arts, you do it by yourself.

B: Yeah, I do it by myself. I think it works best like that for me.

K: So, how does choir go about recruiting or do they do anything?

B: Uh, they do, everyone does something different. Some years they do a recruitment video, some years they do a concert, but everyone does something generally different.

K: Ok, do you feel like they're supportive of your program?

B: Mmhmm. Yeah, both of us are Longwood graduates, and she's a wonderful person and we work well together. We do all of our concerts together.

K: OK, so would you do if you had to pinpoint one thing that would be your primary motivating force in recruitment? What would that be?

B: The number one thing that works concretely for me in regard to recruiting is performing with kids that play instruments that are close in age to the kinds that I am recruiting. I used to recruit with my high school symphonic Wind Ensemble, you know, grade 5 bands, and they did not care at all but when I took current beginning bands to recruit, one year below them, it just exploded the growth.

K: Do you feel that your job is at stake if you don't increase numbers?

B: Absolutely. Numbers play a big, not a huge game but you've got to look, the community has to feel like they're investing in something that's successful.

K: So, what was your recruitment goal for this year like your ideal number of incoming band students?

B: 50 is my goal and right now we have 26 in one class and 22 in the other class, so you know pretty close.

K: Do you have a maximum number that you don't want to go over, a number you couldn't possibly support?

B: No, it's unlimited. It's a financial issue if we had too much because a lot of our instruments I've kind of just picked up from the flea market and stuff over the years and just kind of loan them out.

K: Do you feel your geographical location has an effect on recruitment strategies?

B: I think so. I think we are uniquely situated because we are close to Lynchburg. We are becoming the suburb growth out of the large city roughly 45 minutes away. I think our county... I really don't know how to say it. But I really enjoy the caliber of students we start with.

K: So, if you live in an urban area, what benefits or opportunities or resources in regard to recruitment do you think you would have at your disposal that you don't have now?

B: I think I'll be closer to you know the people of which I was trying to recruit. where in my County I'm the only band director for the entire County, sometimes I have to travel the world just to get instruments out to students, or whatnot. And I think it would be better because I may have a supervisor or a co-band director that I could work with and that could be great if they have the standard that I have, but it could also be bad if we didn't agree.

K: So how did you choose what recruitment practices to implement? Have you tweaked what has been going on before you, did you learn it from a conference or a book and you talked about habits of a successful band director book…

B: I get a lot of ideas from that book, but I also grew up with a band director father and you know a lot of the things he did to recruit I saw and learned along the way and I kinda did a lot of the same things that he did growing up. I got to see it. And you know when you go recruit is not about you know pulling off a Superior rating it's about do the kids enjoy what you're playing and is it fun.

K: Can you describe your recruiting events?

B: Yes, so I take all of my beginning band students over to the Elementary School and the entire 5th grade class comes in and I give them a concert. And then I pull specific instruments out and during the recruiting concert I let them hear what instrument that they want to play sounds like and what it looks like and we do little petting zoos where they can come up and touch it and get a chance to see what will fit them best.

K: As far as the process for signing up students for band, how does that look? Do you send anything home? Do you give it to the elementary teacher?

B: So I give each of them a folded brochure when they come in listing what our band program is all about, our accomplishments, where we travel, basically you know the gist of it because we treat our Band program as an entire 6 through 12 entity, and then the last three page booklet has a you know fill your name, the instrument you want to play, the secondary instrument you want to play if they're all full. It has a place for a parent signature and then they cut that out and send it to my guidance counselor.

K: And that's at your school, correct? The guidance counselor at your school. I will ask, if you are willing, if you could provide me with a copy of that brochure so I may include it in my appendix?

B: Yeah, it's at the school right now. The virus hit so quickly I wasn't even able to grab my computer and get it out of the building. As soon as they allow us back in I will send that to you.

K: Okay, so would you consider your recruitment events to be successful?

B: Yes.

K: Are there any like extraneous factors influencing the results of your recruitment events?

B: I used to think this is the competition and it's still like that a bit, but what we are competing with in VA is the mandated classes that take up the elective time slots. It's not

like a kid gets to pick band, it's not like Pepsi or Coke and there is nothing else because you have to take these classes so we're fighting. We are fighting that every day I mean we're about one more mandated class away from arts being obliterated in Virginia.

K: Wow I didn't know that.

B: It really is. It trickles up all the way through colleges and that's unfortunate too, if we have less numbers I have less kids that I can send to university programs.

K: Do you feel like you have kids to won't join because they think that they can't do band because of like sports or because they work on a farm and they just don't have time to do it?

B: So luckily, I guess I am lucky in my situation because I can relate to the Rednecks in my community. So, I played Sports and I currently farm and they, um I relate that all to them. the only thing that Sports you know causes them to not be you know a part of is the marching band, but we have four state champion football teams and my quarterback was also my lead snare drummer.

K: Right, your school shares. That's awesome. So, do you think you will continue to use the same recruitment events year for year?

B: That depends. If you get set in your ways that's when you're doomed to fail, my opinion. What I am, how I am recruiting now is vastly different from five years from now.

K: Are there other things that you might consider doing or done in the past with varying success that you would consider doing again?

B: Yeah, one thing we did one year was take the marching band and through the school at the elementary school just playing pep music. They really like that. Drumline is always something that kids really love unfortunately they don't want to hear the Hummel concerto on trumpet.

K: cool if you had to, let's pretend like you weren't proactive and did all this recruitment ahead of time and you have to completely re-imagined your recruitment methods where would you turn to for help or guidance?

B: I am uniquely, it's unique because I am in that situation with my marching band. I did my recruitment for 6th grade. I'll tell you what my plan is. So I am relying on community members I'm friends with a lot of the band parents and I am with a marching band I'm relying on leadership and we're going to do some type of online audition process for our marching band because unfortunately the county doesn't care say if we have the season opens tomorrow and we haven't been in school they still expect the band to be ready to go. that's crazy luckily and hopefully, hopefully they won't throw, because the other teachers did not get a chance to recruit hopefully they won't throw mine out with they may, but I feel very confident with 6th grade band but I am in that situation with marching band and I'm struggling to figure out what to do. Social media is kind of out, I keep getting hacked right now by lot of people but don't want kids on there and my district doesn't really approve of Facebook and you know

K: What advice do you give a younger teacher who is in the same situation you are in, who is the only band director in the school and maybe the whole county. What are some things they can do, where do they go to for help?

B: I'll recommend them finding a program of a successful or finding a director of a successful program and using them as a mentor throughout their career. I've done that and thus far and it's really beneficial. Most of my mentors are dying or retiring,..

K: Great. So, if you had to pick one reason why your students joined band what do you think it is?

B: I think they join band primarily because their friends are in it. I think that may sound silly but that is why I think they originally join band where I am. Secondarily they really do love the idea of learning a new, something new, music. You know lastly our program has been mildly successful and they see us in the newspaper and in the parades and they want to be a part of that. I also think that things like marching band or extracurricular trips, or things like that is a pretty big motivating force for students to join something like that. Where I am if we didn't have marching band I probably wouldn't have a band program. Kids around here don't get a lot of chances to travel, and they see the band traveling to different states or all around our state competing, they just love that opportunity to travel to get out.

K: Awesome so this goes back to something you were hinting at earlier do, you think that the main motivating force for students joining band has changed for students today versus the student career?

B: Yes, absolutely. we're in a completely different era of time and 10 years ago not a single middle school student I taught had a smartphone. As for today I would say 95% of my middle school students have smartphones. I'm not trying to sound old, you just have to differentiate some things because a lot of their world is instantly gratified now, you have to get them engaged super quick and they can't sit through an hour-long concert anymore at a very young level.

K: Awesome so how have you adapted your recruitment practices over the years to meet the needs of students today?

B: I have kind of turned it from all being a just a spectator sport concert to engage in the audience as 5th graders and getting them involved so we will play a third of the time and I'll play in 30 second increments, stop get a kid question, get them to come up and demonstrate and they feed off of that.

K: How has technology changed how you go about recruiting band students?

B: Well, it has, and it hasn't for me. at the end of the day I don't. I probably should be doing more with technology, but I haven't found anything that can replace the sound of a beautiful concert you know? I think I would implement more technology in an urban area where students all have school issued iPads or something. Spotty internet access out here in the county is an issue as well. With the current pandemic, we are dealing with students who don't have the technology to do their assignments. It has to be equitable. I would be more intrigued to start that if I knew they had the access.

K: So, let's pretend you didn't recruit at all and you got stuck with this COVID situation, how do you think you would go about doing it?

B: I would, as soon as we get back into the school I would start recruiting. I would go to every sixth-grade homeroom class and bring instruments and I would, I would make it happen. Basically, the same type of recruitment except it would happen at the middle school.

K: Do you believe the new methods and use of technology being used to recruit and contact students now will stick around in the future? Even if there isn't a pandemic?

B: I don't think so. Well, you know, I don't know. I think that if they find something that is better they may stick to that. It's just hard to replace the one on one contact with something like we teach.

K: Lastly do you have any remaining thoughts regarding Recruitment in Rural communities?

B: I would say in rural communities' people look at your character for your programs more than they do in any other place. If you're kind of a crappy person, and people know that, they're not going to let their kids be a part of your program. You don't have to go around politicking, kissing babies and what not but you do have to do some of that. People want to know you're an upstanding person before they let their kids go overnight on a trip and travel with the band hundreds of miles. I like to be involved in other organizations like I'm involved with fundraising for a hunting club and that includes 5000 people who come to our drawing every year for my County. I direct the choir at the local Methodist Church. You know, you just need to make your presence known and I feel like once the people get to know you, your program will really start to flourish, but you really can't be your character is everything in the rural parts of Virginia. I let the community know about our successes as well. If we win a competition, it'll be on the front page because everybody in our community reads the newspaper still.

K: So, you think Community perception has a lot to do with whether or not students are involved?

B: I do, Big time. Our football team for example, our coach is one of the strongest character persons that I have ever met. He has been there 6 years and won 4 state championships. People would do anything for him.

K: I look forward to seeing the artifacts you send me to look over and thank you for giving me your time!

Joe Interview:

K: The first question I have is to get to know you. Could you explain your teaching responsibilities during an average day?

J: So, an average day is I get to school around 8:00 from 8:30-9:00 I have something called Tribe time, where for 30 min. All the students at the school are either in enrichment or enhancement classes where if they are struggling in math, language, etc. they are in that. If they're not, they can choose to be in any elective such as game design, coding, choir, band, things like that. Last year my tribe time class was terrible. I tried to make it a second band and use it as my recruitment band to travel to the elementary schools, but it didn't work out. This year I was like I have a good number of percussionists and made that a percussion class. For the first 9 weeks we had percussion and that has slowly evolved to a bucket drumming class full of bucket drumming concerts and whatnot. It was so much fun. We did solos on pots and pans and the kids loved it and the audience loved it too. I felt really good about that. From 10:00-3:30 I teach just band and that's it. I have two beginning band classes, and then I have a concert band and symphonic band which are both mixed 7th and 8th. Concert band is split by instrumentation and so is the beginning band. That's how my day goes. In the fall on Thursdays I go to the high school and help teach marching band and Fridays are football/Saturdays are competitions. It's an assistant coach stipend to help out with all of that.

K: Do you team/co teach during the day?

J: Last year the way our schedules worked she was able to come every day either at the beginning or end of the day. This year they changed our schedules and made her teach a credit recovery class, so she has to babysit kids during the time she would normally come

to my class. We were so mad! We told the admin that this was going to greatly negatively affect the growth we made last year. They tried to help, but it was way too late. This year I was all by myself which has been fine, with it being my second year at this school I've been able to see what I need to work on and have been able to not just rely on my colleagues.

K: So, can you describe your community? Are you rural or urban?

J: Rural, for sure. I was shocked. I am from suburban Georgia and then I moved to Lexington and thought it was small, and then I went out into the state in college and was like wow, this is all just cows and horse farms. I don't even know what the main source of income in my community is, probably the school and the hospital, and maybe Walmart.

K: So, what is your school size?

J: 5A, because of how many people are at the high school. This is a new increase, we have typically been 4A. 1100 students at the middle school alone.

K: How many students are enrolled in band at your school?

J: This year I have 151 students.

K: So, you mentioned that there are other related arts electives offered. What are they?

J: Game design, French, choir, coding, PE, we also have a big co-curricular area consisting of choir, orchestra, music, band, art, FFA, mock trial, drama, and a hand full of other electives that some students can take like astronomy and graphic design, career explorations, life skills, I think that's it.

K: Wow that's a lot! OK, so in your school how are recruitment responsibilities delegated?

J: Like in what aspect?

K: Planning and implementation. Who is in charge?

J: I would say at each level it is mostly me. Some of the other music teachers will be like if you don't join choir or orchestra check out band…. ya know? So, we are all very supportive and I have a lot of students that do both choir or orchestra and band as well. Where we lose people is that if they do two music classes they can't do another elective. Eventually they choose one or the other to take another class. At the end of the day I try to make sure they are doing something in music and not necessarily does it have to be with me. I had a great 7th grader last year who was incredible. She told me she was going to quit band which crushed me. I asked why, and she was like it's just not for me. I tried to convince her for like a month and she didn't budge. She joined choir instead and made all state singing which made me feel better. I do most of the planning and implementation myself. Our principal doesn't really let us take class time to allow for students out for recruitment. We can't even go around to the classes to ask students to join band. The dynamic from administration is not great.

K: You don't really recruit with other RA classes right? But that support is there.

J: Absolutely. There is a day where 6th graders come to the middle school and the school sets up booths and students get a chance to see what elective activities are available. I allow students to try instruments and I use 8th graders to help me and talk to the kids who are interested. That is our one main thing that we are allowed to do. I say go check out orchestra and choir and then come back and sign up for my class.

K: What is the primary motivating force in your recruitment practices?

J: I don't wanna toot my own horn but I'm gonna toot my own horn. I think last year I tried to get to know as many students as I could, especially the 6th graders because in our school you can also join the beginning band in 7th grade. I tried like I got involved with people, I got involved with other programs, I would do random class visits, and say hello and see some of my students and I think the word of mouth of Oh...Mr. Sells is fun. You have a fun time in his class, or you know he is funny and that's my favorite class. A lot of time that word of mouth to other students "ooh I wanna join, I wanna see what it's about" I think it all starts for me with the relationship you build with the students and that word of mouth travels. That's been the best way for me to be able to get people and have those connections. Kids I don't know greet me in the hallway because they've heard about my class and are intrigued. I would always love to do more. There were a handful of students who signed up on the interest form for band and they show up on the first day of 6th grade and I actually had a whole bunch of students sign up for band that didn't get band this year. Probably 30 students that wanted to do band did not get band this year. I could have had 180 middle school band students, but they decided to put them in other classes and I about had it. I was so mad! It was so, they gave them their schedules at a 'camp' day, so I went to all the classrooms and asked who signed up for band and realized several students were left off the band schedule. That day I found out there were 30 people who signed up and didn't get it. I emailed guidance and they said it was in their top 3, but we chose others for them to fill out the schedule. Shocked me. I think it was because I split up my concert band class into two class periods, because I had 3 beginning band classes last year, so that change messed up the schedule. The 7th graders needed to be separated though, and then the 6th grade class size was reduced greatly. Went from 89 to 50. I was mad and couldn't do anything because they weren't going to change anything. Did I answer your question?

K: Yes, thank you. Do you feel that your job is at stake if you don't recruit a certain number of students?

J: No, not yet anyway. If we have a concert in the fall and spring and get good assessment scores they're pretty happy with me.

K: OK, the next question is what is your goal for recruitment? A number of students?

J: 60. If I can get 60 people in chairs I would feel very successful. If I kept 40 of them through 8th grade and they continued into high school that would result in 160 in the high school band over time. It would be really good for our area to have a band that size in high school, we could actually compete with bands in our classification at that point if funding increased as well.

K: Is there a max number you couldn't support?

J: 100. We don't have the room or the chairs.

K: So, do you feel your geographical location has a positive or negative effect on your recruitment process?

J: Negative for sure. I think a lot of times in the urban suburban communities there is more parent involvement and influence. Parents advocating for their child's success. I mean I have a good number of parents who want their child to succeed but I would say the majority is like you know, kids go to school, kids come back home, great.

K: If you lived and taught in an urban area, what benefits, opportunities, or resources would be at your disposal that you don't currently have?

J: I think it's all about your administration. If your admin lets you recruit, if they let you be successful then it would happen. It is also about that and your hard work. The additional assistant directors and possible funding that comes from an urban school doesn't hurt, but I've also seen lazy directors in urban areas that are not successful and don't have as many students. It's not always location, it's a fact of I think I could get a lot more students if my admin let me go to elementary schools and they don't let me. That was the tricky thing that happened with the tribe time. I could not travel with them and present something. They don't want to allow anything to interfere with core instruction, but those teachers just sit their kids in front of a computer and definitely don't teach bell to bell.

K: Do you think having documentation or research showing that elementary school tours are effective in recruiting would help?

J: Oh yes, definitely. Thankfully this is her last year. She is retiring. So maybe there is hope for next year. I think too, if there was an opportunity for all the music classes to just one day go to the elementary schools all together, bring a handful of students and make a presentation, is that really going to cause so much harm? But also, it advocates music in schools and it advocates like this is such a cool and positive thing that a lot of people should be involved in. So, yea, I think it would help if she would actually read it but who knows if she would. I doubt it.

K: As far as recruitment events that you do, that are allowed, how did you create/choose those specific events? At a conference, podcast, book, friend?

J: The big thing that we do is that one night where students come to the school and come to my booth with instruments and try them. There would be a lot more things that I would want to do. We attempted an ice cream social, the high school director helped with that too, we do 8th grade night at the high school but that is recruitment for high school band not necessarily beginning band. Kids go to the games and say hello, the marching band is a huge recruitment ensemble as everyone goes to the games and parades, so we are very visible at those events. We've mostly been doing what was done here before since we are so restricted. Word of mouth is also huge in a community like this. It's frustrating. I have a lot of students who use sports participation as an excuse to not do band. I wanted to take a picture of all my students in their athletic attire holding their band instrument. Make a giant poster to hang around school that says "Just because you're in sports doesn't mean you can't be in band" or something like that to get people's attention. There are probably 40-50 students who are in athletics. It's all about the sports ball here. Growing up where I did I had no idea places like this existed. I didn't realize how lucky my band experience was structured. I came here and was just shocked.

K: OK. Is that basically all you do for your recruitment events?

J: Yes, I'll let you know if I forgot any.

K: How successful would you say your recruitment events are?

J: I would say fairly successful. A lot of times people don't understand what band is. The opportunities that arise from it. The excitement and joy from a kid making a small little sound on an instrument mouthpiece or segment of the instrument gets them really excited about it. Kids who haven't even thought about doing band see that they can be successful right off the bat by making a noise. Your reaction to the experience is huge too. I always freak out and make a huge deal about it. That's what gets them involved. I would say from the people that attend that fair and try instruments, a lot of them were like yeah, I

never even thought about doing band. By the end of talking with them and they experience 8th graders and try instruments they think it's the coolest thing ever. I say that to my principal and I say that to my administration if you just give me a minute with some students I'll have them out of whatever the electives that you just drop them in and I'll put them in mine. I don't care. Give me more students. I beg for more students.

We have a lot of what I call legacy students who are younger siblings or children of someone who was in band at my school. We count on the younger siblings of our current students to join the band as well. I try to make that connection when they visit the building for concerts and whatnot and I try to make them feel like a really big deal. They are also influenced by their older siblings, getting to see how much fun they are having, learning a new instrument, making new friends and things. These kids are also typically my better students because they know what they're in for and their parents understand what's expected as well. I feel like legacy students are a prime characteristic of a rural band program. It takes the whole family to get the program going. It takes the village, literally.

K: So, you've mentioned some of these, but are there extraneous factors affecting the results of your recruitment events?

J: Yeah, administration is number one. My principal is quite mean. If you're not getting the heat, someone else is getting the heat. I've never worked for someone who at first, I thought oh this should be fun and then immediately I was just thrown a curveball. Everyone at the school is on edge around her. There is a different feel to the school when she isn't in the building. It's like the reign of terror is gone. She is my main road block.

K: Let's pretend you get a new admin next year, a more accepting supportive admin, will you continue to use the same recruitment practices, or will you change it up?

J: 100% no. I will extend them and do more. Without a doubt. There is so much more that I could do that I want to do but can't like collaborative music events with the elementary schools, inviting and being able to collaborate with the elementary schools. Visiting them during their school day in their music classes. Bring an instrument or a couple students with me, having an info session in some sort of area where I can bring students up in front of their whole grade while they're playing an instrument and have them go nuts for each other. Giving information out to them. I would love to do more activities outside of school. I would love to plan a band social like an ice cream social just with middle school band kids and interested 5th graders. I feel like there is a lot more I could do, like I would like to personally try kids on their instruments over the summer or after school to get them excited and ready to play an instrument that fits their need on day one, not three weeks into the semester. That way nervous students could just be with me and their parents and not have to play in front of everyone if they are nervous. I think the idea of having to play alone at the beginning just to choose an instrument keeps students away that may otherwise join. My principal won't let me work over the summer though, so that idea was shot down. We also don't get our rosters until 5 days before school starts. My principal and our guidance team wouldn't let me see who was signed up earlier than that, so I could plan and contact parents, etc. 30 kids were registered for the wrong class. This could have been avoided when there was time to fix it, not during crunch time right before school started. I was livid. Why do I provide them with the students divided into their specific classes and then mix it up without contacting me? I think the best situation

to have is a guidance team who participated in band and understood how the classes function. Thing that gets me is my principal was in band and she still isn't supportive of our program.

K: If you had to reimagine your recruitment methods, where would you look for ideas? Podcasts? Colleagues/mentors? Books? Conferences?

J: I totally turn to other band directors and mentors that I have, which include former professors. I think getting more students involved in social media would be helpful, but the area you are in influences how successful that would be. You have to accommodate to your area. What works here probably wouldn't work in Louisville or Lexington. I don't think a cow petting zoo would work in downtown Louisville but would be a huge hit here! I have students who show and sell cows.

Side story: I have a student who was a "showgirl" for cows. She is the Vanna White of cow sales events. She sold a calf and was super excited to tell me she sold it to buy a soprano saxophone with the funds she got for her prize calf. You can't tell me that happens everywhere. I have a couple students who quit because they can't keep up with band and the horse farm where their family lives and works. They can't take care of the farm or take care of cattle and do all the other sports they have to do because that is valued more in their family. It's unfortunate. I have one student who plays softball, basketball, volleyball, on track and field, and is in the band. She is going to have to make a choice one day and I will be surprised if she chooses us, but hopefully she will choose band. Our schools tend to be smaller than the larger urban schools and they have more people and don't have to share students among all the activities like we do.

K: Why do you believe that your students join band?

J: Hmm...my students…. they join band because I trick them into doing it. It sounds bad but it's true. I think when I get them in the classroom they will get it and understand how much fun making music is. All the things about the band that makes it so much to be a part of. I just have to get them in the room, and sometimes I have to sell it to them or "trick" them into getting there. I think the reason they are in the band now is because they like me, I'm fun, and they enjoy playing their instrument. The opportunities I am giving them like the drum bucket class, things like that, district honor band, solos and ensembles, they love doing that kind of thing. It gets them out of class, they get to travel with their friends, make memories, and make good music with other kids their age. How cool is that? Participation in solos and ensembles and district band also grew based off of how I sold the experience to them. Before they just saw it as it as something they had to audition for. Once I told them about traveling, staying overnight, eating pizza together, putting on a concert in just three days, they were stoked, and participation grew from 10 kids auditioning and 6 getting accepted to 40 kids auditioning and 25 getting accepted.

K: You haven't been teaching as long as some of my other participants, so this next question asking if the main motivating force behind students joining band has changed compared to when you started teaching doesn't really apply to you. Do you think the motivation to join band has changed since you were in middle school making the same decision?

J: Well, I was one of those legacy students we were talking about earlier. That's why I was there. Which hasn't changed much over the years.

K: How has technology affected how you may recruit in the future?

J: I use a lot of google forms. I would love to be more active on social media which isn't much of an option at my school. Everything we do has to be approved, so I couldn't post on the middle school page who was accepted to the district band for instance, without getting permission. Recently, recently I made a tik tok that students can see, and I do goofy videos relating to band which they really think are cool. Kids want to see personalities, that we are relatable and a real human who understands their world. Technology can bridge that gap. It also helps that I am the youngest full-time teacher at our school. I get added cool points due to that.

K: Due to the changes in schools due to COVID-19, how do you plan to recruit for next year?

J: I think bands across the world are going to struggle next year in all ways. How will I recruit? I have no idea. I will be using the reminder app more, asking principals to pass along information to their students, and do neighborhood drives by promoting bands. It's difficult to have that personal connection when it's all online or over the phone. I will probably make a fun promotional video, but it won't have that student element that I think attracts the students.

K: Well, that's all my questions. Thank you for being so giving with your time.

Kent Interview:

K: So, to start, I would just like to know what's your typical day looks like? What classes do you teach, that sort of thing?

Ke: We have a 6-period day with one planning period. I have two 6th grade bands that are just split randomly because we don't know what instrument they're going to play. I have two 7th grade band classes which I am fortunate in that they work with me to split them woodwinds and brass There is a bit of percussion in each one. I then have one 8th grade band class currently.

K: So, no general music or anything like that.

Ke: No. When I first started I did but the band grew so much over two or three years and it got phased out.

K: OK. DO you team or co-teach throughout the day?

Ke: I do not. I do have a random student teacher that will be placed with me but not anyone from the district.

K: Can you describe the community? Rural or urban?

Ke: Rural with a small "downtown" area. My school is in the heart of the "downtown" area. I can look out the window of my room and see the main street of our town.

K: So as far as the district is concerned, I'm unfamiliar, are your students pulled from that town area or do you get the very rural county kids too?

Ke: It used to be that way but since they built a new middle school I get a little of both. More county kids than "town" kids. We had a great superintendent who said OK we are going to try to make the middle schools as equitable as we can. We have a combo of county students that are bussed in with the "town" students.

K: So, I know the high school is 5A. How many students attend your middle school?

Ke: We have around 600 students right now.

K: There are three middle schools in the county correct?

Ke: For the northern part of the county correct. The other county high school has two middle schools. There is also a prep lab school at the local university.

K: OK thank you. Between 6-8th grade band this past year, how many students were enrolled in the band?

Ke: About 210.

K: What other related arts or elective courses are offered at your school?

Ke: At my school we offer gym, we have choir, and the choir teacher does a few classes of general music. We have art, and we have STEM class and I believe that is it.

K: If you are enrolled in band can you take other electives as well?

Ke: Yes, we used to be in a situation where you could only take band. My new principal is amazing, and she wanted the band to grow so she changed our schedule to a 7-period day, so they can have two related arts classes. Band and chorus are all year long and then their other RA class rotates every 9 weeks. It messes up gym and art and STEM classes because we don't have enough teachers for them to rotate every 9 weeks so sometimes kids re-take those classes rotating through and it makes it difficult. I think it's apples and oranges when it comes to fairness to the band and choir kids.

K: For your school, how are recruitment responsibilities delegated?

Ke: It's just me. I do all of it by myself.

K: Do you recruit as a RA unit? Do you recruit with choir or is just band alone?

Ke: Just band alone.

K: What kind of recruitment events does the choir do?

Ke: I'm not going to throw her under the bus a lot, but she doesn't do a whole lot. She waits until school is getting ready to start back up and she will go to this pre-school thing and she will talk to the kids then and see who wants to be in choir and that's really about it. She is getting ready to retire, kinda towards the end.

K: What is the primary motivating force behind why you recruit actively for your program?

Ke: Two things for me is when I started I realized how hard it was to actually teach general music and band and to have a successful band at the same time. Having 6 preps a day, because my three general music classes didn't do the same thing nor did my band classes. The high school director told me that if I didn't want to teach general music any more that I needed to make the band bigger, so I couldn't teach it. It worked. There are so many kids in the seats there is no way for me to teach GM anymore. The second guiding principle for me, because I do feed the high school and they are so successful, there is a bit of pressure, quite a bit of pressure to have numbers, have students, and have students that play at the level that's expected at the high school because you want them to continue to be successful.

K: Do you feel like your job is at stake if you don't recruit a certain number of students?

Ke: mmm...no. Probably not here. My county is super supportive of the arts here. I do see how others feel that way and I know many colleagues who have been put in that situation.

K: What is your ideal number of incoming band students for 6th grade?

Ke: 80 is my ideal number. I have two classes which would let me split them 40 and 40. I've started up to 110 and sometimes when it gets that big I have a hard time getting students instruments.

K: You answered my next question!

Ke: My room is not the problem, I can cram a ton of kids in the room. It's really the lack of instruments that I get caught up with.

K: Do you feel like your geographical location has an effect on your recruitment strategies?

Ke: It hasn't affected me that much here due to the success of the high school. Parents are familiar with the program from football or the reading about it in the paper. It is a very positive thing that they want their kids to be involved in. Realistically too, the longer that I have been here I'm starting to have younger siblings or friends of families that I've had where parents are talking about me and they say, "Oh you have to have your kid in this program because he's great, it's a good thing" That legacy student is a huge part of the growth and success of our program.

K: If you lived in an urban area what opportunities or resources do you think you would have as far as recruitment that you don't think you have now?

Ke: I've never really looked at it that way. Everyone thinks an urban school is the mecca for bands in this state. I've never really looked at it as what they have that I don't have other than number of teachers. That is huge. There are multiple directors at each school that can tackle recruiting where here it is just me. They may also have more funding than our schools but that is purely speculation. I spend so much of my time fundraising that I feel like other activities get pushed to the back burner and at times that includes organizing a more elaborate recruitment event.

K: So, the next section of questions is specifically about the actual recruitment process. Let's start with how you came around to choosing the events you use while recruiting. Did you generate these events/documents yourself, are you adapting what occurred before you taught at the school? Did you learn any ideas from a conference, book, or podcast?

Ke: The longer I've taught my recruitment has evolved. I believe there is no substitute for human contact. For me, the number one thing that I try to do is first establish a positive relationship with the elementary music teachers and the fifth-grade teachers at the elementary schools. They are the number one contact with the students while they are in fifth grade. They're the ones who hand out papers for you and help get information to parents while they are still at the elementary school. Sometimes if I am collecting forms like interest forms, I'll ask the fifth-grade teachers to hand those out for me and collect them back. When I go back to pick them up I usually take them a $5 Starbucks gift card or something like that just to say I appreciate you doing this for me. The end of the school year gets busy. It's really involved. Then the next step would be to have your program visible in the elementary schools. I try to take at least the 8th grade band over and do one program like maybe not necessarily a recruiting program but like we play in their veteran's day ceremony. They have some type of real music other than a recorded track. We have also done a Halloween program or holiday program. I also do a recruiting concert where we go and play music that the kids will enjoy like baby shark or some type of pop tune like we did Taylor Swift *Shake it off* or *Uptown Funk* by Bruno Mars. They get super excited when they hear music they are familiar with. Even the teachers get excited when watching.

K: Is that recruitment concert, are there any hands-on aspects of the program?

Ke: Depends year to year based on the school schedule, with everything going on we just want you to come in and play and leave Sometimes they may say we want you to come in and play and do like an instrument demo or petting zoo type thing and I break it down a little bit more from there. I may have kids individually play for students. Luckily my

elementary school feeders are all very supportive of the program and assist in encouraging students to join the band. They want the kids to be involved in something. They realize that we don't have strings, and they do realize that we have choir, but students can do both so there isn't any pressure there. They do let me know if a student is gifted either in instrumental music or a gifted vocalist. Here is the one kicker of our schedule, if they choose band and choir then they don't get another elective class. They can do both, but they are locked into two yearlong electives. That's where the choir director and I have to be in communication with each other.

K: How successful do you consider your recruitment events to be?

Ke: I would say for me it was very successful. Because I typically start between 80 and 100 students each year in 6th grade.

K: Do you think there are any extraneous factors that influence those results?

Ke: It kind of turns into a pain in the butt over the summer, but once I get, I always do interest forms and I have like a basic list. Ok if you're interested in band put your name down here. When the names roll over into infinite campus the guidance counselor prints me phone numbers and I call them over the summer and I always am so glad that I do that because the parents will say "well they play football so they don't have time for this" and I can say well actually at our school it's all during the school day and we only have 4 concerts a year. I have a lot of parents tell me it's too expensive, we can't afford an instrument. I can tell them we can provide an instrument for them if they really need it. They have no idea that's an option. Calling parents is huge. It is time consuming but well worth it.

K: are there other methods of recruitment that you have done with varying levels of success in the past?

Ke: Instrument fittings and things like that don't really work here. I got really fancy a couple of years and set up an instrument fitting night at my school. A one call and letters were sent home and only 5-10 students showed up. That process did not work here. I'm not sure why. I guess it's just too specific and too early in the process at that point.

K: Will you continue using the same recruitment practices year after year?

Ke: Probably, yes.

K: Let's say tomorrow your admin says you are no longer allowed to travel to elementary school feeders and you have to reimagine your recruitment practices. Where would you turn for help and guidance?

Ke: Probably after sectionals podcast, colleagues for sure, there is a be a part of the band series by Scott Lang that I could send out. It's a bit dated, but then I would go to the Midwest conference website and look for past sessions on recruiting and retention and see if anything works for us.

K: So why do you believe that your students decide to join your program?

Ke: I think they hear when you pick the right music and you play it for them it seems fun and exciting. Community perception and word of mouth, legacy students, those things all encourage family and students to encourage participation in the band. I think they want to learn an instrument just by hearing that stuff. Really, I just think that's the basic reason. Peer influence is key as well. My friend signed up, so I will too. That kind of thing.

K: OK. What do you think is the primary motivating force behind students ultimately joining band?

Ke: I think at the age they are in 5th grade, when you expose them to something that is that new in that form they get excited about it. It is finally something new from their experience in elementary school.

K: Do you think the motivating force has changed for students today versus the students you taught at the beginning of your career?

Ke: Probably not. They have access to more technology, so I could probably start incorporating more of that kind of stuff.

K: Elaborate more on that. It's my next question.

Ke: Versus when I started teaching, now every kid has a cell phone almost. I've even got kids starting to have smart watches and stuff like that. You could figure out the google classroom stuff that most of the elementary school teachers have and have them blast stuff into google classroom or have them put stuff on the schools Facebook and Twitter pages letting families know what is coming up. A vast majority of our students at the school follow the schools Instagram page. Facebook is for old people now so it's good for reaching the parents.

K: How many years have you been teaching?

Ke:14 and I have been here my whole career.

K: That's a great gig right out of college! Very cool for you. So, how have you adapted your recruitment strategies to meet the needs of today's students versus the students you had 14 years ago.

Ke: I haven't changed a whole lot. I pretty much show them what it is and adapt things to meet the needs of the school schedule. That communication over the summer is the biggest factor I think.

K: I can't write a paper about recruitment in spring of 2020 and not mention the fact that our school year ended quite differently than it began. How does your recruitment process look now?

Ke: I'm at a loss with it right now. I have talked to the elementary music teachers and asked them what the majority are of the fifth-grade teachers are doing to stay in contact with the kids. It's almost universally Google classroom. They are doing/did online work through google classroom. I have brought home the entire band room home. I have one of each instrument here and I will probably do some type of demos of me showing what the instruments are and ask these fifth grade teachers to upload it to their google classroom to promote that band will be an option for them next year. If you want to do this send me your name so I can relay it to the band director. I think they will try their best to help me with this because it is such a new world. I am worried about, I think due to job loss and lack of in person contact my numbers will go down next year. Even though I can provide an instrument for most students, parents realize band will cost money ultimately with reeds, trips, method books, things like that. I may lose numbers because of that.

K: Do you believe any COVID changes you make would end up being something you keep as a part of your recruitment process?

Ke: We will have to see. If it works well...I just know that I probably had about a 45-50% participation rate in my online classes, I am assuming the 5th grade classes are about the same. I don't think totally online is the best way to recruit due to access. There may be parts of it that I can keep but it would go along with the other recruitment events we already do.

K: Any remaining thoughts, nuggets of wisdom but recruiting?

Ke: There is no substitute for in-person contact. Human contact, a phone call can go a long way sometimes. I can share with you my handbook and other documents. I can just email you.

K: That would be great! Thank you for your time. I know you are very busy. If you have any questions let me know. Thanks again!

Randy Interview:

K: So, the first question is I would like you to just describe your teaching responsibility so what classes do you teach? what's your schedule look like?

R: I teach at two different Middle Schools, so I have 6th 7th and 8th grade band twice a day. I teach 6-8th in the morning at one school and 6th -8th in the afternoon at another.

K: So, you don't have general music or anything like that?

R: No.

K: Do you co-teach with anyone?

R: Yeah, I co-teach with the High School directors that I feed. Those guys are there with me.

K: For all three band classes?

R: Well, in the afternoon, that High School director with my seventh-grade band, which is the last period of the day which is when he is teaching his high school band.

K: Right, Okay, can you describe your community? Is it rural or urban?

R: Very very rural. One school is where part of the Appalachian trail runs through. They host trail days every year where the Appalachian trail people come through. It is very rural.

K: Can you tell me roughly the size of your schools? How many are in each school?

R: I looked all that up to give you more specific information. School 1 has 191 students and School 2 has 293.

K: That's students total in the school, right?

R: That's total in the school.

K: Just making sure! Can you tell me the number of students enrolled in band?

R: We are at 104 in school 1, and 149 at school 2.

K: Great! And then what other related arts or electives are offered in your school?

R: School 1 has music class in 6th grade, and then they can be in chorus in 7th and 8th. There is a computer class, there is a Spanish class, art, PE, Agriculture, and a class where the go and they build robots and whatnot, some sort of STEM Class. I can't remember the actual title of it. It's the same at both schools.

K: OK. Um, so in your school how are recruitment responsibilities delegated? Do you come up with everything on your own or do you work with the high school directors?

R: No, I am in charge.

K: Do you recruit with choir or is it band alone?

R: I just do the band. The choir guy does his on his own.

K: You may not know, but how does the choir director recruit? Or do they?

R: Um….I'm not sure. And at the two different schools it's two different choir directors, so I do know that since they don't have 6th grade choir they recruit during the music class that is offered in the 6 rotations of students that come through their 6th grade music class.

K: Oh OK! So, what is your primary motivating force for recruiting band students?

R: I want to have the strongest band program possible. Um, this is my 16th year as a full-time middle school director. From the first year to now, the program is very very very strong. I take a lot of pride in that and my administrators are behind me 1000% because we have become kind of a spotlight of the school. The last couple of years my numbers aren't what they were and a lot of it is more economy related than anything. I traditionally have hung between 55-60% of the school in band which is a really fantastic number. So, that's been kind of a spotlight of the school for us.

K: So, I've heard this comment from a lot of teachers, do you feel your job is at stake if you are not successful in recruiting a certain number of students?

R: I'm gonna say that it wouldn't be, and the reason is the choir program at one of the schools is not successful at all. Numbers or quality. I think the new director will eventually get it there, but where I am running 55% of the school, I think in his 8th grade choir he has 7 kids and in 7th grade choir has 4. They know that he is going to try to rebuild the program. As bad as it got before he got there, cutting the program was never mentioned.

K: OK. Do you have a recruitment goal every year? A certain number of students you target?

R: Just from what I've done over the years, I want 50% of the population I am recruiting from. There are some years, you know, I don't think I've not hit 50% in a few years, but 4 or 5 years ago there were 73 6th graders and I got 70. The 6th grade teachers loved me because when I had band, they had a planning period.

K: I bet! OK, so do you have a max number of students you can't go over?

R: No. Never. I'll make it work.

K: OK, do you feel your geographical location has an effect on your recruitment strategies? Positively or negatively?

R: Not really.

K: If you lived in an urban area, what benefits or opportunities do you think you would have at your disposal that you currently don't have?

R: I'm gonna say this and it's going to sound horribly arrogant and cocky, but I'm gonna do what I do no matter where I am.

K: OK, so you don't think living closer to music stores, professional music orgs. Would change how you do anything?

R: No.

K: Is there a university within an hour or two of where you live?

R: There is.

K: OK. So, the next section revolves around recruitment in general, so the first thing I would like to know is how you came up with your process for recruitment?

R: Um...well can I say trial and error?

K: Yeah!

R: So, I would say that when I was young I did the total program (K-12). And so, I just kinda had to wing it on my own, and then when I got the next job, I took what the guy that was there did and kinda started to create my own hybrid version of it and by the time I got here, I'm doing me. I'm doing what I know works well. Just a lot of years of experience of this works, this doesn't.

K: mmhmm. So, you would agree that these aren't topics that are typically mentioned at conferences or anything like that?

R: No, oh no. I mean I graduated undergrad in 1993. You mentioned podcasts, it would have been cool to have a podcast back then.

K: Alright, so then can you take a moment to describe what you do for recruitment?

R: Sure, um...I go to the elementary school that feeds me and I take my 6th grade band and we go and do a 45-minute recruitment concert/me selling the band to them. Before I got here, the high school guy would take the high school band to play, so the very first thing I changed was I wanted to take 6th graders. He really thought that was a horrible idea at both schools. My reasoning was if I am recruiting 5th graders and I take 6th graders, they know those kids. They were in the building with them the year before. They see someone they were friends with and are like Hey! They know how to play the trombone. It made a huge impact in numbers at both schools.

K: Can you describe the concert? How does it work?

R: Are you familiar with Essential Elements? I don't know what book you used. In the 6th grade book, line 56 there are four little concert type tunes. *When The Saints Go Marching In*, *Old MacDonald Had A Band,* you know those four pieces, well we will play those, I'll do a song from our solo and ensemble packet that we are working on getting ready for solo and ensemble, and then I'll do, if we're ready at that point a spring concert tune that we're working on and then I always do line 97 which is *Trombone Rag* where they learn how to play a gliss. That's pretty much the music part of the concert. The way I always do it is I show up and introduce myself and tell them I'm here to talk to you about joining the band for next year, and then I'll play a song, and then I go through a bunch of things about joining the band that they don't know. Everyone thinks they know about joining the band but I'm going to tell them things they didn't know. I talk about "Did you know that if you join the band that you can still play sports?", and then I'll turn around to the 6th graders and say how many play sports, and it's almost all of them. "How many times have you had to miss a sporting event because of band practice?" and it's never, because we don't rehearse after school in the 6th grade. I go through about 5 or 6 of those key points of recruitment for me. We talk about travel, high school you're going to get to go places you may have never gone. I talk about all the places I've been, you know How many people have been to the Bahamas? No one raises their hand. Who's been to NYC? I name off 8 or 9 really exotic places. Well, I've been there with the band! Who's seen the Chicago Cubs play at Wrigley? I have, and it was on a band trip. I talk about scholarship opportunities. I sell it to them. I kinda feel like a car salesman at that point. I think that is my biggest strength, I can sell, I can get kids excited about it and want to do it.

K: Do you mention financial things? Instrument rental and other things?

R: I do and what I say is, joining the band can be expensive, but I don't want you to worry about that yet because I am going to help you come up with an instrument somehow someway, and the very next thing is I'll turn to the band kids and say how many of you guys are playing a used instrument? It's a large part of the ensemble. Half the kids. That makes the kids feel better about it.

K: OK. As far as the process of them actually signing up for the band, what's that look like?

R: This works like gold, When I go to the recruiting concert the guidance counselor comes with me and as soon as we finish our concert (while students are putting instruments in cases) she hands out scheduling sheets to take home and if you want to

join the band you have to check this box. When she says check the box I have trained my 6th graders to yell "Check the box!" She says something else and we yell again, check the box! It worked like gold.

K: So, based on the numbers you have given me the next question isn't necessary. How effective are your recruitment events? I believe they're fairly successful.

R: Fairly so, yes.

K: Are there any extraneous factors that affect recruitment in your community? You touched on the sports excuse earlier…

R: Um...well I mean I think what works for us is we have been successful. We have had a strong program for a long time. It's easy to get kids to want to be in something that's good already. I also tell the 6th graders, we have to play great because no one wants to join a band that sucks. They wanna be on the good team not the bad team. There have been occasional years where I took an 8th grade band over the 6th grade band if they're not ready.

K: So, I am assuming the answer to this is also yes, will you continue to use the same recruitment practices year after year?

R: Oh yeah, I may tweak something here or there. As the time changes, what I use as a selling point will change. I find what works for us and use it.

K: OK, are there other methods that you have considered doing or have done in the past, with varying levels of success?

R: Um...I've tried it before where I went by myself and demonstrated instruments and that was a big flop. No one wants to watch an old man play a flute. Other than that, I would say no. It's just been little tweaks for a long time.

K: OK, if for some reason your admin totally lost their mind and you had to reimagine your recruitment methods, what resources would you turn to for help or guidance?

R: Other middle school band directors, and that's the, there's another middle school director in our district, and we talk a lot and ask each other lots of questions. He comes to my program and works with the kids and vice versa, so to be honest, the COVID thing, I didn't get to recruit before we closed, so I am very anxious, and I wouldn't say worried but it's of all the nonsense that's gone on, it's the thing that I am concerned with the most. So, I will start asking people, "what are you doing, what are you going to do?" When I was young I was just cocky enough that I knew more than the old guys that I was the real deal, and that I was going to show them how to do it and it took me 3 years to realize holy cow there's just now replacement for experience, so I will go hunting for experience. What makes me anxious is I don't think anyone has any experience with what is going on now!

K: Right! OK, excellent! So, the next question is about student motivation. Why do you believe your students joined the band?

R: Because I make them want to. We've had a strong program for a long time. A shining star. So that helps a lot. Community perception is huge.

K: What is the primary motivating force for students joining band other than success?

R: I am going to say it is a combo of my personality and peer relationships. When I teach in 6th grade, I am a giant cartoon character. Everyone loves Mr. R. He is hilarious. In 7th grade they all are shocked. He's kicking out butts now! By then they know why, and they understand. I think that's the big thing with kids these days is they've got to enjoy it and it

has to be fun because there are so many other things that they could be doing, so it's got to keep their interest in this is cool! I think that's huge.

K: Do you think any of them join because they actually want to learn an instrument? Or do you think it's all the other things like peer relationships and travel and whatnot?

R: I'm always amazed that I have a few kids that come along that are highly motivated kids that want to be good musicians. But at School 2, it's near, you were talking about colleges, It's near a small private college, so it's really strange makeup of kids in that school. It's a bunch of farm kids and college professors' kids. When you walk into the cafeteria, you can see that. And so, especially with the professors' kids they all come in and you know they're all about being good musicians and you know, so there is a little bit of that. At school1 not so much because they're a bunch of rednecks, for lack of a better term. Music education is not a valuable thing to them right out of the gate and that's why I have to sell it.

K: OK. Do you think that the main motivating force behind students joining band has changed over the years as you have been teaching?

R: Maybe a little bit, as college education has gotten so expensive, a lot of kids and parents in this area see it as a vehicle that this could get their student help with college funding. I sell that big. When we do our winter and spring concert I make sure they are aware that the local college is trying really hard to start a music program and they are a liberal arts college with a hefty tuition, but they give out music scholarships like lollipops. One student got a $12,000 music scholarship which is huge. At 'University' which the biggest university is close to us, they have a program now that if you join their marching band you get in state tuition automatically. That's an $84,000 scholarship over 4 years. That's probably the thing that's changed the most. Skyrocketing tuition costs and this is a way to offset it.

K: OK excellent. So, how has technology changed how you go about recruiting, or has it?

R: It has not.

K: Would you say part of that is being in a rural community? Due to technology access?

R: Partly, but it also has to do with me being an old man. My children, I have three kids 20 and above, and they teach dad how to do that stuff. I wish that I could incorporate it, but I retire in three years….and this has been working, so I'm not going to go chasing that one around. It has been eye opening how many of my students don't have access to the internet at all, which we discovered during this COVID time. Several of my students were completely unable to participate in online schooling due to distance from civilization and lack of resources.

K: Right, ok. So, the next question has to do with the world now during a global pandemic. How are you even approaching recruitment as of now?

R: Well, that's very much in progress. My youngest daughter has been telling me to make a recruitment video that I can send to all the 5th graders via their school emails, make it just as goofy, you know tik tok like as I can. That's their speed and level and she thinks they would respond to that. I am looking into doing that, but I have no idea where to start with it, so I'll need help putting it all together. I don't know what else to do. I'm afraid to do my recruiting when they show up to school in the fall. I think that's dangerous, and I don't know. That's what I'm looking at doing, but then who am I going to be reaching due to the lack of resources in the community? Won't be as effective as it would have been with me standing in front of them like I've done for the last 27 years, but it's something.

K: Right. OK. Do you believe any part of any changes you would make to your recruitment procedure would stick around to your yearly recruitment process?

R: If that video is even partially successful, I will probably something I would continue to do alongside what I already do. It certainly can't hurt if it's successful at all. When it gets put together I won't assign a year or a date to it so it will be time neutral, so I can use it year after year without creating a new one each year.

K: Do you feel like your timeline for recruitment for the year in the future will change? Will you do more or some of it in the fall too? To prepare for a situation like what we are in now?

R: I will not, reasoning is kids forget quickly. Recruiting needs to happen as close to when they sign up for band as possible. One thing I butt heads with the choir director about is he is extremely organized. We send out a calendar at the beginning of the year with all the dates. He wants to send the reminder letter to parents about our joint winter concert in October which is far too early. Parents will forget, or students have too much time to lose the form. I send out a reminder letter 10 days before the concert, which I've found is more effective. It becomes a waste of time. If I recruited in the fall, I don't think I would see a benefit over what I have been doing. Now, can I predict that we're going to get sent home 3 months early again? No, but you now, for me, what I've done has worked and if I can take this little recruitment video and wrap it up too, then maybe.

K: Any remaining thoughts regarding recruitment that you would like to share? Any nuggets of wisdom?

R: Um...I kinda talked about it earlier if they have to get excited and want to do it so you are a car salesman. I watch a lot of younger teachers when they recruit they are doing it because that's what they are supposed to do. You asked what my goal of recruiting is, I want to get as many kids in the band as possible. That being said, we didn't talk about this, but there is a middle school band in my county that is at our biggest middle school, the band director there has recruited from 600 kids and she will get 300 kids. She starts over 100 6th graders every year, but she gives out instruments school owned instruments like lollipops. If there is a kid that can't afford to be in band she gives them what they need. I will not do that. When I was younger, every now and then there would be a kid come in and I would do that, but I have never had success with a kid that has been provided everything. The reason is they have zero investment in it at all so it's really easy for them at any point just to drop it. Even with my tuba players, they have to buy a mouthpiece, a mouthpiece pouch, a tuba stand, and a book which is roughly $150. They get pissed at me because I'm working them hard, so they go home and complain to mom and dad and they say No! We paid $150 you're not quitting! You're a car salesman when you want them to join. I use lots of, they always crack up when I walk in and say "OK Guys, what's the tea? Spill the Tea?" But when I do that, then they are on my side. And so, I do silly things like that and they have to have fun and want to be there because there are so many other options compared to when I joined the band. No longer band, football, or basketball. Now there is AAU Everything and FFA and all kinds of other activities like archery and bass fishing teams. We have indoor track teams with no indoor track, and swim teams with no pool. We are competing for the kids, and so they have to be, I almost compare us to the super churches. I was a church musician at a church near here who has 7,000 members and they quickly found out the reason the 7,000 people showed up was because of the band. We were all pros. We're kind of doing the same thing with kids, we

have to have an edge that no one else has. Once they are in, parents start to see the benefit, they get hooked, and that's the biggest thing.

K: That's all the questions I have. Thank you for letting me have some of your time!

Kyle Interview:

K: If you would describe your teaching responsibilities like, what does your typical day look like?

Ky: So, my title is I am the DOB at Horse Farm Middle School and the assistant at the high school. My position within the high school program is funded by an after school coaching athletic stipend. So, it is a small district. In some ways our program is like one direct feeder program because I have my feet in both the HS and the MS program. My school schedule that I have, I teach four band classes, 6-8th grade band separately, and then I have I guess I could say I have technically 5 band classes but not all band classes meet the entire year. So, the three core band classes meet all year. Jazz band only meets the 2nd and 3rd trimester. The 5th class that I have is a hodge podge mentor program during the first trimester. It is all 6th grade and like 7-10 8th grade mentors. Some schools call it like STAR or enrichment classes, we call it Colonel time class. IT is the same amount of time as my other classes, but it meets 1st thing. Sometimes it's shorter if we have assemblies or whatnot. Those always happen during this class. Monday-Thursday we always meet but sometimes on Fridays we have special meetings where class time is taken away. The 1st trimester is that mentor program and then the 2nd and 3rd trimester that period is jazz band. I also teach 6th and 7th grade general music and 8th grade guitar. Basically 5 band classes, two general music classes, and a guitar class.

K: Ok, so that seems like a pretty stacked day. Do you co-teach at the high school during band class or just after school?

Ky: Just after school. I help there after school and on the weekends.

K: The director doesn't come help you either?

Ky: He does! And he brings high school students down depending on how many aids he has. He has had 2-7 aids in the past and when he comes down just for 6th grade band class only, he brings the high school students down to work with the program. I feel like that affects our retention in a positive way. But, with the current teaching situation and sub shortages, he is only able to come down one and a half out of 5 days a week because they ask him to cover other classes who don't have sub coverage during his planning period. It is supposed to be every day but that doesn't always happen. That's difficult with planning for the class. I have to make a plan for the class if I have help and a plan for the class if I don't. Both schools are on one campus, there is no driving between buildings which helps on the day's he does come over. I also think that helps with retention. Same fight song, same mascot, direct feeder program. I feel the high school director feels the programs are one in the same and that he is over all the programs. My perspective is that no, this is my program and he comes to assist. We don't butt heads or anything, it's just interesting but pretty typical for the high school director to assume a "boss" role in the relationship. In small towns like this, I've been in both situations. I've taught in schools that feed 6 high schools and this small-town thing is just different, but I think it has its positives and its negatives.

K: Describe the community. Is it rural, urban?

Ky: I would say it is rural, we have 20% of our population is Latino, and that is because of the horse farms that are around our community. They bring in the Latino work to work

the farms. That is really interesting, and I wasn't expecting that. 2% African American and then everyone else is Caucasian. We don't get a lot of diversity other than groups. There is an ESL classroom right across the hall from mine. We get a lot of people from Mexico and Guatemala, and then we have some Caucasian French speakers which I find interesting. Our community is very rural. Our economic situation is that we have some kids with a ton of money. Like 10-15% have horse money, walking around with more expensive cars than me, having nicer shoes and bags, it just blows my mind. We have really rich kids that own horses, which that whole situation blows my mind. I lived in Louisville, the Derby City, I thought I knew a lot about horses, but man I know nothing. A stud that has derby lineage can run starting at $300,000 to breed. A young horse can sell for upwards of $60,000. It is often a family business, and these families often have 350 horses at a time. We had a band parent just buy us a marching band trailer last year. We then have no middle class and a really poor working class. 7-10 students in my 6th grade band don't have internet at all, they live on the horse farm where their parents work.

Side comment, with the out of school responsibilities required with this job I just don't see how directors in this environment can have a functional family. What can you put in a program? I feel like that definitely affects recruitment. Being a young single guy allows me to put a lot of time into the program right now. I also think retention is affected by the quality of the product. Kids don't want to quit something that is successful. We get some college kids from schools not too far from here, but it is hard to get professors to come into our area because we are a smaller program. Our marching band ran 131 members last year, 47% of that number were middle school students which is extremely high for the state. I think that plays a significant role in kids staying around. It is successful, they have fun, we have won 7 national championships and 9 state championships. I have kids asking me about marching band in 6th grade, they're so excited! We march 7-12th graders. It is a significant chunk of kids to be in the high school program. These kids love marching band. I am trying to make a concert band just as exciting and fun as a marching band, but the motivation for doing well is that they want to be a part of the marching band. Right now, I am using smart music grades for marching band auditions due to COVID restrictions. Sorry, I got off the question.
K: That's ok! So, school size, you all are 4A?
Ky: Yes, we have about 200 kids per grade level at the middle school. Around 600 kids total.
K: What other related arts or elective courses are offered in your school?
Ky: Choir is offered and the current schedule that we have, kids can take both. We don't have orchestra, nor do I feel like it is on the radar. They only get two. So, if they take both band and choir they can't take any other classes. All core classes are 60 minutes, related arts classes meet for 40 minutes. We have general music, guitar, Spanish, health, we still separate health and PE by gender, so we have male and female gym classes, art, technology, and I think that's it. The choral teacher also teaches general music so we kind of flip back and forth. If she is teaching choir I teach general music and vice versa.
K: In your school, how are recruitment responsibilities delegated?
Ky: It's me. I am the one who chooses how to do it and when to do it. Whatever plan I come up with is what we do. The head director at the HS I think he likes to chime in, a little bit of a hoverer. I get it, the success of his program is dependent on my ability to

recruit a large number of students. Because of this I go above and over the top in my activities.

K: They don't occur as a related arts unit, correct?

Ky: Well, the choir teacher likes to hop on my bandwagon. Due to lack of conflict of interest in scheduling it's not a huge deal. We go on tour together to the elementary school. It is challenging when you only have 45 min to pitch both programs. We weren't able to do that this year so I am curious how recruitment will look this year. We were planning to go to all the elementary schools and do that.

K: What is your primary motivating force in your recruitment practices?

Ky: Marching band, honestly. The success of the marching band, not the concert band or the need for a pep band at basketball games. It is to support the high school program and the marching band. That's not necessarily my personal philosophy, but the program and the belief within the program is to recruit numbers for the marching band. That is the end goal.

K: Do you feel your job is at stake if you don't recruit a certain number of students?

Ky: Not yet. I feel like my teaching ability is strong, and I think my desire to have a large MS program is to have a large program because the more kids I have in the band the more control I have over scheduling (with parent power). If I have almost half the kids in 6th grade band, which I don't right now, you can't tell me that band will only meet every other day. I would use the parents to help me advocate for the program and fix this. We haven't had to do that yet. The administration seems to be supportive, the high school principal is a former band student who understands scheduling and what we are doing. My principal is the former band director at my school. We have a lot of pro-band people in charge. So, I will continue to recruit strongly but I feel like I am safe for now.

K: What is your recruitment goal?

Ky: The goal has always been as many kids in the room as possible. There are only 56 chairs in the classroom but that won't stop me from recruiting more than that. This year I was hoping for 80 students in the 6th grade band. Why 80? I wanted them to drop my 6th grade general music class and split my beginning band class into an A/B class. The administration doesn't want to do that, they think that will take other opportunities away from kids in RA classes. I think a minimum of 80 kids would make that class split successful. This year I had all of the 6th graders in the same class. I have the room for 80 kids at one time but that is not necessarily ideal for quality learning and instruction. I am slightly afraid that they would tell me either to reduce the numbers to a class that is manageable or force me to have all 80 students in the class at the same time. I taught a class of mandated band with 95 students in inner city Louisville. I know what that is like and would rather not do it again.

K: You have taught in both rural and inner-city situations. Do you feel your geographic location has an effect on your recruitment strategies?

Ky: Yeah it does. I'm not sure how much, and I think that is different for different situations. I found it more difficult to recruit in the city school because we didn't have the cool high schooler influence for the students. That urban school split 7 different ways for high school so it was difficult to retain students. There had to be traveling incentives in the middle school program to keep kids in band. I don't have to do that so much here because the marching band travels, they provide the community and family experience for the students. It definitely affects my retention strategies. Students can just quit my

class in the middle of the term with no explanation. The principal could back me up and say no, this kid needs to stick it out, but the parents will just walk down to the central office, complain to the superintendent, and boom their kid is removed. It happens more than you would think. The parents control this place.

K: If you were in an urban/suburban area, what benefits or opportunities or resources do you believe you would have at your disposal that you don't currently have?

Ky: I think um, this is going to sound crazy, but I had title 1 money at my other school that I could pump into my program. So, a lot of times a principal would just hand me 10 grand to do something with. I don't know if that was a common thing, since band was mandated at my own school. They use the title 1 money because it affects every kid because they were all in music. There are usually multiple directors at urban schools. That can help with the paperwork for fundraising which can be extensive, they share the teaching load, and they can help plan and implement recruitment events. I also believe the amount you have to fundraise can affect retention within the program. I have to dangle a lot of carrots to get my 8th grade to sell stuff, they get burnt out. I have to fundraise just to spend the money on busses to visit the elementary schools for recruitment. I am having to raise money in order to implement my recruitment activities. I could use that title 1 money at my old school to cover those costs, but I didn't need to because the band was mandated for every student.

K: So, the next set of questions revolve around your specific recruitment techniques. The first question has four parts and it is about how you generated your recruitment plan. Did you come up with the ideas yourself, implemented and kept by a former director, or did you learn about these ideas at a conference or another source such as a book or podcast or all of the above?

Ky: It is just a hodge podge. There is no direct source, I am not modeling my plan off of what someone does somewhere else, if I hear a good idea I try it. With recruitment I don't think there are any bad ideas. It's not like a fundraiser where there isn't any kick back from what you do. It's a bunch of different people. My number 1 source of ideas I go to middle school programs that are really large and talk to their directors to find out what they are doing. I take all those ideas and I tweak them to fit my school. I think it is worth the time to do everything. It is so important. The way I want to foster my band program is I want to build my numbers as high as possible in 6th grade. I don't care if it slows instruction, but the thing is that in order for me to play the literature I want to in 8th grade, I am going to have to have all the instrumentation and full sections. I need first, second, and third clarinets, oboes, bassoons, etc. The main goal is also feeding the HS program, I know it's the high school directors' goal, but it is also mine. There is job security in what I am doing if I do it well. Do I feel like my neck is on the line? I feel like if I was doing poorly they would try to get me out because I would be crippling what is going on at the HS. That's what happened to the guy before me. He did a bad job recruiting and they pink slipped him. His last year here he had 80 kids in 6th grade but only 17 kids retained between that year and the next. There was clearly a problem. I think my main source is that I seek out people with large programs and experience and implement that into my situation. I have done online research. Simple google searches will result in articles that may or not be helpful. There is a program called be a part of the band by Scott Lang. My last district pushed it. It's a group of videos and other resources. It feels like something made a long time ago that doesn't necessarily relate to kids now. I

think if it seems cool, and older kids are participating in it, then it gives the program value and merit. I am not opposed to using bits and pieces of this program.

K: The next question is to describe your recruitment plan you have.

Ky: It's not fancy or anything. I keep a google doc full of ideas that I implement and try. It is always evolving. One thing that I got off of a middle school band teacher Facebook group is this one girl sent out postcards (front and back) with a picture of me and of students that says check out the band, be a part of the band! The pictures include class time, concerts, and trips and fun events. Pictures will be of current 6th grade students because the 5th graders will recognize some of those students. Included on the card is a QR code that takes parents directly to my school's band website frequently most asked questions page. I also have information for students, parents, there is media, and a link to our band Instagram page. The Instagram handle is also on the postcard. I want to showcase our program on a platform that kids commonly use. I sent them out to the entire 5th grade for the elementary school. I read an article that said if kids recognize your face and know who you are, there is like a visual presence or a face with the program, and they will be more likely to join your class if they think they have a relationship with you. My plan was to mail them two weeks before we went on our elementary school tour which obviously didn't happen due to COVID, so I just mailed them. I scheduled petting zoos for the elementary during the evening. I have four elementary feeders. I am appreciative that the principals are letting us come in for a 45 minute concert, so I am not so sure I will get to have them in the building during the school day, but the more exposure I have the better. That isn't going to happen this year either.

I did something similar digitally, but I am not sure it was so effective. I know students don't have access to electronics and the internet. My students were all issued chrome books so they all used smart music during the semester if they had internet access. I also make a poster for bands to hang in the elementary school related arts classes. I am present on the poster, it hangs all year round and kids can ask questions about it. Because 47% of the kids are in marching band, sometimes have a conflicting desire to use that as a recruitment tactic. I know it deters students who are athletes who don't think they can participate due to their sport. I don't personally don't like to promote marching band when recruiting because in my mind middle school bands are not marching band, but in the HS, directors mind they are all one in the same. I am trying to shift the culture to allow middle school band to be its own independent thing which has been difficult. I think it is important for the middle school band to have its own identity so that kids that are involved in other activities can be involved in the program. Which all goes back to your philosophy of education. Do you believe all kids should be in band or just the kids that can be involved in marching band? Right now, if you are in high school band you have to be in marching band. There is no exception. There are only 55 kids in the high school concert band. The current 8th grade band has 37 students that he will receive next year. He will have 80 students. He is splitting the classes next year to have two concert bands at the HS, but if he does that it could cut the choir program at the high school because he also teaches choir there. In reality if I keep my numbers where they are it will affect the courses offered at the high school. I have the posters professionally made, and I personally walk them to the schools and hang them in the class myself for additional face presence in the school. That article I referenced said the more your face is

present around school, and kids feel like they know who you are the more approachable you become. We also do a tour, a presentation with band and choir, I'm not a big fan of that because it cuts into my time to promote the band, but it has to be that way, so I just bite my lip and go. I also administer a survey, a general paper survey asking if they want to be in band. The RA teachers in 5th grade pass out and collect the survey. I look through the results and it generates names to pursue. The 5th grade music schedules don't align well with my planning period because I would love to just go down every now and then and hang out during their class. I was trying to do that pre-covid as well.

I was going to put a QR code on the postcard that went straight to the google form to sign up for band, but I thought taking the students and parents to the website where they sign up is a better idea, because then they also see reference materials available on the website. I think that website is key to save time for recruiting because if not all you will do is answer questions via email and phone calls that could all be answered on the site. The program we use is called homestead. I am always updating it and really sad that I haven't done this before. It can answer all the FAQ's that parents have about students joining the program. There are so many common misconceptions people have about joining a program. Every page on the website there is a join now button for students to click and immediately sign up for band. That sends them to the google form that puts it on an excel sheet for me. I prefer this, so I don't get multiple emails. The website needs to be flashy looking too. I think if parents look at that website and feel that you have a great program with a lot of things going on, it helps. They aren't hesitant to allow students to join when the program looks established and the program looks like it's working. This information is also here all the time and they can't lose it like a paper document sent home.

At the performance...a lot of the stuff is stuff that I was planning to do this year but didn't work out or I had to find an alternative due to COVID. I was going to print off stock cards for kids to manually sign up for band during the performance. If I can get their information in multiple ways, and the same names keep popping up over and over then I know that I am going to get that student enrolled. Even if they say yes one time I am going to pursue them and call home.

I have also looked into mouthpiece testing during my planning period, getting in there and having kids just put mouthpiece to the face to make sounds and start building a relationship with them. I generally do all of the mouthpiece and instrument testing the first two weeks of school. I want to get them in the class and then figure out what they're playing once they are enrolled. I find that works best for us because they don't have to come over the summer. It also helps if you put a kid on an instrument they didn't necessarily want two weeks into the program they are less likely to be able to drop the class. They are more exposed to how the class works and they know what's available to them and it works well for us. I don't like using mouthpiece testing as a recruitment technique. I can control my instrumentation better when I do it once school has started. I am learning that sometimes the instrument can affect the retention of a student. I had a French horn player call me last night to let me know she wasn't going to continue with band next year. She is a smart driven student who has been struggling with French horn, and I think not being immediately successful has been a new situation for her that she doesn't know how to handle. Her excuse was because of Houdini and Scooter. I was like who or what are they? She told me they were her horses and she was going to go to

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nationals next year. She thinks she can't do band because of marching band. It takes time away from her doing her professional horse-riding competitions, but it could also be because of her instrument choice.

It's not fair for me to bust my butt on recruitment, invest three years on students, just for the high school director to turn them down for not doing marching band due to other interests the student has.

This one is unique, but one of my students wrote a fight song for her elementary school in second grade, and every morning they sang it on the announcements. I have arranged it for band and we go on the tour to that school we play it for them which they think is so cool. When we go on these concert tours we play music that is really relevant for kids to hear. It is not always what you assume is cool at the time. Resort to the opinions of your current 6th graders. They know what those 5th graders will enjoy. Sometimes just asking some elementary teacher friends could help in choosing relatable music selections. The timing of the recruitment tour is key as well. Too early the kids forget, too late you run into the testing window and principals and teachers get antsy. I think April is a good time for the concert, but my administration wanted initial numbers in early March. I let them know that wasn't feasible nor would they be accurate. I am lucky that my administration is flexible with me and works with me. Not everyone is that lucky.

We do the Conn Selmer UMI and administer it to all the 5th graders in their elementary setting. We then heavily pursue the kids who score high. I do that test again once they join band to compare results and it helps me choose the students to put on oboe or horn. One thing I have started doing as a result of COVID is a band BINGO with flip grid and it almost went viral. Kids were cleaning cases, playing scales, doing all kinds of things to mark off their BINGO sheet. Flip grid is a similar program to tic tock that gets kids excited about class. I could find a way to share that with potential students.

The last thing I do is one week before school starts we have an orientation night. I pull out all the fancy cool instruments, get a tv set up on a table and play previous concert videos and have picture slideshows, I decorate tables and have cake or cookies and soft drinks. It makes those students feel really welcome when they come see me with their parents during that time.

This year I also did a recruitment video that teachers shared with students containing high school students demonstrating and plugging their instruments. We will see how that works for us come fall.

Once they are in school I have a spreadsheet with their name, their first UMI score, their grades in reading and math, their second UMI score, and then their first second and third choice for instruments. I try to give students their first or second choice, but it helps when students complain, I can remind them that they asked for that instrument.

K: Well you have answered some of the questions that I have, but if you had to reimagine your recruitment methods to who or where would you turn for help or guidance?
Ky: Like I said, at KMEA I seek out the large successful programs and talk to their directors asking them to share their recruitment strategies.
K: Why do you believe your students join band?

Ky: Marching band. I think that is what hooks them. The community loves that so much and it is such a strong part of our community that the kids really want to be a part of it. They see the success of the program, they hear about it on the news and in the paper.

K: Thinking back, do you think that the main motivating force for students to join band today vs the students at the beginning of your career, do you think that's changed?

Ky: I think that is true at this school. Not necessarily at my previous school. I think the value system in a rural band program, the sense of family we get in a close-knit community like ours also encourages students and families to want to be a part of this program. You see the band director at the local ice cream shop? Sit down with them and your family and just chat. That doesn't really happen in urban areas as much. That kind of culture is attractive to parents. They want to know who is going to influence and mentor their child for 7 plus years.

K: Technology is something you have mentioned quite a bit. I am sure it has changed how you recruit students since you started teaching. I mean, QR codes didn't always exist! How have you gone about adapting for that?

Ky: I think that the more floors…. once they are in my program they are in this tech bubble where they are going to be blasted with voice recordings through infinite campus, texts via remind 101, Instagram posts, website updates, things like that. I communicate a lot, so the parents feel comfortable and aren't surprised by events or costs of things. In a small rural community like mine, I am learning that if you reach one kid you usually reach the whole family. That results in legacy kids that continue to feed the program. In the future I plan to start a YouTube channel and a twitter account to use to blast all district results and things like that to make families and the community aware of what we are doing. It also creates a digital portfolio of our program through the years.

K: Are there any other ways you haven't mentioned how to recruit for this coming year due to the covid situation?

Ky: In addition to the things I have already mentioned, I tried to figure out how to administer the UMI assessment, but it didn't work out. The elementary schools just did a packet situation. I will have to wait for fall to complete that assessment. We also look at their grades on infinite campus, specifically in math and reading. I can still do that with the numbers I get from signing up on the website. We want kids that are successful, and studies show that kids that are good at reading and math in conjunction with music assessments more accurately predicts a student's success in the band program. We go after those students hard! That data helps me also select instruments for students, I want to create an experience that is fulfilling and rigorous for that student.

K: Do you think some of these insights you are gaining on recruitment during the COVID era will stick beyond this experience?

Ky: Yes. I would never have implemented flip grid and it will be a fun way to encourage kids to practice at home. I will also keep my informational video.

K: Thank you so much for giving me your time. I appreciate it. I will be in touch, and please feel free to contact me if you have any additional questions.

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