

Liberty University

School of Music

Parent Perspectives for Elementary Instrumental Music Participation

A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of the School of Music
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Music Education

by

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May, 2024

Abstract

This hermeneutic phenomenological study was conducted to understand participation issues surrounding elementary instrumental music programs from a parent's perspective. Many school districts' elementary instrumental music programs have continued with a district-funded model with classes that meet during the school day. The school district in this study adopted an outside-the-school-day model that is tuition-based. The study utilized semi-structured interviews and observations from the researcher. A quality music education program should include the highest possible number of students. This study uncovers the motivating factors in elementary instrumental music participation. It also reveals potential barriers to entry. Music educators can use the results of this study to build participation numbers while removing barriers to entry and allowing equal access to quality music education.

Keywords: music education, participation, parent, student, tuition, fee, schedule, location

Dedication

To Lulu, You're the best.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Background

Instrumental music enrollment is dropping in many schools while others are steady or even growing. Due to various circumstances, such as enrollment or budget changes, some schools and school districts have adopted a model to offer instrumental music classes outside the school day. Some institutions allow outside vendors to provide instrumental music classes outside the school day while charging a participation fee. Currently, only a few of these programs exist, but as school priorities change, these types of programs are becoming more common. This study delves into the viability of instrumental music programs that meet outside the school day and charge participation fees. Viability at the elementary level lends itself to higher enrollment at the secondary level.

High-quality music programs often demonstrate strong enrollment¹ John Benham notes that high-quality music programs should have a participation rate in elementary instrumental music of 65% of total enrollment. This applies to districts that begin instruction in fifth grade, according to a national case study.² Music educators with low enrollments who adopt the 65% target for elementary instrumental music could significantly increase the total number of students engaged in musical education through middle and high school. He also notes that starting in fifth grade is recommended due to lower initial enrollment, coupled with more significant attrition associated with a later start.³ Benham's research also reveals a maximum targeted attrition rate of 15% at each grade level. He continues: "The same national case studies indicate districts that

¹ John Benham, "Student Participation Issue: MUSC840: Current Issues in Music Education (D01)," *Liberty.edu*, 2023, https://canvas.liberty.edu/courses/414135/pages/watch-student-participation-issue?module_item_id=49450780.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

eliminate the elementary instrumental music program or start later than grade five will have 65% less participation at the secondary level.”⁴

Theoretically, if each grade level in a high school feeder area, which includes local elementary, middle, and high school students in an attendance area, contained 400 students and met the 65% participation target, 260 students would participate in elementary instrumental music. If the music programs maintained a 15% attrition rate, the middle school program would have 569 members, and the high school would have 431 members of the instrumental music program. Table one demonstrates this concept by grade level.

Table 1: Enrollment Projections of schools with 65% enrollment and 15% attrition

Grade Level	Band enrollment	Orchestra enrollment	Total instrumental	School Band total	School Orchestra total	School total
5 th	140	120	260	140	120	260
6 th	119	102	221			
7 th	101	87	188			
8 th	86	74	160	306	263	569
9 th	73	63	136			
10 th	62	53	115			
11 th	52	45	97			
12 th	45	38	83	232	199	431

If the same feeder area had a twenty-five percent fifth-grade participation rate with a twenty percent attrition rate, which would miss Benham’s enrollment goals, the elementary

⁴ Benham, “Student Participation Issue: MUSC840: Current Issues in Music Education (D01).”

program would contain 100 elementary students, 195 middle school students, and 122 high school students. Table two demonstrates this by grade level.

Table 2: Enrollment projections of schools with 25% enrollment and 20% attrition

Grade Level	Band enrollment	Orchestra enrollment	Total instrumental	School Band total	School Orchestra total	School total
5 th	60	40	100	60	40	100
6 th	48	32	80			
7 th	38	26	64			
8 th	31	20	51	117	78	195
9 th	25	16	41			
10 th	20	13	33			
11 th	16	10	26			
12 th	13	8	21	74	48	122

In this case, the schools that meet the targets have several advantages. The first is full-time-equivalent (FTE) allocation, the formula that school administrators use to make staffing choices. Schools with higher enrollment would receive a higher FTE allocation. Using an average FTE allocation, the feeder area in the first table would have 8.5 music staff versus 2.67 for the second. Higher enrollment also allows programs to offer a wider variety of ensembles that can group student by ability.

Schools often hire music staff to work in part-time or itinerant positions. Gardner agrees by stating: “Music teachers are more likely than other teachers to teach in multiple buildings

within a school district.”⁵ Unfortunately, “teachers who hold part-time and itinerant positions experience higher rates of turnover and attrition than teachers with full-time positions who are situated within a single building.”⁶ Higher numbers of music staff, Gardner notes, could allow schools to hire teachers with diverse expertise and offer a wider variety of ensembles. Both factors are better for the student because their needs regarding their chosen instrument and ability level can be met. Jagow, another researcher, states that “if music educators truly desire to provide students with the best music education possible, then we must use the support and professional direction of experts in each field.”⁷ The high-enrollment model in the first table allows music teachers to reach the maximum number of students at their individual level of musicianship and growth, providing them with the highest quality education. One of Capone-Rachilla’s interviewees described their ideal comprehensive music program as one with scheduling flexibility for leveled ensembles that provides equal access for students.⁸

Consideration must be made for recruiting and retention at each level. Music teachers must partner and communicate with students, parents, and administration. Funding levels, facilities, and student-teacher ratios must also be considered. Music educators must have the skills to “clearly demonstrate the fiscal viability of the music program.”⁹ While enrollment

⁵ Robert D. Gardner, “Should I Stay or Should I Go? Factors That Influence the Retention, Turnover, and Attrition of K–12 Music Teachers in the United States,” *Arts Education Policy Review* 111, no. 3 (2023): 117, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10632910903458896>.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁷ Shelley Jagow, *Teaching Instrumental Music (Second Edition): Developing the Complete Band Program*, (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2020), 263, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/liberty/reader.action?docID=6402115>.

⁸ Maryann Cecilia Capone-Raschilla, “Experienced High School Band Director Perspectives on Sustainability for a Successful Instrumental Music Program” (Doc. diss., Northcentral University, La Jolla, 2019), 123, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2307784749/>.

⁹ John L Benham, *Music Advocacy: Moving from Survival to Vision* (Chicago, Illinois: GIA Publications, 2016), 141.

numbers at the elementary level are not the only factor in determining the quality of the music program, higher enrollment also affects other parts of the program's development. Increased enrollment can justify increased funding, FTE, and capital improvements to facilities and equipment. Increased registration through recruitment and retention efforts is an area where music educators can exert direct and immediate influence. Increased enrollment and low attrition open the door for other program offerings that will benefit music education students.

Some schools and districts have moved to a tuition-based model, where students meet outside the school day. In this case, the school contracts with an outside company to provide elementary instrumental music classes. The school district, on the other hand, provides facilities but no materials or instruction. Therefore, parents pay tuition to cover the cost of instruction. Due to the district service contract, classes meet before or after school. The company is sometimes vetted through an RFP (request for proposal) process. Unless specified, the music company is not obligated to use certified music teachers: it is up to the company to verify the quality of the teachers they employ.

Music educators involved with these programs have an additional responsibility to justify the program's value to parents because parents are paying for a service for their students. This value must be communicated in a clear and concise way. Baker's research demonstrates that "even if programs are based on sound principles enunciated by experts, if children do not see the program as meeting their needs, they may not be willing to attend or... may create behavior management problems. Or, if parents do not agree with the way programs are designed, they may not permit their children to attend."¹⁰ Therefore, value must be communicated to all stakeholders.

¹⁰ Dwayne A. Baker and Peter A. Witt, "Multiple Stakeholders' Views of the Goals and Content of Two After-School Enrichment Programs," *Journal of Park & Recreation Administration* 18, no. 1 (March 1, 2000): 70, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280385909_Multiple_Stakeholders_Views_of_the_Goals_and_Content_of_Two_After-School_Programs.

Participation in after-school programs, including music, involves a complex decision-making process. Vasil's research indicated that "several extrinsic motivators initiated student interest in the instrumental music program: family, environment, social factors, and finances."¹¹

Baker offered more insight:

Students stated that after-school enrichment programs were most appealing when it was not 'just more school.' Student participants strongly believed that the programs offered safe, interesting, and enjoyable activities. Students indicated that if an after-school program was successful, there needed to be noticeable improvements from the previous session or year. Students also wanted the opportunity to interact with their friends during the programs.¹²

One must also consider students who choose not to participate. Baker's research further indicated that "Students who were nonparticipants were more likely to view the programs as 'just more school'."¹³ Music educators must emphasize the attributes that students find attractive.

Tuition-based music programs, because they meet outside the school day, can be categorized as another type of after-school enrichment program. They also share many costs with after-school sports programs. Kroshus observes several factors in parents' "decision to allow their...child to play a given organized sport: time for other activities, cost of sport participation, how to get the child to and from practices and games... emotional stress of sport, impact on schoolwork/homework."¹⁴ In the tuition-based model, music is offered at the school and is an extra-curricular activity taught by an employee of a company outside the school district. The

¹¹ Martina Vasil, "Extrinsic Motivators Affecting Fourth-Grade Students' Interest and Enrollment in an Instrumental Music Program," *Applications of Research in Music Education* 32, no. 1 (2013): 80. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/8755123313502345>.

¹² Baker and Witt, "Multiple Stakeholders' Views of the Goals and Content of Two After-School Enrichment Programs," 77.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁴ Kroshus et al., "Socioeconomic Status and Parent Perceptions about the Costs and Benefits of Youth Sport," 16, no. 11 (November 10, 2021): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0258885>.

quality of instruction can vary widely because the vetting process is up to the company. It is possible to have an expert musician with a passion for teaching who is an outstanding instructor and motivator. Unfortunately, the opposite could be accurate, but the reality is most likely somewhere in between.

Elementary instrumental music is subject to many of the same arguments, both for and against, when approached as an after-school enrichment program. Parents are critical to the success of after-school activities because they “provide instrumental support in the form of transportation to and from practices and games, league fees, equipment, and spectatorship for the millions of children and adolescents involved in competitive sport and thus are integral to the existence of youth sports programs.”¹⁵ The most obvious challenge is money. Fu describes extracurricular tuition as “supplementary teaching provided by private individuals and institutions, which needs to be paid, beyond the formal school education.”¹⁶ Any additional activity added to one’s schedule creates increased responsibility and stress.

Participation in extracurricular sports programs is a common additional financial burden for families.¹⁷ Fu describes additional stressors that result “in an overburden for students, anxiety among parents, and a pursuit of profit.”¹⁸ The other main challenges are time, transportation, and money. Families often discover more difficulty meeting the demands of transportation and

¹⁵ Lenny D. Wiersma and Angela M. Fifer, “The Schedule Has Been Tough but We Think It’s Worth It’: The Joys, Challenges, and Recommendations of Youth Sport Parents,” *Journal of Leisure Research* 40, no. 4 (December 2008): 505, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00222216.2008.11950150>.

¹⁶ Chengzhe Fu et al., “Effect Mechanism of Extracurricular Tuition and Implications on ‘Double Reduction’ Policy: Extracurricular Tuition Intensity, Psychological Resilience, and Academic Performance” 13, no. 3 (March 2, 2023): 1, <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs13030217>.

¹⁷ Wiersma and Fifer, “The Schedule Has Been Tough but We Think It’s Worth It’, 516.

¹⁸ Fu et al., “Effect Mechanism of Extracurricular Tuition and Implications on ‘Double Reduction’ Policy,” 1.

scheduling than providing funds for sports participation.¹⁹ The results indicate that other after-school activities share similar challenges. Because of this, parents often must make decisions about children's participation. Wiersma found, "Some parents mentioned that because of these time demands, they limited their child's involvement to a single sport, and often restricted other activities outside of the season."²⁰ That statement has severe implications for after-school music participation. In order to "fit everything in," parents and students must make choices.

Parental support is also essential for children's enjoyment of activities. Sports participation provides an example: "Parental provision of unconditional emotional support serves as a precursor for children's enjoyment of sport."²¹ Additionally, Wiersma found "children's goal orientation, learning, and worry to be directly associated with their perceptions of the motivational climate established by parents (and coaches). Moreover, children often rate parents as the most significant source of influence for participation ... or even the child's own decision to become involved."²² Therefore, educators should seek opportunities to foster parental support of children's musical endeavors.

There may be benefits for students from extracurricular tuition-based opportunities, however. Tuition-based after-school activities have the potential to enhance student academic performance.²³ Studies also indicate other emotional benefits. Baker found that "results indicated that self-esteem and academic achievement increases were greatest for students who participated

¹⁹ Wiersma and Fifer, "The Schedule Has Been Tough but We Think It's Worth It," 517.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 505.

²² Ibid., 517.

²³ Fu et al., "Effect Mechanism of Extracurricular Tuition and Implications on 'Double Reduction' Policy," 3.

in five or more after-school program activities over the course of the school year.”²⁴ Another benefit of an after-school program could also be child safety and behavior. “Developing appropriate after-school programs is critical since 3:00 to 6:00 pm. has been identified as one of the primary periods when children tend to be unsupervised and exposed to opportunities and circumstances that can lead to negative or delinquent behaviors.”²⁵

Parents also benefit from extracurricular activities and find teaching opportunities for their children. Wiersma’s findings indicate that “one of the major benefits that parents received from being involved in youth sports was the joy in observing a child’s enjoyment, improvement, development, and success.”²⁶ Some parents use sports to help their children build resiliency. Wiersma found that “parents did not want their children to develop the belief that they could quit any time a task became difficult, and they wanted their children to understand that it is not fair to the other kids on the team if they were to walk out half way through the season.”²⁷ As with all people, there are varying commitment levels. “However, the parents also felt it necessary, yet not easy, to balance commitment and fun; when it stopped being fun for the child, for various reasons, they were afraid of pushing the child to continue playing.”²⁸

There are three options for elementary instrumental music. The school district could fund the program or choose not to provide instrumental music education; these two models have been the prevailing trends. The third and newer alternative is the tuition-based model. By determining

²⁴ Baker and Witt, “Multiple Stakeholders’ Views of the Goals and Content of Two After-School Enrichment Programs,” 69.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Wiersma and Fifer, “The Schedule Has Been Tough but We Think It’s Worth It,” 514.

²⁷ Ibid., 518-519.

²⁸ Ibid., 519.

student and parent motivations for participation in elementary instrumental music, music educators can learn how to increase enrollment, resulting in program improvements at the middle and high school levels. An additional layer of complexity is added when the program must be funded by student tuition in a program that meets outside the school day. Because tuition-based elementary instrumental music that meets outside the school day is a newer model, more research is necessary. Due to this fact, throughout this document, research from other after-school enrichment programs and club sports is used where issues overlap. Common overlapping issues include participation fees, transportation, recruiting, retention, quality, time, and other opportunities.

Statement of the Problem

While many elementary instrumental music programs continue with a district-funded model, a handful of schools or districts have adopted a model that meets outside the school day and requires participation fees. This is sometimes referred to as a pay-to-play model.²⁹ A tuition-based model has two primary challenges and several smaller ones. The first challenge is time: the tuition-based model is relegated to extracurricular status and offers instrumental music classes outside the school day.³⁰ According to Lautzenheiser, “as school curricula evolve, there are more and more additional learning options available to the students...Every discipline has developed an outside-the-school-day agenda, from debate club to the National Honor Society, there is a huge demand on every student’s time.”³¹ The second challenge is tuition. Benham states, “[pay-to-play] is simply a convenient means of increasing the level of taxation for those who can afford

²⁹ Benham, *Music Advocacy: Moving from Survival to Vision*, 157-158.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 41, 158.

³¹ Tim Lautzenheiser, *Music Advocacy and Student Leadership: Key Components of Every Successful Music Program: A Collection of Writings* (Chicago: Gia Publications, Inc, 2005), 28.

or choose to have their children participate...adoption of fees can lead to significant attrition, particularly in areas of economic stress.”³² Other issues such as transportation can create further barriers to entry. This can be summed up by Wiersma’s statement, “Excessive time demands, monetary expense, transportation, limiting family time outside of school and sports—these were all challenging roles for parents.”³³ These challenges can create issues of equal access for students.

A tuition-based program also has a certain level of autonomy. It is less beholden to district standards due to outsourcing to a private entity that conducts business outside the school day. Tuition-based music programs could see increased enrollment in certain areas. Many students participate in club sports that practice year-round. Bjork found that “According to our parent survey, the annual cost of playing on a travel team ranged from several hundred dollars to \$15,000, with most parents reporting somewhere between \$1,000 and \$5,000.”³⁴ Music educators must learn to build this level of support and commitment for their programs. There is a gap in the literature that directly addresses a tuition-based, after-school elementary instrumental music program. Most of the literature on this topic is linked to other activities, such as athletic programming.

Statement of the Purpose

This qualitative, hermeneutic, phenomenological study aims to address a gap in the research and explore the determining factors for participation in elementary instrumental music programs for parents and students in a school district with a tuition-based model that meets

³² Benham, *Music Advocacy: Moving from Survival to Vision*, 158.

³³ Wiersma and Fifer, “The Schedule Has Been Tough but We Think It’s Worth It,” 525.

³⁴ Christopher Bjork and William Hoynes, “Parents Find Community: Youth Sports as a Mobile Neighborhood,” *Sport in Society* 25, no. 11 (July 11, 2017): 2290, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2021.1932817>.

outside the school day. This model is employed because, as one author notes, the “researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals.”³⁵ Participants engaged in semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions that provided perspectives based on their lived experiences. The interviews were designed to “listen to participants and build an understanding based on what is heard” from families with elementary students faced with a decision to participate in music or not.³⁶ A hermeneutic phenomenology was employed to allow the researcher to “acknowledge their own past experiences and existing knowledge as embedded in and essential to the interpretive process.”³⁷

IRB approval was obtained to conduct the research in order to interview parents of students eligible to participate in the elementary instrumental music program. The school district offers elementary instrumental music as an outside-the-school-day, tuition-based program. Participants were recruited through a series of emails. Emails were sent to families that had students who were eligible to participate in the elementary instrumental program. Participants who replied were sent a short email to confirm their qualifications for the study. Eligible participants included three groups of parents divided by role within the district. The first group only has a single role as a parent in the district. The second group has a dual role of parent and teacher within the district. The third group consists of one participant with a dual role as parent and administrator within the district. After confirmation of eligibility, an interview was scheduled at a time and format of the participants’ choice. All interviews were conducted either

³⁵ John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, 2018), 13.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 63.

³⁷ William E Bynum and Lara Varpio, “When I Say ... Hermeneutic Phenomenology,” *Medical Education* 52, no. 3 (September 12, 2017): 252, <https://doi.org/10.1111/medu.13414>.

in person or over Zoom. All interviews were audio recorded using otter.ai and a handheld voice recorder as a backup.³⁸

In this context, family is defined by a parent with at least one student who is eligible to participate in the program. General question categories included personal and social benefits, school and community beliefs, overall program benefits, and potential barriers to entry.³⁹ Interviews attempted to determine factors in the choice for participation, such as perceived level of enjoyment, social connection, and extracurricular opportunities. Participants were also asked questions about tuition, time commitment, and transportation. These surveys were collected, and data were analyzed to assess trends related to both students' and parents' thoughts about music participation in this setting. The questions were the same for all participants except for one. The parents with an additional employee role were asked to address their perception from the perspective of a teacher or administrator as applicable due to their dual role.

Significance of the Study

More research is needed because only a few schools and districts have adopted a tuition-based model. Because the idea is relatively new, no studies of long-term effects exist. The study's significance lies in the newness of the delivery method for elementary instrumental music. Educators can increase effectiveness in growing music programs by ascertaining the motivations for participation and identifying barriers to entry on the part of both parents and students.

³⁸ www.otter.ai

³⁹ James J Zhang et al., "Development of an Evaluation Scale to Measure Participant Perceptions of After-School Enrichment Programs," *Measurement in Physical Education and Exercise Science* 6, no. 3 (September 1, 2002): 181, https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327841mpee0603_2.

Decreased enrollment numbers have big-picture implications, even at the district level. Benham agrees when stating, “any circumstance that causes a decline in student enrollment or prevents students from participation will have a negative cost effect on the district budget.”⁴⁰ Enrollment numbers directly affect FTE allocations, funding, and course offerings. Decreased enrollment makes advocating for music programs with administrators, school boards, and the community more difficult.

This issue affects all stakeholders in music education. If the enrollment numbers do not justify keeping music programs, they will be eliminated. If a tuition-based model becomes more widespread throughout the country, music educators need to be aware of the perceptions and implications of this model’s adoption. This is because, as one author notes, “adoption of participation fees can lead to significant attrition, particularly in areas of economic stress.”⁴¹ As with any system, there are strengths and challenges, but these issues should be highlighted.

School music programs nationwide are seeing a decline in enrollment numbers. Brinkmeyer observes, “Our profession is experiencing a crisis because music education in American public schools could be facing eventual extinction.”⁴² Students today are participating in more activities with higher commitment levels than ever. Sports and dance activities often require travel and a full-year commitment from families at a substantial cost. Acknowledging the commitment to time and transportation for these activities is also essential. Music education programs that utilize a “pay-to-play” model only increase each family's financial, time, and transportation burden, which can lead to a decline in enrollment.

⁴⁰ Benham, *Music Advocacy: Moving from Survival to Vision*, 155.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 158.

⁴² Lynn M Brinckmeyer, *Advocate for Music!*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 1.

Upon entering middle school, students usually have more freedom in choosing elective classes with a wider variety of options. Because of this newfound freedom, students are less likely to begin studying instrumental music.⁴³ The ubiquitous use of technology, including social media, also reduces the time for more productive activities, contributing to enrollment declines. Hash observes that “declines were more substantial among beginners in all grades and non-beginners in grades 5-8.”⁴⁴ There are music educators who have overcome these and other barriers to entry into instrumental music programs. Educators can learn to increase program numbers by determining the factors that motivate families to commit more resources to the instrumental music program. Participation numbers should increase as the barriers to entry are lowered.

This study addresses the unique situation of an after-school tuition-based program. Lessons learned from this study can be applied to “traditional,” or free, in-the-school-day, programs. Music educators must be aware of the issues surrounding instrumental music enrollment; this awareness will help them grow programs, making them more challenging to cut. According to Black, in 2020, 54% of children aged six to seventeen participated in organized sports in the prior twelve months.⁴⁵ Parents are willing to support activities they deem valuable. Music educators can discover the factors that influence participation in music programs through this study, which can help them become more effective advocates with both parents and students.

⁴³ Benham, *Music Advocacy: Moving from Survival to Vision*, 155.

⁴⁴ Phillip Hash, “Enrollment in Illinois School Bands during the COVID-19 Pandemic,” *Journal of Band Research* 58, no. 2 (Spring 2023): 72, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2823698866>.

⁴⁵ Lindsey Black, Emily Terlizzi, and Anjel Vahratian, “Organized Sports Participation among Children Aged 6-17 Years: United States, 2020,” *NCHS Data Brief, No 441* (August 2022): 1, <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db441.pdf>.

Research Questions

To explore parent and student perspectives on elementary instrumental music participation and develop semi-structured interview questions, the following research questions and hypotheses were addressed:

Research Question 1: What are the characteristics of elementary instrumental music programs that influence students' decisions to participate in elementary instrumental programs?

Hypothesis 1: Characteristics of an elementary instrumental music program that influence students' decisions to participate in elementary instrumental programs include the perceived level of enjoyment, social connection, and extracurricular opportunities.

Research Question 2: What are the characteristics of elementary instrumental music programs that influence parents' willingness to facilitate participation in elementary instrumental programs?

Hypothesis 2: Characteristics of an elementary instrumental music program that influence parents' decisions to support elementary instrumental programs include tuition, transportation, and time.

Definition of Terms

1. After-school program- Enrichment programs that meet outside the school day; the most common are academic, sports, and arts-focused.⁴⁶
2. FTE (Full-time equivalent)- A calculation used to determine, among other things, student-teacher staffing ratios in schools.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Benham, *Music Advocacy: Moving from Survival to Vision*, 201.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 204.

3. Pay-to-play, fee-based, tuition-based- A participation fee for co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.⁴⁸
4. Youth sports- A specific type of after-school program that involves athletic activities focuses on school-aged children.⁴⁹
5. Pull-out program- elementary instrumental music programs offered on a voluntary basis in which students are “pulled out from their regular classroom instruction.”⁵⁰

Summary

Music educators have worked for years attempting to build successful, vibrant music programs. Exemplary elementary, middle, and high school programs exist in school districts of all sizes and economic situations. Only a few districts have exemplary elementary, middle, and high school programs in all areas, including general, vocal, and instrumental. One benchmark for schools of high quality shows elementary instrumental music participation greater than 65% of total enrollment and attrition rates of lower than 15% in subsequent grade levels. While some school districts have continued with a district-funded model for their elementary instrumental music program, others have chosen to adopt one that meets outside the school day and may or may not be tuition-based.

An outside-the-school-day tuition-based model has strengths and weaknesses. One possible advantage of a tuition-based model is the added value parents and students place on musical participation due to the time and money invested in learning an instrument. Ferreira and Armstrong observed, “Parents who may not know much about an organisation can either

⁴⁸ Benham, *Music Advocacy: Moving from Survival to Vision*, 205.

⁴⁹ Wiersma and Fifer, “Parents Find Community: Youth Sports as a Mobile Neighborhood,” 2299.

⁵⁰ Suzanne Brookey, “A History of Music Education in the Baldwin Park Unified School District 1950-2015,” (MA thesis, Azusa Pacific University, Azusa, 2015), 43, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1970370980>.

correctly or incorrectly infer that high price must mean high quality and choose programs accordingly.”⁵¹ As the name “tuition-based” implies, it requires a more significant financial commitment from families. It also requires an increased commitment of time and transportation. When speaking about travel sports teams, Bjork states, “attachment to a travel team imposed distinctive demands on them, but also put them in regular [contact] with other adults who shared their interests and values.”⁵²

On the positive side, a more significant commitment to resources can also lead to a more outstanding intrinsic commitment that reduces attrition rates. Ferreira and Armstrong state that “parents who have spent more time (and have subsequently invested more money and energy) ... may consider or weigh their investments and feel more compelled to continue in the activity and in the organisation than parents who have not spent as much time in the activity and in the organisation.”⁵³ Instead of allowing students to have “downtime,” it can increase student engagement and help improve grades. Lowe observes that, “positive outcomes among youth who regularly attended high-quality afterschool programs, either alone or in combination with varied sets of additional enrichment experiences available in their neighborhoods.”⁵⁴ It also gives the music educator a degree of autonomy that is unavailable when tied to a district-funded model.

⁵¹ Mauricio Ferreira and Ketra L. Armstrong, “An Investigation of the Relationship between Parents’ Causal Attributions of Youth Soccer Dropout, Time in Soccer Organisation, Affect towards Soccer and Soccer Organisation, and Post-Soccer Dropout Behaviour,” *Sport Management Review* 5, no. 2 (November 2002): 154, [https://doi.org/10.1016/s1441-3523\(02\)70065-x](https://doi.org/10.1016/s1441-3523(02)70065-x).

⁵² Wiersma and Fifer, “Parents Find Community: Youth Sports as a Mobile Neighborhood,” 2296.

⁵³ Ferreira and Armstrong, “An Investigation of the Relationship between Parents’ Causal Attributions of Youth Soccer Dropout, Time in Soccer Organisation, Affect towards Soccer and Soccer Organisation, and Post-Soccer Dropout Behaviour,” 157.

⁵⁴ Deborah Lowe Vandell, Elizabeth R. Reisner, and Kim M. Pierce, “Outcomes Linked to High-Quality Afterschool Programs: Longitudinal Findings from the Study of Promising Afterschool Programs” (University of California Irvine, October 2007), <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED499113.pdf>.

For example, a tuition-based program can utilize resident expert musicians with a passion for teaching but no state teaching license.

A district-funded model also has strengths and weaknesses. It allows more students to participate with a lower cost of entry due to a lack of tuition, transportation issues, and classes that meet during the school day. A significant financial commitment is only required of parents who need access to an instrument; school districts that supply instruments can allow students to participate for free. This is also true for families that currently own an instrument for student use.

This study assessed parent perceptions of families residing in a district with an outside-the-school-day, tuition-based program. The goal of the study was to determine the perceptions of the parents and students with access to these programs. A quality music education program should include the highest possible number of students. This study aimed to learn how to maximize student participation within this system.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

Healthy music programs have strong enrollment, which inherently has greater support due to more families being involved. Unfortunately, building healthy music programs has become more complicated in recent years due to district budget reductions.¹ Stephen Benham states that “the number one goal of the music educator...should be to build a program that serves a large portion of the school population and where student achievement is high, teaching is based on sound educational practice, the program is relevant to the community, and drop-out rates are low.”² This is even more critical in the current social climate as fewer people participate in music-making. In an increasingly isolated society, group music-making has the unique ability to bring people together. Unfortunately, participation in bands, orchestras, and choirs is becoming less common among all age groups.³

The school music curriculum should include group music-making opportunities for all students.⁴ Many schools have added music classes such as guitar, piano, and music technology to curricular offerings. These offerings, while beneficial, promote isolated music-making. Easy access to isolated musical activities can lead to the extinction of group participation, however.. Thram states: “I am concerned...for the many students who do not participate in the music curriculum beyond primary school, and therefore have few opportunities for group participation

¹ Brinckmeyer, *Advocate for Music!*, 1.

² Benham, *Music Advocacy: Moving from Survival to Vision*, 52.

³ Diane Thram, “Understanding Music’s Therapeutic Efficacy: Implications for Music Education,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy in Music Education*, ed. Wayne D. Bowman and Ana Lucia Frega (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 193.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 194.

in music-making except as spectators.”⁵ Instrumental ensembles offer a unique opportunity in this regard.

School system decision-makers often make educational programming choices based on budgetary concerns. Due to their distance from the classroom, administrators and school board members tend to focus on “adult-centered issues” associated with education.⁶ Major discovered a much more complex process, in which she states the following:

Administrators considered (a) their personal values and philosophies of music education, (b) the values and demands of the community, (c) the quality of teaching that (the district) could afford and provide, (d) the aesthetic and utilitarian purposes of keeping music education in the curriculum, (e) the economic value that music added, and (f) how the program contributed to the overall image of the school district.⁷

Within this context, administrators also value the music program’s ability to promote social engagement and academic enhancement of other subjects.⁸ Music educators should focus their advocacy efforts in these areas to maximize administrative support of their programs.

Administrators must make yearly staffing decisions based on actual and projected enrollments. In a site-based school district, each building principal is given a total FTE for the building that must be divided across content areas. These assignments are based on course enrollments for elective courses, such as music. Fewer music enrollments lead to fewer course offerings in music, which can result in a loss of music FTE.⁹ Fewer course offerings can also

⁵ Thram, “Understanding Music’s Therapeutic Efficacy: Implications for Music Education,” 207.

⁶ Benham, *Music Advocacy: Moving from Survival to Vision*, 36.

⁷ Marci L Major, “How They Decide: A Case Study Examining the Decision-Making Process for Keeping or Cutting Music in a K–12 Public School District,” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 61, no. 1 (2013): 17, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0022429412474313>.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁹ Hash, “Enrollment in Illinois School Bands during the COVID-19 Pandemic,” 73.

result in part-time teaching positions or full-time positions at multiple schools.¹⁰ Rogers related a personal story of charter schools that opened in his area, resulting in reduced enrollment. He states: “At first, it was one music appreciation class to fill my schedule, then two when the choir director and art teacher left...But the personal reality was I needed numbers to keep my full-time job.”¹¹ The music teacher was asked to teach courses outside their area of expertise, which is a common scenario. It is incumbent upon decision-makers and music educators to provide the best possible experience for their students. Students rarely have a voice in choosing their teachers, including music teachers, therefore, decision-makers must act faithfully on behalf of their constituent students.¹²

School districts with elementary instrumental programs have traditionally funded the instruction, facilities, and equipment necessary to provide it. Other districts have chosen to offer instrumental education beginning at the middle school level. Schools are advised to start instrumental music at the elementary level because students are less likely to begin music instruction while simultaneously moving to middle school.¹³

A common vehicle for offering elementary instrumental music classes is a “pull-out” program, where students are removed from regular classroom instruction.¹⁴ The Baldwin Park

¹⁰ Gardner, “Should I Stay or Should I Go? Factors That Influence the Retention, Turnover, and Attrition of K–12 Music Teachers in the United States,” 117.

¹¹ Brad Rogers, “A Driven, Meaningful Change to the Band,” *School Band & Orchestra* 22, no. 10 (October 2019), 22, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2306076903>.

¹² Thomas A. Regelski, “Ethical Dimensions of School-Based Education,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy in Music Education*, ed. Wayne D. Bowman and Ana Lucia Frega (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 287.

¹³ Benham, *Music Advocacy: Moving from Survival to Vision*, 155.

¹⁴ Brookey, “A History of Music Education in the Baldwin Park Unified School District 1950-2015 - ProQuest,” 43.

music program in California is one such example. Brookey observes: “District music at the elementary level is strictly voluntary for students on a ‘pull-out’ basis during their regular school day for instrument instruction. Students can take classes in strings (grades four, five, and six) and winds (grades five and six).”¹⁵ Unfortunately, these programs are often one of the first to appear on a list of potential programming cuts at the district level. There are two reasons for this. First, it eliminates staffing redundancy because a different teacher can supervise the students. Second, there is a failure to consider the long-term consequences of secondary programs.¹⁶ A tuition-based approach to elementary instrumental music is highly uncommon; it is often simply an effort to appease those who wish to cut the program but still offer it in some form. Unfortunately, as Benham notes, “at the basic level, this is simply a convenient means of increasing the level of taxation for those who can afford or choose to have their children participate.”¹⁷ Therefore, more research needs to be done by music educators in areas that utilize this unique model.

This literature review uses music education research and research related to other after-school activities with commonalities to an outside-the-school-day, tuition-based model. The two most common research sources include after-school sports and academic enrichment programs. A study of these areas, coupled with music education research, provides valuable insight into a before- or after-school elementary instrumental music program.

Overarching Issues

There is an expanding trend of declining numbers of music teachers nationwide. Mark discovered that, “in 2012, there were 7,000 fewer music teachers in K-12 schools than there were

¹⁵ Brookey, “A History of Music Education in the Baldwin Park Unified School District 1950-2015 - ProQuest,” 43.

¹⁶ Benham, *Music Advocacy: Moving from Survival to Vision*, 155.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 158.

in 2010.”¹⁸ In 2023, over 40% of string teaching positions remained vacant.¹⁹ This may be, in part, due to frustrations with school administration. Music teachers can exert a high level of control over their classroom, however, their control wanes as decisions progress to the building or district level.²⁰

Parental involvement is critical to students' success regardless of the program or academic pursuit. Parent involvement tends to be higher when children are younger, then declines as they age.²¹ Deisler states that “whereas the relationship between parental involvement and affective outcomes increased with age, the relationship between parental involvement and cognitive and performance outcomes were strongest for elementary level students.”²² Band teachers also recognize the importance of parental support as an essential factor in the program's success.²³ Gardner discovered that a lack of parental support is a point of contention among music teachers. He found that music teachers “felt that the three most problematic issues were students coming to school unprepared to learn, lack of parental involvement, and student apathy.”²⁴ This issue seems to be mitigated through a series of support mechanisms for music teachers. Gardner found, “the more teachers felt supported by their administrators, the more they

¹⁸ Michael L. Mark and Patrice D., Madura, *Contemporary Music Education* (Boston, MA: Schirmer Cengage Learning, 2014), 224.

¹⁹ Gardner, “Should I Stay or Should I Go? Factors That Influence the Retention, Turnover, and Attrition of K–12 Music Teachers in the United States,” 112.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 116.

²¹ Amy Cox-Petersen, *Educational Partnerships: Connecting Schools, Families, and the Community* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2011), 114.

²² Ann M Deisler, “A Comparison of Common Characteristics of Successful High School Band Programs in Low Socioeconomic Schools and High Socioeconomic Schools,” (PhD diss., The Florida State University, Tallahassee, 2011), 8-9, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/902729862/6449CA883FCE427EPQ/>

²³ *Ibid.*, 105.

²⁴ Gardner, “Should I Stay or Should I Go? Factors That Influence the Retention, Turnover, and Attrition of K–12 Music Teachers in the United States,” 116.

felt that their students' parents were supportive and that they had control over their instructional practices within their classroom, and the less likely they were to leave their position for another teaching job or leave the profession altogether."²⁵

The current academic environment of Common Core and standardized testing makes it increasingly difficult for all elective subjects, including music, to offer robust, comprehensive programs. The After School Alliance attributes this to budget cuts with an increased emphasis on standardized test scores.²⁶ After School Alliance states: "a national survey of 3rd to 12th-grade public school teachers found that approximately half say that both arts instruction and music are getting less attention in school (51 percent and 48 percent, respectively)."²⁷ They concluded, "Arts education is competing for schools' time and resources, but is often coming out second best."²⁸ This contrasts the opinion of many stakeholders who would prefer to keep programs such as music and cut administrative funding.²⁹

There is a demand for after-school programming within parent communities. In 2022, almost twenty-five million children wished to access after-school programming.³⁰ Baker identified peak demand in the hours immediately after school due to a lack of childcare.³¹ The

²⁵ Gardner, "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Factors That Influence the Retention, Turnover, and Attrition of K–12 Music Teachers in the United States," 120.

²⁶ "Arts Enrichment in Afterschool," www.afterschoolalliance.org, 2012, https://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/issue_briefs/issue_arts_enrichment_56.pdf.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ afterschoolalliance.org, "Arts Enrichment in Afterschool."

²⁹ Anna Maria Corral, "A Case Study of the Role of High School Booster Organizations in Fund Raising, Governance Issues, and Personnel Decisions," (EdD diss., University of Southern California, Los Angeles, 2001), 4, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/275985479/96E21D8B099D45BAPQ>.

³⁰ "Access to Afterschool Programs Remains a Challenge for Many Families" August 2022, <https://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/Afterschool-COVID-19-Parent-Survey-2022-Brief.pdf>.

³¹ Baker and Witt, "Multiple Stakeholders' Views of the Goals and Content of Two After-School Enrichment Programs," 69.

benefits of after-school programs have, in his words, “indicated that self-esteem and academic achievement increases were greatest for students who participated in five or more after-school program activities over the course of the school year.”³² The content areas of programs are wide-ranging, from academic assistance to sports and the arts. Children may be unable to enroll in after-school programs for various reasons. In some cases, there is a lack of offerings or spots available. The most common issue is the cost associated with attending. The After School

Alliance states:

When examining obstacles parents face enrolling their child in an afterschool program, the cost of programs is at the top of the list of barriers. Fifty-seven percent of parents report that afterschool programs being too expensive was an important factor in their decision not to enroll their child. Other barriers include lack of a safe way for their child to get to and from programs (52 percent); inconvenient program locations (51 percent); and programs’ hours of operation not meeting parent needs (49 percent).³³

These findings align with the common barriers to entry for tuition-based elementary instrumental music programs.

Parent Concerns

Parents are critical in children’s musical activities. Often, they must supply instruments and materials. In the case of elementary programs, they have the added burden of transportation. There is an increased cost burden in tuition-based programs and private lesson situations. Chan describes this phenomenon in community-based sports programs, where he states the following:

[These programs] can be unique in that these “non-playing participants,” such as parents and legal guardians, are the crucial decision-makers for children’s participation. These non-playing participants—or attendees—consume a great amount of time, effort, and resources so that their children can be involved ... (e.g., transporting their children to and from practices and games)... Without parents’ inclination to become involved in the

³² Baker and Witt, “Multiple Stakeholders’ Views of the Goals and Content of Two After-School Enrichment Programs,” 69.

³³ Afterschoolalliance.org, “Access to Afterschool Programs Remains a Challenge for Many Families.”

community-based youth sport programs, children cannot gain any benefit that can be from participating in sports activities.³⁴

The surrounding community must also have the correct combination of support systems to aid in the success of after-school programs.³⁵ It is incumbent on teachers to create and communicate the value of these programs. The community is willing to support participation in programs they find valuable.³⁶

Parents of music students want to see their children do well in their musical endeavors, and the value of a two-parent household should not be underestimated. Music participation is higher, and attrition rates are lower for students who live in two-parent households.³⁷ Grogan found that parental involvement levels varied widely at schools of different socio-economic statuses.³⁸ In areas of higher socio-economic status, this often translates to parents who seek out extra musical opportunities for their children. These families often commit to private lessons to ensure their children get opportunities to achieve musical honors, such as higher chair placement.³⁹ Grogan's interviewee offered a balanced approach, stating, "The schools where the parents have more money, you tend to have more parent involvement. Sometimes that's good. Sometimes it's not

³⁴ Amy Chan Hyung Kim, Joshua I. Newman, and Woong Kwon, "Developing Community Structure on the Sidelines: A Social Network Analysis of Youth Sport League Parents," *The Social Science Journal* 57, no. 2 (January 27, 2020): 180, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.soscij.2018.11.011>.

³⁵ Priscilla M. Little, "Evaluating Afterschool Programs," *New Directions for Youth Development* 2014, no. 144 (December 2014): 122, <https://doi.org/10.1002/yd.20117>.

³⁶ Marci L Major, "How They Decide: A Case Study Examining the Decision-Making Process for Keeping or Cutting Music in a K–12 Public School District," 18.

³⁷ Daryl Kinney, "Selected Nonmusic Predictors of Urban Students' Decisions to Enroll and Persist in Middle School Band Programs," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 57, no. 4 (2021): 345, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/214477102>.

³⁸ Robert Joseph Grogan III, "A High Achieving Middle School Band at a High Poverty School in Georgia: A Case Study," (PhD Diss., Auburn University, Auburn, 2022), 65, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2724241574/82092B823FA442ACPQ>.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

good, but then you go to the high need schools, and you rarely get parent involvement which is good and bad sometimes.”⁴⁰ Educators in all contexts should communicate regularly with parents to foster positive support students.

School Funding

School district funding varies by state, but some generalizations can be made. Mark states, “state education law determines how funds are distributed and utilized within the state (in keeping with federal guidelines and policies).”⁴¹ State tax revenue provides the majority of funding for most school districts.⁴² School funding models and levels vary between states. This can affect funding between school districts and even individual schools.⁴³ As a result, the public wants to be able to account for the results that schools produce. Hansen continued, “Current funding trends are beginning to link schools’ [productivity] with the potential amount of capital received.”⁴⁴ Therefore, music educators “must be vigilant about informing the school and community about the “outputs” of district music programs.”⁴⁵ This will help to ensure music programs stay viable.

Funding in schools has been an issue for a long time. As a result, music programs have seen a steady decline in teachers and course offerings. Corral states the following:

Prior to Proposition 13, the Los Angeles Unified School District had instrumental and choral programs at every school, a regular music teacher assigned to every school, and a

⁴⁰ Grogan, “A High Achieving Middle School Band at a High Poverty School in Georgia: A Case Study,” 65.

⁴¹ Mark and Madura, *Contemporary Music Education*, 68.

⁴² Dee Hansen, *Handbook for Music Supervision* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2007), 55.

⁴³ Jagow, *Teaching Instrumental Music (Second Edition): Developing the Complete Band Program*, 259.

⁴⁴ Hansen, *Handbook for Music Supervision*, 55.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 56.

traveling music teacher. In 1990, the district had fewer than 25 instrumental music teachers and 72 traveling music teachers assigned to 360 elementary schools. The remaining 60 elementary schools were on a waiting list to be included in the music program.⁴⁶

Current funding trends do not necessarily mean reducing the music education program. Major found “no significant relationship between budget limitations and the reduction or elimination of instrumental music in California public schools.”⁴⁷ Music education's value must be communicated at the administrative level.

Funding issues also arise when equipment-related problems occur. In many school-funded programs, instruments are provided by the school, which can add another layer of complexity. Instrument repair and replacement must be accounted for when budgeting for music programs involving beginning elementary students who are learning to care for and play an instrument.⁴⁸ Unfortunately, school administrators may not see a lack of funding as a problem. Deisler states, “some of the characteristics the principals thought were the least influential to the success of the band were ‘high quality instruments...successful fundraisers...and adequate funding’.”⁴⁹ When administrators value the music programs, however, funding can be substantial. Programs that receive substantial funding are able provide significant resources to students, contributing to the overall health of the program.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Corral, “A Case Study of the Role of High School Booster Organizations in Fund Raising, Governance Issues, and Personnel Decisions,” 18.

⁴⁷ Major, “How They Decide: A Case Study Examining the Decision-Making Process for Keeping or Cutting Music in a K–12 Public School District,” 7.

⁴⁸ Deisler, “A Comparison of Common Characteristics of Successful High School Band Programs in Low Socioeconomic Schools and High Socioeconomic Schools,” 107.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁵⁰ Grogan, “A High Achieving Middle School Band at a High Poverty School in Georgia: A Case Study,” 79.

Alternative Music Education Programs

At times, school districts have made unpopular decisions to meet budget goals. Shaw outlines a situation in the Lansing School District that eliminated twenty-seven elementary music teaching positions.⁵¹ Music educators must be aware of hidden agendas, which Benham also speaks to.⁵² In the Lansing case, the cuts were often presented as reducing planning time instead of eliminating music, art, and P.E. teachers.⁵³ The remaining classroom teachers were tasked with the additional responsibility of teaching “specials” classes such as art, music, and P.E.⁵⁴ This solution shares the same problems as other arts organizations' partnerships: a lack of consistent, sequential, quality instruction. One of Shaw’s interviewees highlighted this, stating: “There were people teaching music that could not even read music...I saw people teaching music that had the music book upside down.”⁵⁵ Decision-makers must work to provide qualified teachers for all disciplines, including music.

In the history of education, after-school programs are a relatively new phenomenon. During the 1990s, as one author notes, “after-school programs gained popularity based on the need for students to have more supervision after school.”⁵⁶ A significant hurdle for many after-school providers is hiring quality instructors. Langreo states the following:

The Ed(ucation) Week Research Center conducted a nationally representative survey...of 269 K-12 principals and 712 after-school program personnel. It found that 67 percent of principals and 61 percent of after-school providers said a major challenge right now and

⁵¹ Ryan D. Shaw, “The Vulnerability of Urban Elementary School Arts Programs a Case Study,” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 65, no. 4 (2018): 394, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48588720>.

⁵² Benham, *Music Advocacy: Moving from Survival to Vision*, 88.

⁵³ Ryan D. Shaw, “The Vulnerability of Urban Elementary School Arts Programs a Case Study,” 406.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 394.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 401.

⁵⁶ Cox-Petersen, *Educational Partnerships: Connecting Schools, Families, and the Community*, 43.

for the foreseeable future is recruiting and retaining qualified employees for after-school programs, whether they are run by the schools themselves or outside organizations.⁵⁷

This was apparent in the study from an after-school program in Alaska whose program was “operating at 30 percent capacity” due to a lack of staff and applicants.⁵⁸

The three main categories of after-school programs are academics, athletics, and arts. Best of Out-Of-School Time (BOOST) Collaborative took notice of the freedoms associated with afterschool programs. BOOST states that “afterschool programs...are unrestricted by curriculum guidelines, standardized accountability, and, for the most part, state and federal mandates. They can support academic success and social-emotional competence through individualization to students’ needs and background.”⁵⁹ Therefore, program quality is left to the discretion of the provider, whose standards may vary greatly.

There have been studies of after-school programs with overall positive results. Cox-Petersen states, “Many students in after-school programs demonstrated more positive attitudes toward school...these children also have better grades, stronger work habits, positive emotional adjustments, and good peer relations.”⁶⁰ BOOST found that “SAFE (defined as sequenced, active, focused, and explicit) afterschool programs have been found to improve students’ self-efficacy and academic performance, while decreasing developmentally disruptive

⁵⁷ Lauraine Langreo, “After-School Programs Face Perfect Storm of Staffing and Funding Problems, Survey Finds,” *Education Week*, July 14, 2022, <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/after-school-programs-face-perfect-storm-of-staffing-and-funding-problems-survey-finds/2022/07>.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ BOOST Collaborative, “Filling in the Gaps: How Developmental Theory Supports Social Emotional Learning in Afterschool Programs,” BOOST Cafe, August 12, 2016, <https://boostcafe.org/social-emotional-learning-afterschool-programs/>.

⁶⁰ Cox-Petersen, *Educational Partnerships: Connecting Schools, Families, and the Community*, 73.

characteristics.”⁶¹ Instrumental music programs that meet outside the school day can provide a structure that can enhance academic and social-emotional skills found in other after-school programs.⁶² Provenzano conducted a study of an El Sistema-inspired after-school program (ESI-ASP). The study offered “empirical evidence that an ESI-ASP can provide opportunities for improved developmental health, social, and educational outcomes.”⁶³ The findings here are notable due to their consistency across a variety of contexts.

Kinsella’s study provides a quality example of the programs described in the current analysis. She examined music education in England in which “there is curriculum music in school, specialist instrumental and vocal tuition, delivered by visiting teachers, along with a multitude of music organisations providing a range of activities on a short- and long-term basis, as well as independent music educators teaching aspects of music across genres in independent settings.”⁶⁴ Many commonalities were outlined here, such as varying quality of instruction, lack of a standard curriculum, and access issues. Kinsella found that the partnership between the schools and music educators utilizing the National Plan for Music Education (NPME) had some common faults. These included a lack of understanding of the role of each partner, a lack of knowledge of time constraints for music educators, and a warning for the careful handling of future partnerships.⁶⁵ In a different study, a partnership was developed between a university and

⁶¹ BOOST Collaborative, “Filling in the Gaps: How Developmental Theory Supports Social Emotional Learning in Afterschool Programs.”

⁶² Deisler, “A Comparison of Common Characteristics of Successful High School Band Programs in Low Socioeconomic Schools and High Socioeconomic Schools,” 4.

⁶³ Anthony M. Provenzano et al., “Effects of a University–School Partnered After-School Music Program on Developmental Health, Social, and Educational Outcomes,” *Journal of the Society for Social Work and Research* 11, no. 3 (September 1, 2020): 458–459, <https://doi.org/10.1086/709175>.

⁶⁴ Victoria Kinsella, “Re-Thinking Music Education Partnerships through Intra-Actions,” *Music Education Research* 24, no. 3 (2022): 299, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14613808.2022.2053510>.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 308.

an urban school to provide music lessons to elementary students. The university provided ten music education majors to teach lessons.⁶⁶ This partnership addresses a few common concerns around non-certified teachers in music classrooms, such as lack of curriculum.

One alternative instrumental music program was founded in a New England school district, which started a program titled *Making Music*. Jones stated, “The basic premise of *Making Music* was that teaching artists employed at CMS would come into the schools and provide free weekly music instruction on string, woodwind, and brass instruments during the school day. The program was initially housed in schools with no existing music programs.”⁶⁷ The program utilized teachers who promoted active learning, however, there were some opportunities for professional development. Jones's research reveals a common theme for these types of programs: “One of the inherent challenges faced in developing this partnership was structuring the program in a way that was beneficial to all parties. While the administrators, parents, and students were happy to have music in the schools, logistical issues permeated the partnership.”⁶⁸ These logistical challenges created social and cultural challenges as well. Integrating visiting teachers into the school community is one such challenge; visiting teachers with limited time in the building may find connecting with students, parents, and staff challenging.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Patrice Madura Ward-Steinman, “The Development of an After-School Music Program for At-Risk Children: Student Musical Preferences and Pre-Service Teacher Reflections,” *International Journal of Music Education* 24, no. 1 (April 2006): 87, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0255761406063111>.

⁶⁷ Sara K. Jones, “Making Music: A Community–School Music Partnership,” *Arts Education Policy Review* 121, no. 2 (April 2020): 64, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10632913.2019.1584136>.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 70.

The *Making Music* program was successful in ways like building community, despite challenges. Jones found, “The partnership also helped to build bridges outside of the school setting. *Making Music* helped to connect the school community with families and the larger community.”⁷⁰ Finally, Jones stated,

While the *Making Music* partnership could not replace having a full-time music educator who is part of the school community and understands the students’ needs, it did demonstrate how developing connections between the community and schools can be structured to potentially support the creation of music teacher positions, particularly in locations where music programs have previously ceased to exist.⁷¹

It is essential to acknowledge that despite existing in ideal circumstances, the music education received via this partnership provided value to the participants that is common to music classrooms. However, Jones recommended, “The school should also make sure a member of the school faculty or staff are present at all times to help teaching artists and schools to avoid potential liability issues.”⁷²

Music education programs are sometimes moved outside the school day to reduce the amount of building FTE or utilize the FTE for another program. This reduces the number of certified teachers required to work with music students. While after-school music programs may employ certified teachers, there is no requirement. Brinckmeyer observes: “using noncertified individuals to teach children and adolescents produces a haphazard mixture of pedagogical practices and an inconsistent curriculum.”⁷³ Some programs utilize professional musicians to work in their programs. This creates two potential issues, as Charles Seeger discovered. First, he

⁷⁰ Sara K. Jones, “Making Music: A Community–School Music Partnership,” 70.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁷² Jones, “Making Music: A Community–School Music Partnership,” 72.

⁷³ Brinckmeyer, *Advocate for Music!*, 23.

statest that “there were not enough competent musicians who were also competent teachers.”⁷⁴ Second, the professional “musician traditionally emphasized subject matter- devotion to the art- while the educator had more interest in the child than in the subject matter.”⁷⁵ Other after-school music programs like El Sistema, which is “fraught with insufficient teacher training,” have encountered similar problems.⁷⁶

After-school music programs have been acknowledged at the national level due to their increasing numbers. The National Association for Music Education (NAfME) stated, “After-school programs should supplement, not supplant, a complete music education program presented during the school day.”⁷⁷ However, NAfME concedes, “If a school does not offer music education courses during the day, then an after-school program used as a first step in a specific timetable developed with the ultimate goal of implementing day classes during the regular school day may be acceptable.”⁷⁸ Programs like El Sistema can potentially fill a gap in music instruction for students who may not have access due to a variety of circumstances.⁷⁹ Simpson observed several strengths in the El Sistema programs. She states that “the first theme, persistence, appeared when the young musicians pushed beyond fatigue and failure as they pursued musical excellence.”⁸⁰ She also noted, “Other adult participants in this study mentioned

⁷⁴ John E Clinton, *Embracing Administrative Leadership in Music Education* (Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc, 2015), 56.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Sean Corcoran, “Teaching Creative Music in El Sistema and After-School Music Contexts,” *International Journal of Music Education* 39, no.3 (August 2021): 323, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0255761421990820>.

⁷⁷ “After-School Music Education Programs,” NAfME, 2014, <https://nafme.org/about/position-statements/after-school-programs-and-music-education-position-statement/after-school-music-education-programs/>.

⁷⁸ NAfME, “After-School Music Education Programs.”

⁷⁹ Corcoran, “Teaching Creative Music in El Sistema and After-School Music Contexts,” 323-324.

perceptions of increased patience, self-control, responsibility, focus, and maturity as a result of the children's work."⁸¹ The program in Simpson's study also faced many of the same challenges as other after-school programs. Student engagement and the development of a sense of community were sometimes lacking. The community challenges were related to a lack of access to student information, which resulted in a lack of communication, as well as teachers who did not want to give up their classrooms for after-school use.⁸²

One major issue surrounding after-school music classes is equal opportunity. Personal factors such as finances, schedules, transportation, and outside commitments create barriers to entry for some students.⁸³ One of Simpson's interviewees mentioned this in speaking of the rural setting: "We don't have any kind of education like this out here. I mean it's costly, you have to invest a lot of finances and your own time as a parent to get your kids to music lessons. And it's after school and you know you have to take time off of work."⁸⁴ It is important to note that this program offers free instruction to children. The cost and time commitment mentioned by the interviewee were outside the scope of instruction itself. Instrumental music programs within the school day inherently offer more access due to the lack of other potential outside conflicts.

⁸⁰ Jamie Simpson Steele, "El Sistema Fundamentals in Practice: An Examination of One Public Elementary School Partnership in the US," *International Journal of Music Education* 35, no. 3 (2016): 361, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0255761416659514>.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 362.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 363.

⁸³ NAFME, "After-School Music Education Programs."

⁸⁴ Steele, "El Sistema Fundamentals in Practice: An Examination of One Public Elementary School Partnership in the US," 364.

Recruiting

Recruiting and retaining students is a consistent responsibility for music teachers, no matter the context. Educators need to develop programs and maintain them conscientiously throughout their careers. Benham discovered that “districts identified as of qualitative excellence consider 65 percent of grade 5 students as a minimum target level for participation in instrumental music, and a maximum of 15 percent attrition between any two grades.”⁸⁵

It is essential to note the importance of starting children on instruments earlier rather than later. Hartley’s study revealed that approximately 82% of districts started band and orchestra students in fourth or fifth grade.⁸⁶ The same study found approximately 85% of string students begin instrumental study in fourth, fifth, or sixth grades.⁸⁷ Hartley notes: “The MENC publication *The Complete String Guide* suggests that starting strings and band during the same year has several advantages: (a) A potentially larger participation rate in the overall instrumental program may occur, (b) attrition from the instrumental program may be reduced.”⁸⁸ Gordon did not advocate for a set chronological age but instead “advocated the necessity for sufficient motor dexterity to perform on a musical instrument at the elementary level of proficiency.”⁸⁹ Unfortunately, because children develop at different rates, but schools separate them by age, this approach is only realistic in private lesson settings.

⁸⁵ Benham, *Music Advocacy: Moving from Survival to Vision*, 152.

⁸⁶ Linda A. Hartley and Ann M. Porter, “The Influence of Beginning Instructional Grade on String Student Enrollment, Retention, and Music Performance,” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 56, no. 4 (January 2009): 375, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429408329134>.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 371.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 372.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 373.

Attrition rates are a topic of concern for music teachers. As students get older and discover new interests, their enthusiasm for music instruction wanes.⁹⁰ Benham's research agrees: "When a district delays the beginning of instrumental instruction to grade 6, there will be a minimum loss of 65 percent of the enrollment at the middle school level."⁹¹ Hartley's results "indicated that although the difference in enrollment between a fourth-grade start and starting in the later grades was not statistically significant when considering percentages, starting students in the fifth or sixth grades clearly yielded much higher retention rates by the end of seventh grade."⁹²

Unfortunately, current trends indicate "the drop-out rate of students from school band programs each year is approximately twenty to twenty-five percent."⁹³ The attrition rate in Hartley's study ranged from seventy-two percent on the low end to eighty-eight percent at its high. Kinney found that students with higher academic achievement were more likely to join band programs.⁹⁴

Kinney's research also looked at socio-economic status (SES) as a participation predictor. His study found, "that although SES may be a factor that affects retention of students, it does not necessarily influence students' initial enrollment in instrumental programs."⁹⁵ Music educators should find this news cautiously encouraging.

⁹⁰ Virginia W. Davis, "The Meaning of Music Education to Middle School General Music Students," *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, no. 179 (Winter 2009): 62, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40319330>.

⁹¹ Benham, *Music Advocacy: Moving from Survival to Vision*, 89.

⁹² Hartley and Porter, "The Influence of Beginning Instructional Grade on String Student Enrollment, Retention, and Music Performance," 381.

⁹³ Michael Davis, "Concert Band Recruiting and Retention Study and Survey for Central Louisiana" (MM thesis, University of the Arts, Philadelphia, 2017), 1, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2029198402/39467CC05FCA43FDPQ>

⁹⁴ Kinney, "Selected Nonmusic Predictors of Urban Students' Decisions to Enroll and Persist in Middle School Band Programs," 344.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 344-345.

Recruitment efforts must be intentional and thoughtfully designed to maximize their success. Music educators can learn from best practices in research as well as from their peers, and then adjust their individual methods accordingly. The visibility of the middle school program at the elementary level is a major contributing factor. This is notably true in the context of this study due to the various elementary instrumental formats, including those with no program.⁹⁶ Making the high school program visible and creating exposure is a common strategy for music educators.⁹⁷ Exposure can occur through various means, including concerts for students and parents, publicity within the community, social media efforts, and even the right t-shirts to promote the program.⁹⁸ Jackson promotes the use of transition programs for students moving between schools. His research reveals that “schools that offer three or more activities throughout the transition process increase the likelihood students will experience a successful transition and remain in school after the move.”⁹⁹ Jagow’s book highlights four contacts for teachers to make with elementary students: a quick informational visit, a recruiting concert, an instrument tryout, and a parent meeting.¹⁰⁰ Grogan observed an incredibly influential recruiting event for rising sixth-grade students. The principal spoke to the students during an orientation event and

⁹⁶ Daniel J. Albert, “Strategies for the Recruitment and Retention of Band Students in Low Socioeconomic School District,” *Contributions to Music Education* 33, no. 2 (2006), 65, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1305772/A0FE3E25E8BB41CCPQ>.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Albert L. Jackson, “The Effect of an Attrition Intervention Program on Middle School Band Students: An Action Research Study,” (EdD diss., Capella University, Minneapolis, 2016), 148, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1868502402/5E558028468347A8PQ>.

¹⁰⁰ Jagow, *Teaching Instrumental Music (Second Edition): Developing the Complete Band Program*, 247-250.

explained “why they should join a music program.”¹⁰¹ Albert also cited culturally relevant ensembles and positive student perception of the program as other significant factors influencing recruitment.

Retention

Once students have been successfully recruited into a program, the music educator must engage all stakeholders willing to continue through the course of study. Retention has been an area of concern for a significant amount of time. Rogers found conflicts with outside activities and academics significant contributing factors to student dropout.¹⁰² Band directors in Miksza’s study named energy and enthusiasm, along with motivational abilities, among the most essential qualities of effective teachers.¹⁰³ Martignetti’s study shows that 34% of elementary students discontinued playing in consecutive years.¹⁰⁴ Teachers in the study cited a “loss of interest due to parental indifference” as the most common reason to drop out.¹⁰⁵ Children in the study, on the other hand, cited difficulty learning an instrument as a reason for disliking it. This was coupled with a lack of time for practice due to other activities.¹⁰⁶ Parents cited the exact reasons for dropping out as their children, but the ranking was reversed. Due to its publication date,

¹⁰¹ Grogan, “A High Achieving Middle School Band at a High Poverty School in Georgia: A Case Study,” 73-74.

¹⁰² Bradford Dean Rogers, “Student Attrition in a High School Band Program: An Examination of the Reasons for Attrition Identified by Students and the Levels of Music Achievement among Senior Participants and Dropouts,” (MME thesis, University of Louisville, Louisville, 1989), 10, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/303718547/fulltextPDF/AAB29FA97874ACEPQ>.

¹⁰³ Peter Miksza, Matthew Roeder, and Dana Biggs, “Surveying Colorado Band Directors’ Opinions of Skills and Characteristics Important to Successful Music Teaching,” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 57, no. 4 (December 30, 2009): 377, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429409351655>.

¹⁰⁴ Anthony J. Martignetti, “Causes of Elementary Instrumental Music Dropouts,” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 13, no. 3, (Autumn 1965), 178, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3343672?seq=1>.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 181.

Martignetti's study reveals how recurring themes in music education have remained historically consistent.

Educators must work together to mitigate attrition. Jackson found “that there is a positive relationship between the collaborative effort of all band directors and stakeholders and attrition. This means that as the overall collaboration rate in intervention activities increases, the band attrition rate at the high school decreases.”¹⁰⁷ Successful teacher collaboration has facilitated up to 90% student retention rates from middle to high school.¹⁰⁸ Albert mentions three primary student retention attributes: “teacher personality, philosophical values, and proactive processes.”¹⁰⁹

Parents and students must perceive a program's value and support it through participation.

Baker observed the following:

[There was a] congruence of viewpoints may be critical to creating buy-in and support from various stakeholder groups. Even if programs are based on sound principles enunciated by experts, if children do not see the program as meeting their needs, they may not be willing to attend or, if forced to attend by their parents, may create behavior management problems. Or, if parents do not agree with the way programs are designed, they may not permit their children to attend.¹¹⁰

Holster's research echoed this same point, but it was applied to the students in the program.

Holster states the following as well:

¹⁰⁷ Jackson, “The Effect of an Attrition Intervention Program on Middle School Band Students: An Action Research Study,” 145.

¹⁰⁸ Daniel Tyner, “Exploring Middle and High School Band Directors' Perceptions of Collaboration and Its Impact on Their Programs: A Qualitative Study,” (PhD diss., Auburn University, Auburn, 2023), 64, https://etd.auburn.edu/bitstream/handle/10415/8958/Daniel_Garland_Tyner_DISSERTATION_FINAL_DRAFT.pdf?sequence=2.

¹⁰⁹ Albert, “Strategies for the Recruitment and Retention of Band Students in Low Socioeconomic School Districts,” 62.

¹¹⁰ Baker and Witt, “Multiple Stakeholders' Views of the Goals and Content of Two After-School Enrichment Programs,” 70.

As students come to view band or orchestra as interesting, enjoyable, important, and useful despite the costs—and as their social circumstances (e.g., teachers, peers, parents, socioeconomic status [SES]) reinforce those perceptions through variability in needs satisfaction—student motivation to continue studying and making music can be reignited or frustrated, resulting in continued enrollment over time or attrition from music studies.¹¹¹

Davis' research reveals that the social aspect of participation was one of the most significant contributing factors to music continuation for secondary students.¹¹² This is also reflected in Stewart's study, which found that "the most frequently cited reasons students gave for staying in band were 'fun,' 'friendships,' and 'travel'."¹¹³ Conversely, Stewart's interviewees "most frequently cited...other interests and activities" as their reason for dropping out."¹¹⁴ Albert's study of band directors found that they also valued the importance of parents in the retention process. One of Albert's interviewees stated that "we educate their parents as well as the students on how to be good band parents...The kids are more successful when their parents are involved."¹¹⁵ One should not underestimate the need to educate parents. Parents have a wide variety of experiences and expectations related to music education. Therefore, educators should clearly communicate program expectations and outcomes to create common understandings among stakeholders.

¹¹¹ Jacob D. Holster, "The Influence of Socioeconomic Status, Parents, Peers, Psychological Needs, and Task Values on Middle School Student Motivation for School Music Ensemble Participation," *Psychology of Music* 51, no. 2 (June 6, 2022): 450, <https://doi.org/10.1177/03057356221098095>.

¹¹² Davis, "Concert Band Recruiting and Retention Study and Survey for Central Louisiana," 20.

¹¹³ Jennifer L. Stewart, "Factors Related to Students' Decisions to Continue in Band," *Contributions to Music Education* 32, no. 1 (2005), 67, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/656905/A0FE3E25E8BB41CCPQ>.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹¹⁵ Albert, "Strategies for the Recruitment and Retention of Band Students in Low Socioeconomic School Districts," 63.

There is also discussion among music educators surrounding the issue of intrinsic versus extrinsic rewards. Dray's surveys of suburban students in elementary through high school revealed that "intrinsic motivation is the highest motivational orientation impacting students to join and remain in band programs."¹¹⁶ Lautzenheiser found that some students "consider playing their instrument as a means to the end, and when the end does not provide a satisfying extrinsic reward, they choose not to continue their study...In contrast, if intrinsic value is a mainstay of the band experience, the extrinsic disappointments are far less damaging."¹¹⁷ Therefore, music educators should focus on the intrinsic, instead of the extrinsic rewards.¹¹⁸ Fraser-Thomas' study of youth sports athletes found, "The most common reasons for participation relate to physical competence, social acceptance, and enjoyment, while the most commonly cited reasons for withdrawal include conflicts of interests, as well as negative experiences such as lack of fun, coach conflicts, and lack of playing time."¹¹⁹

Music teachers' personalities and leadership styles vary greatly. These variations can also contribute to continued participation. Fraser-Thomas observed coaching styles, stating the following about his research:

Typically, studies examining associations between parents' behaviors and youth sport outcomes have found that high perceived amounts of parent support, encouragement, involvement, and satisfaction have been associated with more enjoyment, intrinsic motivation, and preference for challenge. In contrast, high amounts of parental pressure,

¹¹⁶ Megan Dray, "Motivation and Retention of Instrumental Music Students in a Suburban School District" (MS thesis, State University of New York, Buffalo, 2014), 71, https://digitalcommons.buffalostate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1013&context=multistudies_theses.

¹¹⁷ Lautzenheiser, *Music Advocacy and Student Leadership: Key Components of Every Successful Music Program: A Collection of Writings*, 122.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 131.

¹¹⁹ Jessica Fraser-Thomas, Jean Cote, and Janice Deakin, "Examining Adolescent Sport Dropout and Prolonged Engagement from a Developmental Perspective," *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology* 20, no. 3 (July 16, 2008): 318-319, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10413200802163549>.

high expectations, criticism, and low amounts of parental support have been associated with decreased enjoyment, increased anxiety, dropout, and burnout.¹²⁰

The peer aspect of participation must not be overlooked. Fraser-Thomas discovered a direct correlation between youth peer relations and enjoyment of the activity. Positive peer relationships yielded enjoyment of the activity and motivation to continue, while negative relationships had the opposite effect.¹²¹ Unstructured play is also important to motivate children to continue their activities. Fraser-Thomas stated, “Findings suggest coaches must reinforce reasonable practice schedules to allow for other extra-curricular activity involvement, create fun and motivating climates...provide individual attention to all program participants, ...and facilitate effective communication with parents.”¹²²

Advocacy

Public school music participation rates have been on the decline for some time. Music advocacy efforts must be improved for music programs to survive and thrive. Lautzenheiser states: “Music advocacy should not be a reactionary device to a threatened music curriculum, but a pro-active tool that becomes a pillar of every music education offering.”¹²³ This is critically important when decision-makers like parents lack a musical background. Lautzenheiser continued, “It is far more difficult to be as convincing about our mission if our listeners/audiences are not attuned to the many benefits of music making or have no prior musical experiences in their own lives.”¹²⁴ This common situation requires a concerted effort for

¹²⁰ Fraser-Thomas, Cote, and Deakin, “Examining Adolescent Sport Dropout and Prolonged Engagement from a Developmental Perspective,” 320.

¹²¹ Ibid., 321.

¹²² Ibid., 320.

¹²³ Lautzenheiser, *Music Advocacy and Student Leadership: Key Components of Every Successful Music Program: A Collection of Writings*, 33.

effective advocacy. Even the best advocacy tools can be found lacking if communication is ineffective. Music education's value must be communicated clearly and concisely to all potential stakeholders and decision-makers.¹²⁵ Messaging must emphasize the importance of equal access to music programming for all children and help stakeholders understand the barriers to entry.¹²⁶ Finally, advocacy communication is an ongoing process requiring consistent, focused effort.¹²⁷

Music Coalition

Music teachers are often so engaged in their daily teaching duties that they do not recognize school district efforts that may hinder their programs in the future. Many districts do not have a music administrator to work with music teachers. Teachers in these contexts struggle to stay abreast of district initiatives and feel underrepresented at the central office level.¹²⁸ To aid this effort, writers have often advocated for creating a music coalition to advocate for the programs. Mark states, “Coalitions have the advantage of greater political clout and represent more constituents than any one discipline can muster.”¹²⁹ Coalitions can also be highly effective at addressing issues of equal access and barriers to entry.¹³⁰

¹²⁴ Lautzenheiser, *Music Advocacy and Student Leadership: Key Components of Every Successful Music Program: A Collection of Writings*, 50.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Tracee Garrison White, “The Role and Possible Impact of Music Administrators on School District Music Programs,” (DME Thesis, Liberty University, Lynchburg, 2021), 68, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2546615595>.

¹²⁹ Mark and Madura, *Contemporary Music Education*, 71.

¹³⁰ Benham, *Music Advocacy: Moving from Survival to Vision*, 14.

Benham's work outlines a music coalition's central executive committee that consists of four subcommittees: communications; administrative liaison; statistics and finance; and philosophy and curriculum.¹³¹ The East Lansing study conducted by Benham highlights the need for a unified coalition. First, he notes that the lack of a coalition of parent and community members "was likely of significant importance for the final decision since vocal groups of parents and community members who rally behind school district causes can wield enormous influence."¹³² He also highlights the need for a concerted effort with clear goals on the part of the coalition, whose "influence was hindered by internal disagreements."¹³³ Shaw agrees and states, "Communities must understand the value of a proactive arts education coalition that stems from meaningful relationships. Without active relationships...cuts like the ones in Lansing can be considered, voted on, and ratified before any substantial opposition is organized."¹³⁴ This scenario can play out when music educators focus solely on their individual programs without regard for larger, district-level issues.

Unfortunately, enrollment trends only seem to continue their decline. Holster found that "enrollment rates for band in a midwestern metropolitan area dropped from 25% of students in sixth grade to 17% in eighth grade and 9% in 10th grade. In orchestra settings, the enrollment rates dropped from 7% in sixth grade to 4% in eighth and 10th grades."¹³⁵ As enrollment and participation rates decline, it becomes more difficult to justify the need for a music program to

¹³¹ Benham, *Music Advocacy: Moving from Survival to Vision*, 15-17.

¹³² Ryan D. Shaw, "The Vulnerability of Urban Elementary School Arts Programs a Case Study," 405.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 405.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 410.

¹³⁵ Holster, "The Influence of Socioeconomic Status, Parents, Peers, Psychological Needs, and Task Values on Middle School Student Motivation for School Music Ensemble Participation," 448.

school administration; courses will usually be eliminated if the numbers do not justify their existence. Administrator attitudes toward music education can vary, and educators must work with them to demonstrate the value of programs. Demonstrating value becomes more critical when working with administrators who view the arts as an optional part of the curriculum.¹³⁶

Hansen observed that school cultures are more diverse than in the past; music educators must as such adjust their advocacy strategies.¹³⁷ Nemeč, agreeing, states that “In this environment, there is more emphasis on strategic focus and a need to educate audiences...The creation of understanding and motivation, and eventually behavior changes, needs a more focused, people-to-people approach.”¹³⁸ The music program must meet, in the words of one author, “students’ musical and educational needs.”¹³⁹ Ultimately, music educators should strive to provide a musical “education that enables, motivates, or inspires students to be more musically active outside of school and throughout life than they would have without such instruction.”¹⁴⁰ The removal of music education programs from public access can create problems. Jorgensen stated, “Thinking of music education as a private rather than public undertaking potentially leaves it out of the public eye and less important as a societal and cultural activity. The model does not necessarily provide for an equitable distribution of opportunities for music education as a human right.”¹⁴¹

¹³⁶ Debra Louise Martin, “A Place for Fine Arts: A Study of Illinois Administrators’ Attitudes, Participation in and Support of the Fine Arts in K–12 Education,” (EdD Diss., Western Illinois University, Macomb, 2012), 109, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1283387358/CDECD98371FA4B2DPQ>.

¹³⁷ Hansen, *Handbook for Music Supervision*, 36.

¹³⁸ Richard Nemeč, “PR or Advertising - Who’s on Top?,” *Communication World* 16, no. 3 (1999): 25–28.

¹³⁹ Regelski, “Ethical Dimensions of School-Based Education,” 287.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 302.

¹⁴¹ Estelle R. Jorgensen, “On Informalities in Music Education,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy in Music Education*, ed. Wayne D Bowman and Ana Lucia Frega (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 464.

There are several issues surrounding music education at the school district administrative level. Benham's work, which is beyond the scope of this research, details the financial benefits of maintaining large music programs for school systems.¹⁴² In essence, it costs a school less money to maintain a music program because the average music teacher can have a classroom with more students, reducing the total teacher FTE needed school-wide.¹⁴³ According to Benham, school districts should offer instrumental music programs to fifth-grade elementary students due to lower participation numbers associated with a later start.¹⁴⁴ As stated earlier, the involvement of parents can positively affect student participation. This is also true at the adult level when parents advocate on behalf of their students with district administration. Ferrell studied music education through the lens of the district music administrator; one of his interviewees emphasized the need to educate and reeducate district-level administrators.¹⁴⁵ Some districts utilize a site-based administration model, such as this study's focus. Ferrell also shares one of the challenges for that model, stating that "there's a fine line between giving schools the autonomy to make their schedules work in a way that fills the need of the demographic of children in their buildings and making it where it's the wild, wild west and anything goes."¹⁴⁶

A music supervisor can be an effective liaison between central administration and teachers. The music supervisor can support the classroom music educator, making them more effective. Gardner state the following to this effect:

¹⁴² Benham, *Music Advocacy: Moving from Survival to Vision*, 136.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 134.

¹⁴⁴ John Benham, "Student Participation Issue: MUSC840: Current Issues in Music Education (D01)."

¹⁴⁵ Christopher Michael Ferrell, "The Role of the Music Administrator in Public School Systems of the Southeastern United States: A Mixed Methods Study," (PhD diss., Auburn University, Auburn, 2021), 84, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2714864812/794AAAA202F24C6BPQ>

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 84.

Supervisors can provide administrators with valuable advice on policy reforms if they understand the aspects of music teachers' jobs that can negatively affect their satisfaction. Music supervisors can also relieve music teachers of the tasks that take time away from planning and instruction or serve as mentors to inexperienced music teachers to help them navigate bureaucratic systems more effectively.¹⁴⁷

Many districts do not have a music supervisor that can act as a resource for both administrators and teachers. Some districts provide an electives coordinator that may be assigned multiple subject areas, but music may or may not be their area of expertise.

Clinton offers four questions to determine current advocacy levels for a music program. He asked, "Are there support groups for the various music groups already in place? Does the community have groups or individuals who could help convey the message of the importance of music education? Are there prominent people in the community who are proud alumni of the music program? Are the music programs a visible part of the community?"¹⁴⁸ Anderson notes improved administrative support for a high school choral program that increased parent participation to "282 hours per month compared to 40 hours per month the previous year."¹⁴⁹ These parent hours included lobbying administration, fundraising, meeting attendance, concert planning, and assisting the director.¹⁵⁰ The parent group successfully advocated for their choir students, allowing them to perform a choir concert at the John F. Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.; this is evidence that intentionally organizing advocacy structures can yield impressive results.

¹⁴⁷ Gardner, "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Factors That Influence the Retention, Turnover, and Attrition of K-12 Music Teachers in the United States," 118.

¹⁴⁸ Clinton, *Embracing Administrative Leadership in Music Education*, 115.

¹⁴⁹ Dean Phillip Anderson, "Improving Parent Advocacy and Participation for More Successful Arts Education Programming in High School Choral Music through Political Involvement," (EdD practicum, Nova Southeastern University, Davie, 1994), 22, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED392657.pdf>.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 23.

Active participation on the part of parents can assist in the development of music program support. Kim's study related to community sports participation found, "While parents attend to the youth sport program as spectators, previous studies have revealed that children's sport participation also leads to increased sport consumption in other forms (e.g., attending events, watching sports on TV) and a greater interest and understanding of sport (e.g., rules, strategies)."¹⁵¹ This concept could potentially transfer to music participation, depending on the level of educator commitment to the process.

Pay-to-Play Programs

Pay-to-play programs are often administered from an outside source that works with the district or school to provide music education services. Although the titles may vary, Higgins refers to this person as a community music facilitator. He states: "Although community music facilitators predominantly work outside formal instructional settings, when they do work with schools, their programs are most vibrant and sustainable when both parties, the community music facilitator and the school, work in partnership."¹⁵² In Higgins's context, the community music facilitator offers enrichment to the current music curriculum instead of a separate program, such as elementary instrumental music. Many programs that Higgins cites are "artist-in-residence"-type programs, such as those facilitated by composers such as Paul Hindemith: drum circles that allow community members to participate, or songwriting workshops.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Kim, Newman, and Kwon, "Developing Community Structure on the Sidelines: A Social Network Analysis of Youth Sport League Parents," 190.

¹⁵² Lee Higgins and Brydie-Leigh Bartleet, "The Community Music Facilitator and School Music Education," in *The Oxford Handbook of Music Education, Volume 1*, ed. Gary E. McPherson and Graham F. Welch (Oxford Academic, 2012), 496, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199730810.013.0030>.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 497.

Private lessons are a common and longstanding example of the pay-to-play scenario. Creech's research reveals that "studies suggested that teachers and students were generally deeply committed to the one-to-one learning context and considered that it allowed scope for the transmission of detailed content in terms of technical expertise, musical knowledge, and approach to the interpretation of repertoire."¹⁵⁴ A common deficiency of this model is the lack of a sequential approach to instrumental pedagogy. This is often attributed to an esteemed performer with limited teacher training.¹⁵⁵ This same struggle has been documented in the context of non-certified teachers working in elementary instrumental music programs.

Pay-to-play programs are commonly housed in elementary school settings. After completing the elementary school program, the students commonly progress to join a district-funded middle school program. The district-employed music teachers and the non-district program teachers must work together in the best interest of their students, creating a partnership that must be maintained. Ideally, program providers will supply high-quality music teachers at every level of instruction, however, quality can vary because contracted music instruction providers are not subject to the same vetting process as school districts. District music teachers must work with program teachers for the benefit of students. To sustain an effective partnership, program providers must utilize thoughtful planning with intentional implementation and a robust program performance evaluation system.¹⁵⁶ This will ensure that the partnership provides maximum value for students and parents.¹⁵⁷ Regardless of the circumstance, music educators

¹⁵⁴ Andrea Creech and Helena Gaunt, "The Changing Face of Individual Instrumental Tuition: Value, Purpose, and Potential," in *The Oxford Handbook of Music Education, Volume 1*, ed. Gary E. McPherson and Graham F. Welch (Oxford Handbooks, 2012), 696, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199730810.013.0042>.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 697.

¹⁵⁶ Richard Hallam, "Effective Partnership Working in Music Education: Principles and Practice," *International Journal of Music Education* 29, no. 2 (May 2011): 164, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0255761410396963>.

should work together in the best interest of the students in the program. Hallam, quoting Rogers, states: “Everyone involved in music education should work together ... We need coordination and collaboration between all music providers, both in and out of school ... to make the most of the strengths and resources of each.”¹⁵⁸

Instrumental music programs include costs that must be addressed to allow student participation. One significant cost is often the purchase of an instrument: most often this is paid by either the school or the individual family. When the family is required to pay for music instruction, this can cause what Hansen terms “socioeconomic segregation.” Hansen explains: “Instrumental music programs may be particularly vulnerable to such ‘socioeconomic segregation,’ including financial factors that might not allow students access to personal instruments or the private lesson that facilitate music growth.”¹⁵⁹ Pay-to-play programs are not a new phenomenon: Corral discovered that, in California in 2001, “17 elementary schools in the Thousand Oaks district, fourth through sixth graders must pay \$90 a semester to learn to play a musical instrument.”¹⁶⁰ This is roughly equivalent to \$158 at the time of this writing in the Fall Semester of 2023.¹⁶¹

Participation fees are more common at the secondary level. A common participation fee is for the marching band. One high school director in Corral’s study charges \$300 to participate in band,

¹⁵⁷ Hallam, “Effective Partnership Working in Music Education: Principles and Practice,” 167.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 156.

¹⁵⁹ Dee Hansen, *Handbook for Music Supervision*, 73-74.

¹⁶⁰ Corral, “A Case Study of the Role of High School Booster Organizations in Fund Raising, Governance Issues, and Personnel Decision,” 56.

¹⁶¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “CPI Inflation Calculator,” Bls.gov, 2023, https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm.

comprising thirty percent of his annual budget.¹⁶² School districts in California continued to charge athletic fees for participation, even though they are not in alignment with the state's constitution.¹⁶³

A cross-section of parents will support their children's endeavors, even if they must "pay-to-play." Murata found that "parents reported that their children's desire to begin or to continue participation in ice hockey programming was an important factor in mediating their decision-making around program consumption. Interestingly, it is important to note that parents did not appear to see their children's participation in youth ice hockey as an investment they might recover in the future."¹⁶⁴ The parents in Murata's study "expressed seeing value in their youth ice hockey program purchases in terms of providing their children with an opportunity to develop important life skills (i.e., self-discipline, personal responsibility, organization, teamwork)—something they also perceived less likely to occur through participation in other extra-curricular activities."¹⁶⁵

Youth sports have experienced a move toward club teams that often travel.¹⁶⁶ The number of parents willing to fund their children's sports participation has "entered the mainstream and expanded into a \$7 billion industry."¹⁶⁷ Participation rates among children seem

¹⁶² Corral, "A Case Study of the Role of High School Booster Organizations in Fund Raising, Governance Issues, and Personnel Decisions," 56.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 141.

¹⁶⁴ Alex Murata and Jean Cote, "Considering the Cost(S) of the Game: Consumer Behavior and Parents in Youth Ice Hockey," *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology* 35, no. 5 (2022), 786, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10413200.2022.2098878>.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ Bjork and Hoynes, "Parents Find Community: Youth Sports as a Mobile Neighborhood," 2284.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

to be correlated to parent education level. Black found that “the percentage of children and adolescents that participated in sports increased with increasing parental education, from 36.8% of children who lived in households with parents who had a high school education or less to 67.6% of children who lived in households with parents who had a bachelor’s degree or higher.” She also discovered that participation rates are correlated to parental income level, observing that it ranged “from 31.2% among children with a family income of less than 100% of the federal poverty level (FPL) to 70.2% among children with a family income of 400% or more of FPL.”¹⁶⁸ Bjork’s research found, “the annual cost of playing on a travel team ranged from several hundred dollars to \$15,000, with most parents reporting somewhere between \$1,000 and \$5,000.”¹⁶⁹ While other research has shown “that parents of children who play sports devote between 3% and 12% of their pre-tax income to the athletic activities of their children.”¹⁷⁰ Bjork’s research found that parent income level was not connected to parent participation level. In fact, “Some of the most engaged parents, those who regularly attended practices or drove groups of players to games, were of modest economic means. And some of the least involved parents, those who were intermittently present and inconsistently engaged with the team, had professional class jobs.”¹⁷¹ In these situations, cost seems to be a barrier to initial entry only: once families have made the initial investment, they are more willing to continue participation.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸ Black, Terlizzi, and Vahratian, “Organized Sports Participation among Children Aged 6-17 Years: United States, 2020,” 3.

¹⁶⁹ Bjork and Hoynes, “Parents Find Community: Youth Sports as a Mobile Neighborhood,” 2290.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 2295.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

Community

The term “community” can be interpreted in a variety of ways. In the context of this research, a music education community is school-based but may expand to the greater civic community as well. With regards to community, Kim states: “There is an underlying premise that the more connections individuals have within their communities, the better they will be supported emotionally, socially, physically, and economically.”¹⁷³ The idea of community has slowly eroded to the point that half of Americans do not know their neighbors’ names. The ubiquitous use of social media has allowed people to stay connected, but “Electronic relationships, however, can be superficial and undependable.”¹⁷⁴ Because the nature of relationships is changing, people are pursuing community in new ways.¹⁷⁵

A sense of community is one area of life that music can potentially help develop. Jones found that alternative music programs can also help build this necessary social component. The *Making Music* program highlighted in her study successfully helped to “build bridges outside of the school setting...[and] connect the school community with families and the larger community.”¹⁷⁶ One part of the *Making Music* agreement was to begin employing part-time teachers in that classroom. This was met with mixed results, but it did provide a template for implementing more expansive music offerings.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ Kim, Newman, and Kwon, “Developing Community Structure on the Sidelines: A Social Network Analysis of Youth Sport League Parents,” 188.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 2288.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 2296.

¹⁷⁶ Jones, “Making Music: A Community–School Music Partnership,” 70.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 71.

Community building is another area of youth sports from which music educators can learn. Youth sports foster a sense of community among both children and their parents. Some parents describe how sports participation develops a sense of being a “part of something bigger.”¹⁷⁸ Bjork found that “four elements that can support the development of a sense of community (SOC) among parents of athletes: group membership, needs fulfilment, influence, and shared emotional connection.”¹⁷⁹

Parents may initially enroll their children in a new activity, such as sports or music, to try something new, however, developing a sense of community may incentivize them to stay involved long-term.¹⁸⁰ Eriksen echoes this sentiment: “Youth sports parenting among our participants involved bonding and belonging to a community: a community of peers, the local community or a community of sports people; people who love and follow the sport their child was playing.”¹⁸¹ The commitment level of travel teams expands over time. At first, parents work together to get their students to practice. At the same time, relationships deepen as the teams travel to multiple-day tournaments to the point that the team is referred to as an extended family.¹⁸² Parents of children in youth sports go a step further in their commitment to the team. Eriksen states: “It is a moral duty of solidarity in order to not let one’s team down.”¹⁸³

¹⁷⁸ Ingunn Marie Eriksen and Kari Stefansen, “What Are Youth Sports For? Youth Sports Parenting in Working-Class Communities,” *Sport, Education and Society* 27, no. 5 (March 1, 2021), 597, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2021.1894114>.

¹⁷⁹ Bjork and Hoynes, “Parents Find Community: Youth Sports as a Mobile Neighborhood,” 2285.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 2285.

¹⁸¹ Eriksen and Stefansen, “What Are Youth Sports For? Youth Sports Parenting in Working-Class Communities,” 596.

¹⁸² Bjork and Hoynes, “Parents Find Community: Youth Sports as a Mobile Neighborhood,” 2292.

¹⁸³ Eriksen and Stefansen, “What Are Youth Sports For? Youth Sports Parenting in Working-Class Communities,” 597.

Music educators at all levels must work to understand their community. Music administrators must understand the parent and student community, administration at the central office and building levels, and music teachers in the district.¹⁸⁴ Classroom music educators must be more active among stakeholders: “You have to be in the community. You have to walk the walk. You have to go into that neighborhood. You have to because you must build trust, and the only way you’re gonna build trust in today’s world is to be with them.”¹⁸⁵

Music is a social enterprise in many contexts. Concerts and other performances create inherent opportunities for community development. Community building can also apply to recruiting efforts between schools. Music educators can perform concerts that involve multiple grade levels. They can also host informal “meet and greet” sessions for students, parents, and teachers.¹⁸⁶ Efforts to build community are essential to the music program's health because they provide a sense of belonging to something bigger, as seen in youth sports.

Time Commitment

If one person asks another how they are doing, they often hear the reply, “Busy.” Families commonly have multiple commitments to school, churches, and organized activities such as sports or music. Each family must learn to balance being involved without being overcommitted. This is especially true of working-class families. Eriksen found some researchers, in the context of youth sports, “point to ‘time poverty’ to help explain why working-class Swedish parents viewed sports and other extracurricular activities as less important and enrolled their children in fewer activities: working-class parents typically have less flexible jobs

¹⁸⁴ Clinton, *Embracing Administrative Leadership in Music Education*, 111-112.

¹⁸⁵ Capone-Raschilla, “Experienced High School Band Director Perspectives on Sustainability for a Successful Instrumental Music Program,” 138.

¹⁸⁶ Jackson, “The Effect of an Attrition Intervention Program on Middle School Band Students: An Action Research Study,” 155.

than middle-class parents.”¹⁸⁷ Some students are over-scheduled with a wide variety of after-school activities that meet throughout the week.¹⁸⁸ Students who play on club or travel teams may have multiple commitments several times a week throughout an extended season.¹⁸⁹

Because of this, gaining some time back can be a relief even when an activity is valued. One of Eriksen’s participants revealed, “Although she recognized the social value of team sport participation, she found family life ‘hectic’ while she still played, but after she quit handball, she said that: ‘now there is more spare time.’”¹⁹⁰

Instrumental music participation often requires an outside-the-school-day component, even when classes meet during the school day. It may be difficult for some families to fulfill even minimal extra time commitments for concerts or extra rehearsals, however, this is a matter of personal context and perspective.¹⁹¹ One of the parents in Grogan’s study indicated they appreciate the time commitment associated with music participation because it “was not as much of a burden on her time as sports.”¹⁹²

There are both positive and negative aspects for the music educator. Families are willing to commit a significant amount of time to an activity with sufficient perceived value. Unfortunately, they may already have several of these on their schedule when music instruction

¹⁸⁷ Eriksen and Stefansen, “What Are Youth Sports For? Youth Sports Parenting in Working-Class Communities,” 593.

¹⁸⁸ Lowe Vandell, Reisner, and Pierce, “Outcomes Linked to High-Quality Afterschool Programs: Longitudinal Findings from the Study of Promising Afterschool Programs Background on the Study,” 3.

¹⁸⁹ Bjork and Hoynes, “Parents Find Community: Youth Sports as a Mobile Neighborhood,” 2290.

¹⁹⁰ Eriksen and Stefansen, “What Are Youth Sports For? Youth Sports Parenting in Working-Class Communities,” 596.

¹⁹¹ Daryl Kinney, “Selected Nonmusic Predictors of Urban Students’ Decisions to Enroll and Persist in Middle School Band Programs,” 345.

¹⁹² Grogan, “A High Achieving Middle School Band at a High Poverty School in Georgia: A Case Study,” 75.

is offered. Deisler also found this to be accurate at the secondary level. She states: “One reason commonly cited by students for dropping out of band is scheduling conflicts. Students who take remedial or advanced placement courses or are placed in special tracks have a hard time fitting music into their schedules.”¹⁹³

Tuition

Cost can be a barrier to entry for many families. Most after-school programs have a fee attached, no matter the type or context.¹⁹⁴ This can be troublesome in areas that struggle to provide quality music education programming under normal circumstances. Grogan shows that “many programs in high-poverty schools struggle with recruiting due to the relatively high cost of participation in the band activity.”¹⁹⁵ In lower socio-economic status (SES) areas, it is often difficult for families to acquire an instrument. Grogan’s study of a high-quality, low-SES program shows that the school’s principal appreciated the director’s efforts to maintain the instrument inventory because it removed a barrier to entry for some students.¹⁹⁶ Depending on context, directors can find other creative ways to reduce the financial burden for families in need.¹⁹⁷ The most common form of assistance is the deployment of school-owned instruments. If a family struggles financially to provide an instrument, it is reasonable to assume that tuition could be an additional financial burden that determines participation for a family.

¹⁹³ Deisler, “A Comparison of Common Characteristics of Successful High School Band Programs in Low Socioeconomic Schools and High Socioeconomic Schools,” 42.

¹⁹⁴ Lauraine Langreo, “After-School Programs Face Perfect Storm of Staffing and Funding Problems, Survey Finds.”

¹⁹⁵ Grogan, “A High Achieving Middle School Band at a High Poverty School in Georgia: A Case Study,” 77.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Kinney, “Selected Nonmusic Predictors of Urban Students’ Decisions to Enroll and Persist in Middle School Band Programs,” 345.

As is often the case, if a family assigns sufficient value to an activity, it will financially support it. This is the case of the low SES school in Grogan's study that wished to perform at a large group performance evaluation (LGPE). His interviewee state: "Now that little sixth-grade band we take to LGPE, they do 10 rehearsals after school, and they sign up, and they pay \$10.00 to help for LGPE and pay for their lunch. That night, we get them Chick-fil-A and bring it back to school...but those are the kids that sign up who want to be there."¹⁹⁸ This is an excellent example of a director creating an incentive to increase participation in an additional activity.

When a school or district decides to begin offering a tuition-based music program, the cost becomes greater because families may be required to contribute instruments, materials, and instruction. This can be problematic for students who are on free or reduced lunch.¹⁹⁹ Eriksen found this same phenomenon valid for youth sports in Norway, iterating that "working-class parents lacked the financial, cultural and/or social capital necessary to find, access and take advantage of structured activities."²⁰⁰

Summary

There have been several repeated themes throughout this literature review. The most prominent is communication. Communication must occur between all stakeholders, including teachers, administration, parents, students, and outside partners. Most of the difficulties and solutions outlined in this chapter resulted from a lack of communication and were resolved through open communication. The music educator must act as a catalyst for communication efforts. In the context of a school district, the classroom-certified music educator is the resident

¹⁹⁸ Grogan, "A High Achieving Middle School Band at a High Poverty School in Georgia: A Case Study," 72.

¹⁹⁹ Deisler, "A Comparison of Common Characteristics of Successful High School Band Programs in Low Socioeconomic Schools and High Socioeconomic Schools," 38.

²⁰⁰ Eriksen and Stefansen, "What Are Youth Sports For? Youth Sports Parenting in Working-Class Communities," 593.

expert who can provide vision and direction for the music program. These teachers readily communicate with the administration to advocate for the program, with parents to support it, with students to recruit and retain the program, and with outside partners to create a standard curriculum and understanding. They can also assist in the formation of a music coalition to advocate for the program. Continuous, open lines of communication are required so that when a crisis such as budget issues arises, the music program remains viable. An ongoing proactive position will help ensure a music program that does not require a sudden reactionary response to problems.

There is a remarkable consistency of writing in the literature. This review has utilized historical writings to demonstrate the sameness of issues throughout time. Music educators have struggled with recruiting and retention issues since music was brought to public education. While thoughts on the matter have been refined, students still drop music classes because of time commitment and other opportunities. On the other hand, a sense of community helps build vital, viable programs at reduced risk of reductions.

Writers tend to agree on the benefits of after-school programs, regardless of content area, especially concerning at-risk youth. After-school programs help students with increased focus, enhanced academics, and positive social behaviors; this is corroborated in research across various topics, including sports, academics, and arts programs, including music. Another interesting consistency is parent willingness to support their children in their chosen endeavors. The most notable example is sports, where parents will spend thousands of dollars for their children to benefit from sports participation. It is important to note that the sports literature rarely mentions the physical health benefits of sports participation. Instead, the literature typically uses humanistic words such as “social,” “discipline,” “persistence,” “self-confidence,” and “agency.”

This is positive news for music educators because arts education provides the same benefits to children. Educators must work to communicate this intentionally.

One subject area of particular interest has yet to be addressed consistently in the literature: an impending teacher shortage. According to the National Education Association (NEA), “The ratio of hires to job openings in the education sector has reached new lows as the 2021-22 school year started and currently stands at 0.57 hires for every open position.”²⁰¹ Anecdotally, there have been news stories and writings on teacher shortages in the general education literature, addressing topics such as college tuition, student loan rates, and a lack of young people entering the education profession. The music education writings on future teacher shortages mention it in passing only, however. A study on this topic is outside the scope of this paper but could potentially affect many aspects of the challenges outlined here. For example, suppose an administrator is willing to provide a music program, but the teaching position goes unfilled: the school will need to find an alternative solution. Administrators in that position may look to alternative music program formats outlined here or elsewhere, perhaps even creating a hybrid program that best fits their context. Considering this, music educators must also communicate the rewards and benefits of the profession to potential future educators. If enough music educators are willing to fill positions, it will become easier for administrators to support the music programs. Music educators can solve the administrative FTE conundrum by giving place to a larger student population. In other words, if a principal has an open art position that

²⁰¹ Eric Jotkoff, “NEA Survey: Massive Staff Shortages in Schools Leading to Educator Burnout; Alarming Number of Educators Indicating They Plan to Leave Profession | NEA,” Nea.org, 2022, <https://www.nea.org/about-nea/media-center/press-releases/nea-survey-massive-staff-shortages-schools-leading-educator-burnout-alarming-number-educators>.

remains unfilled, a music educator can teach those students to play an instrument or sing in the choir, building the program.

Chapter Three: Methods

Introduction

This research aims to learn from stakeholders' lived experiences in a fee-based elementary instrumental music program that meets outside the school day. The district in the study pivoted to this context in 2009 and, therefore, provides an authentic setting for this research. This chapter provides an outline of the procedures for discovering the lived experiences of the participants.

Design

This study comprised a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological research design. The purpose of qualitative research is to discover the reasons behind the participant's decision-making process. In a qualitative study, “researchers talk with and observe people to understand their perspective of life more fully.”¹ The phenomenon under investigation is the decision-making process of whether to take advantage of elementary instrumental music delivered in this format. Researchers must, in one researcher’s words, “acknowledge their own past experiences and existing knowledge as embedded in and essential to the interpretive process” when using a hermeneutic approach.² In this case, the researcher has been a part of the studied community for over a decade and has a comprehensive history with many aspects of the program. In a phenomenological study, “the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by the participants.”³ This study has achieved understanding through semi-structured interviews, personal statements, and reviews on the researcher's part.

¹ Bunnie L. Claxton and Robert K. Mott, *A Step-By-Step Introduction the Research Methods: Qualitative, Quantitative, Mixed-Methods, and Applied* (Kendall-Hunt Publishing Company, 2023), 40.

² Bynum and Varpio, “When I Say ... Hermeneutic Phenomenology,” 252.

³ Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative & Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed., 13.

O’Leary utilized a hermeneutic phenomenological method to study competition in high school bands. He states: “In focusing on the lived experiences of those who compete, this study provides a unique insight into competition in high school bands.”⁴ He recommended re-examining the tradition and practices of competition in high school bands in the United States. Robison conducted semi-structured interviews with male elementary general music teachers and recommended the inclusion of at least one session related to gender in student teaching seminars to prepare male teachers for the intricacies of working in an elementary school.⁵ Sweet conducted a phenomenological study of the adolescent female voice. She found the following: “After a review of previous research, it was clear that the experience of female voice change has not yet been fully explored.”⁶ The participants in Sweet’s study experienced vocal changes that caused anxiety in singing situations.⁷

The present study was conducted in a single school district with a unique delivery model. Research has uncovered other schools and districts that employ similar models and methods. The findings of this study may be generalizable to a broader audience in various contexts, however, some results may be unique to this particular context of location and socio-economic status of the participants. A goal of the phenomenological researcher is to be aware of hidden and

⁴ Emmet J. O’Leary, “A Phenomenological Study of Competition in High School Bands,” *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education* 220, (Spring 2019): 46, <https://doi.org/10.5406/bulcouresmusedu.220.0043>.

⁵ Tiger Robison, “Male Elementary General Music Teachers: A Phenomenological Study,” *Journal of Music Teacher Education* 26, no. 2 (February 2017): 87, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1057083715622019>.

⁶ Bridget Sweet, “The Adolescent Female Changing Voice: A Phenomenological Investigation,” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 63, no. 1 (April 2015): 74, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43900280>.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 84.

unexamined prejudices to avoid underestimating the potential outcomes of the research.⁸ Van Manen identified another vital trait of phenomenological research as retrospective. He states: “A person cannot reflect on lived experience while living through the experience. For example, if one tries to reflect on one’s anger while being angry, one finds that the anger has already changed or dissipated. Thus, phenomenological reflection is not introspective but retrospective.”⁹ Therefore, researchers need to remain objective while conducting this type of research.

Participants and Setting

Participants in the study were parents of children who had the opportunity to access the elementary instrumental music program. The participants represented a variety of positions within the district. The first group comprised parents only. The second group included parents who were also employed as teachers in the district. The third group comprised a parent employed as an administrator in the district. Each group had parents whose children were involved in the program and those who were not. This was accomplished to gain a wide variety of perspectives. Personal categories that will be reported on include role within the district, participation status, and years involved.

The setting for the study is a school district that serves approximately 60,000 students in a suburban area attached to a larger metro area of roughly 3,000,000. The median household income for the area is approximately \$140,000, with 2.7 members per household.¹⁰ The median

⁸ Rasha Alsaigh, and Imelda Coyne, “Doing a Hermeneutic Phenomenology Research Underpinned by Gadamer’s Philosophy: A Framework to Facilitate Data Analysis,” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 20, (January-December 2021): 5, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/16094069211047820>.

⁹ Max Van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice: Meaning-Giving Methods in Phenomenological Research and Writing*, (Walnut Creek, California: Left Coast Press, 2014), 94.

¹⁰ US Census Bureau, “Census.gov,” Census.gov, March 18, 2024, <https://www.census.gov/>.

home price is \$670,000, according to Redfin.¹¹ According to Pew Research, this is considered middle class for the geographic region.¹² 98% of adults have graduated from high school, while 60% have a bachelor's degree or higher.¹³ Racial diversity is 80% White, 10% Hispanic, and 6% Asian.¹⁴ All participants reside within school district limits and reflect area demographics.

The study will define participants by role within the community and pseudonym. The researcher selected participants following the short vetting survey. The study will be introduced to the participants through email. Participants will be identified in three groups with a letter and number. Participants identified as parents only were assigned P1, P2, etc. Interviews were conducted at a place of the participants' choosing, such as a home or school, or an online platform such as Zoom.

The school district provided permission to utilize school district email to recruit participants. An IRB-approved letter was mailed to potential participants to gauge interest. Following a positive reply, the participants were provided with a short questionnaire to verify eligibility using the criteria above. A combination of purposeful sampling and convenience sampling was used. Purposeful sampling was employed for the participants who were also district employees; their unique insight as both parent and teacher or administrator was valuable to gain multiple perspectives.¹⁵ Convenience sampling was implemented for participants whose

¹¹ "Real Estate, Homes for Sale, MLS Listings, Agents | Redfin," Redfin.com, 2024, <https://www.redfin.com/>.

¹² "Are You in the American Middle Class? Find out with Our Income Calculator," Pew Research Center, July 23, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2020/07/23/are-you-in-the-american-middle-class/>.

¹³ US Census Bureau, "Census.gov."

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Claxton and Mott, *A Step-By-Step Introduction the Research Methods: Qualitative, Quantitative, Mixed-Methods, and Applied*, 8.

only role is as district parent. While this is considered a less credible method for selection, in this case, all participants maintain personal knowledge of the program because participation is required.¹⁶ The sample size included eleven participants.¹⁷

Researcher Positionality

The impetus for this study is connected to a personal philosophy of music education and history with the school district. When I started working in the district, elementary instrumental music was offered as a pull-out program during the school day. At that time, there were several robust programs across the district. After moving to an outside-the-school-day tuition-based model, most programs have seen a decline in total participation and quality.

The theoretical framework for this study is Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory. Bandura states: "Social cognitive theory subscribes to a model of emergent interactive agency."¹⁸ This method was selected because elementary instrumental music participation requires a complex decision-making process. Each family's experience in this study is similar but unique due to their context. Bandura stated, "Efficacy beliefs are the foundation of human agency."¹⁹ The knowledge gained from this process is understanding families' decision-making in elementary instrumental music participation. For example, anecdotally, I have found that it is common for adults who participated in instrumental music as children to encourage participation in their children. This implies a value system that places music education in high esteem. Families must

¹⁶ Claxton and Mott, *A Step-By-Step Introduction the Research Methods: Qualitative, Quantitative, Mixed-Methods, and Applied*, 9.

¹⁷ Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative & Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed., 186.

¹⁸ Albert Bandura, "Social Cognitive Theory: An Agentic Perspective," *Annual Review of Psychology* 52 (2001): 4, <https://www.annualreviews.org/content/journals/10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.1>.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

also determine if their context will allow them to overcome the barriers to entry. Arostegui's work reflected these findings when he states: "Identification with a particular culture...supposes the transmission of (1) propositional knowledge; (2) behavioural patterns; and (3) social values deemed important in the community."²⁰

In this study, I will act as a human instrument for the duration of the research. Creswell states, "Qualitative researchers collect data themselves through...observing behavior, or interviewing participants."²¹ I am uniquely positioned to act as a human instrument due to years of observation and reflection. These observations and thoughts, combined with analysis from participant interviews, comprise the data analyzed.

I am also in a unique position with the district studied. An extensive history combined with multiple roles allows a more profound insight than an outside observer may have. I have been an employee and elementary instrumental music provider, therefore, my relationship with the participants is as a co-worker, teacher, or former teacher of students in the programs. I have also been an employee who has taught at the elementary level as part of a pull-out program and as a middle school instrumental music teacher who receives students as they matriculate from the elementary programs to the middle school. Researcher bias is related to years of first-hand knowledge in these multiple roles.

Data Collection Plan

Participants were given a short vetting survey prior to scheduling a semi-structured interview. The survey asked the following questions: How long have you lived in the district? Do

²⁰ Jose Luis Arostegui, Robert Stake, and Helen Simons, "View of Music Education for the 21st Century: Epistemology and Ontology as Bases for Student Aesthetic Education.," *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 12, no. 54 (September 2004): 6, <https://epaa.asu.edu/index.php/epaa/article/view/209/335>.

²¹ Creswell and Creswell., *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative & Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed., 181.

you have children who either are or have attended district elementary schools in fourth, fifth, or sixth grade? Were they eligible to participate in the elementary instrumental music program? Participants who lived in the district for at least one full school year with an eligible child in fourth, fifth, or sixth grade were included.

The study utilized two different data collection procedures. The first and primary source of data is information from one-on-one participant interviews. Interviews were conducted in a natural setting, according to the participants' choice. The second data collection method was through participant observations. In participant observations, the researcher acts as a "participant in the environment...expressing a genuine interest in spending time with groups."²² In this case, the researcher's genuine interest stems from their position as a middle school teacher in the district who is directly affected by the effectiveness of the elementary instrumental music program.

The semi-structured interview allowed the researcher to "follow up with unstructured questions that may seek clarification."²³ This allowed the researcher to explore areas that came from participants' answers. It was essential to examine specific topics more deeply due to the variety of perspectives of the participants, such as those of the parent/teacher and parent/administrator. Questions common to all participants were open-ended. Clarification was provided using follow-up questions.

²² Claxton and Mott, *A Step-By-Step Introduction the Research Methods: Qualitative, Quantitative, Mixed-Methods, and Applied*, 76.

²³ *Ibid.*, 65.

Interview Questions

Rapport/History

1. Please describe your history with the district.
2. Please describe your family history with music education.
3. Please describe your history with the elementary instrumental music program.

These questions aim to develop rapport with the participant and personal history in the context.

Opening the participants to talk about themselves is an essential first step in the interview process.²⁴ The responses also allow the researcher to categorize each participant based on their role in the district.

Thought Process

4. What do you hope children will gain from program participation?
5. (where applicable) How does your role as a teacher or administrator affect your decision to participate?
6. What was your first thought upon discovering the program was offered outside the school day for a fee?
7. How did communication affect your willingness to participate?
8. How did the instructor affect your willingness to participate?
9. How did the location of classes affect your willingness to participate?
10. How did the schedule of classes affect your willingness to participate?
11. How did the costs affect your willingness to participate?
12. Were there any other experiences or circumstances that encouraged participation?
13. Were there any other experiences or circumstances that discouraged participation?

²⁴ Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative & Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed. 191.

These questions attempt to evaluate participants' value systems regarding music education. They also attempt to develop themes around the decision-making process to determine whether their student will participate in the elementary instrumental music program. Eriksen's research found that some sports parents were not as interested in the physical benefits of athletic participation as they were in reducing screen time.²⁵ Murata's findings were similar to Eriksen's in youth hockey. Additionally, Murata found that parent support of after-school activities was directly related to children's enthusiasm for the activity.²⁶

Program Evaluation

14. Describe any benefits your children experienced from participation.
15. Describe any struggles your children experienced during participation.
16. Describe any changes you would like to see in the program.

These questions discovered thought processes after engagement with the program. Participant answers direct the reader toward potential reasons for continuing or dropping participation in the program. Little promotes conducting a needs assessment to determine families' priorities.²⁷ Maximizing perceived benefits while mitigating challenges will allow educators to develop a program that encourages higher participation levels.

Wrap-up

17. Is there anything else you would like to add?

²⁵ Eriksen and Stefansen, "What Are Youth Sports For? Youth Sports Parenting in Working-Class Communities," 599.

²⁶ Murata and Cote, "Considering the Cost(S) of the Game: Consumer Behavior and Parents in Youth Ice Hockey," 789.

²⁷ Little, "Evaluating Afterschool Programs," 122.

In question seventeen, the participant can share any other program-related thoughts not addressed previously. Ideas were developed and clarified throughout the interview using follow-up questions.

Written Protocol

The researcher recorded hand-written notes during the interviews to capture thoughts and ideas. The researcher also created a journal of thoughts and reflections from time spent as a teacher and program provider. Olmos-Vega validates this method and states that “Journaling might be used to bring intention to the researchers’ perspectives and assumptions to the research process.”²⁸ The views and reflections supplement a teacher and program provider's perspective over several years of participation at that level. While it does not provide a first-person source for families' decision-making process, it gives insight into the final decision-making results.

Transcription

Transcription of all interviews occurred via Otter.ai. Software applications in qualitative research are becoming common.²⁹ Once the software completed the transcriptions, the researcher reviewed and edited the text for accuracy. To maintain confidentiality, all audio recordings of the interviews and subsequent intelligent transcriptions were stored on a password-protected computer that only the researcher could access.

²⁸ Francisco M. Olmos-Vega et al., “A Practical Guide to Reflexivity in Qualitative Research: AMEE Guide No. 149,” *Medical Teacher* 45, no. 3 (2023): 245, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159x.2022.2057287>.

²⁹ Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative & Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed., 192.

Saturation

Saturation is achieved when no additional data are added to the body of work with the addition of more participants.³⁰ Guest et al. utilize a bootstrapping method across three studies to determine guidelines for data saturation. His findings recorded 95% saturation at approximately eleven to twelve interviews.³¹ Hennink and Kaiser conducted a study with the following purpose:

[To] synthesize empirical studies that assess saturation in qualitative data...[and] identify sample sizes needed to reach saturation using different qualitative methods, and suggest guidance on sample sizes for qualitative research...[It] is the first systematic review on empirical studies of saturation and therefore provides a valuable resource for researchers... Researchers can refer to our results when estimating an appropriate sample size in research proposals and protocols, which may lead to more efficient use of research resources and clearer justifications for proposed sample sizes.³²

Hennink finds that “saturation can be achieved in a narrow range of interviews (9–17),...particularly in studies with relatively homogenous study populations and narrowly defined objectives.”³³ This study utilized a homogenous population, as demonstrated by the demographic information. The objectives are narrowly defined, as demonstrated by the study's limited scope. Data saturation was achieved at eleven interviews, as evidenced by the limited number of themes and data overlaps demonstrated in chapter four.

Procedures

The researcher successfully applied and was granted IRB approval through Liberty University's IRB. A copy of the IRB approval can be found in Appendix A. The school district

³⁰ Greg Guest, Emily Namey, and Mario Chen, “A Simple Method to Assess and Report Thematic Saturation in Qualitative Research,” *PLOS ONE* 15, no. 5 (May 5, 2020): 2, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0232076>.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

³² Monique Hennink and Bonnie N Kaiser, “Sample Sizes for Saturation in Qualitative Research: A Systematic Review of Empirical Tests,” *Social Science & Medicine* 292 (January 1, 2022): 2, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.114523>.

³³ *Ibid.*, 9.

granted additional approval to include district email lists to recruit participants. A copy of the district approval letter can be found in Appendix B. Participants were solicited via IRB-approved email found in Appendix C. Potential participants were provided a welcome letter and consent forms for review. The letter and consent forms outlined the study and participant qualification requirements.

Confirmation instructions were contained in the initial recruiting email. Confirmation was made through email reply. Replies also included a signed PDF copy of the IRB-approved consent form. Upon receipt of confirmation of participation via email, the researcher and the participant agreed on a meeting time. Participants were provided options for interview times and locations, which varied between home, office, and videoconference via Zoom. At the beginning of the meeting, participants were provided a single-page document with instructions for the interview and a written copy of the questions. The instructions contained a thank you and a reminder that all questions would be answered in the context of the elementary instrumental music program. A copy of the document appears in Appendix E. The researcher employed the laptop voice recorder and Otter.ai to record and transcribe the recordings.

The questions were asked in order and slightly varied to provide clarity to the participants. The interviewer took notes on the answers and follow-up questions. Follow-up questions were unplanned and guided by the participants' answers. Each interview lasted approximately thirty minutes, and participants were thanked at the end of the interview.

Data Analysis

The study employed thematic analysis to address the phenomenon and participants' perspectives.³⁴ The interviews were recorded and transcribed via Otter.ai, and the audio

³⁴ Mai Skjott Linneberg and Steffen Korsgaard, "Coding Qualitative Data: A Synthesis Guiding the Novice," *Qualitative Research Journal* 19, no. 3 (2018): 268, <https://doi.org/10.1108//QRJ>.

recordings were then checked for accuracy.³⁵ An intelligent transcription method was employed. Transcripts were minimally edited to improve readability and reduce vocal tics such as “um” and word repetitions.³⁶ Interview analysis for text coding was performed using the Delve Tool.³⁷ Multiple rounds of coding were conducted in a spiral manner to ensure consistency and accuracy. Many answers to questions received multiple codes due to overlap in participant answers. For example, schedule and location were separate codes. However, many participants talked about both in relation to one another rather than as individual topics. After that, themes were developed via the codes. Online tools are becoming common and valuable in the data analysis process.³⁸ The Delve Tool was accessed to create a qualitative codebook.³⁹ Oliveira stated, “Codebooks are a well-established tool for improving the consistency of coding in qualitative research projects.”⁴⁰ After the initial codebook creation, the researcher further refined themes, which required making, as one researcher defined it, “multiple decisions on deleting, merging, relabelling, and expanding codes to fine-tune their contribution to the analysis of the data.”⁴¹

³⁵ www.otter.ai

³⁶ Caitlin McMullin, “Transcription and Qualitative Methods: Implications for Third Sector Research,” *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 34, no. 1 (September 10, 2021): 144-145, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-021-00400-3>

³⁷ www.delvetool.com

³⁸ Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative & Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed., 193.

³⁹ www.delvetool.com

⁴⁰ Gisela Oliveira, “Developing a Codebook for Qualitative Data Analysis: Insights from a Study on Learning Transfer between University and the Workplace,” *International Journal of Research & Method in Education* 46 no. 3 (2023): 300, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1743727X.2022.2128745>.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 306.

Coding is implemented to establish patterns among the participants. Codes employed in qualitative research consist of a “word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data.”⁴² In this case, the data consisted of participant interview transcripts, researcher observations, and reflections. Saldana states: “They help confirm our descriptions of people’s [“five Rs”]: routines, rituals, rules, roles, and relationships.”⁴³ The first round of coding involved organizing data into broad categories using one or two words.⁴⁴ These codes were then developed into several themes and shaped into a general description.⁴⁵ The coding process included a combination of deductive and inductive reasoning. To focus on known issues, deductive reasoning was employed.⁴⁶ To allow the data to speak, inductive reasoning was implemented.⁴⁷ Subsequent rounds of coding involved pattern coding and categorization of the first cycle codes.⁴⁸ This was conducted to discover an “overarching structure or process that can be understood at a theoretical level.”⁴⁹ This understanding of codes led to developing themes that addressed the research questions. Finally, a theory was developed to address the research questions via the resulting themes.⁵⁰

⁴² Johnny Saldana, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, 3rd ed. (London, UK: Sage, 2016), Chapter 1.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative & Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed., 193.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 194-195.

⁴⁶ Linneberg and Korsgaard, “Coding Qualitative Data: A Synthesis Guiding the Novice,” 264

⁴⁷ Ibid., 263.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 265.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 266.

⁵⁰ Saldana, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, 3rd ed., Chapter 1.

Thematic analysis was conducted in four stages: initialization, construction, rectification, and finalization. The initialization phase began with an immersion in the interview transcripts to discover explicit and implicit ideas.⁵¹ Development of various categories occurred during the coding process, such as conceptual, relationship, participant perspective, and setting.⁵² The researcher also recorded reflective notes to track themes as they developed; this led to the construction phase of the research. The construction phase consisted “of five stages: ‘classifying,’ ‘comparing,’ ‘labeling,’ ‘translating and transliterating,’ and ‘defining and describing.’”⁵³ The researcher implemented this process to organize codes and place them in the context of the research questions.⁵⁴ The rectification phase involves “three stages: ‘immersion and distancing,’ ‘relating themes to established knowledge,’ and ‘stabilizing.’”⁵⁵ The immersion and distancing stage requires the researcher to distance himself or herself from the research to investigate from a fresh perspective. The second stage enables the researcher to refer to the literature review relating the current research to established knowledge. The stabilization stage allows the researcher to demonstrate the connectedness of a list of themes and subthemes that have been developed.⁵⁶ The finalization stage enables the researcher to “ultimately link [his or her] storyline to the literature around which the content of themes in the study revolves to show how the study phenomenon has been advanced and also facilitate a fuller understanding of the

⁵¹ Mojtaba Vaismoradi et al., “Theme Development in Qualitative Content Analysis and Thematic Analysis,” *Journal of Nursing Education and Practice* 6, no. 5 (2016): 103, <https://www.sciedupress.com/journal/index.php/jnep/article/view/8391/5271>.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 104.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 107.

phenomenon for readers.”⁵⁷ Ultimately, the finalization stage develops the storyline of the research.⁵⁸

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness encompasses validity and reliability in qualitative research. Creswell stated, “Validity is one of the strengths of qualitative research and is based on determining whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the reader of an account.”⁵⁹ Documentation of steps and procedures through the research assists in establishing reliability.⁶⁰

Credibility

Several steps were taken to ensure credibility throughout this project. Credibility in qualitative research implies “believability, authenticity, and plausibility of results.”⁶¹ First, using semi-structured interviews is a common practice among qualitative researchers.⁶² The researcher has established familiarity as a school district employee and community member for eighteen years. Additionally, the researcher can provide a unique perspective into the account of the elementary instrumental music programs due to personal history at various levels. Triangulation was also employed in several ways during the study.

⁵⁷ Vaismoradi et al., “Theme Development in Qualitative Content Analysis and Thematic Analysis.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 103.

⁵⁹ Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative & Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed., 199.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 201.

⁶¹ Carol A Bailey, *A Guide to Qualitative Field Research* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2018), 145, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781071909614>.

⁶² Claxton and Mott, *A Step-By-Step Introduction the Research Methods: Qualitative, Quantitative, Mixed-Methods, and Applied*, 65.

The participants in the study were all parents of elementary students, however, some maintained an additional role as teachers or administrators within the district. This allowed for an “insider” perspective on the programs. To ensure participant honesty, there were no incentives offered for participation. Frequent debriefing occurred between the researcher and research advisors throughout the duration of the project; debriefing also occurred between the researcher and employee supervisors to ensure that correct protocols were followed.

Peer scrutiny utilized a multi-tiered approach. Doctoral candidate peers assisted in the initial proposal phases by providing feedback to focus the research, and colleagues within the district were informally surveyed about the project to provide direction and focus. Additional feedback was welcomed from other sources with knowledge of the topic. Data accuracy was achieved through the faithful transcription of participant interviews. Accuracy was also achieved through historical research of the district through both online and peer experience avenues.

Transferability

Qualitative research contains elements of transferability. Nowell et al. states: “Transferability refers to the generalizability of inquiry.”⁶³ This study assists other researchers in a similar context for elementary instrumental music. The researcher must provide “thick descriptions so that those who seek to transfer the findings to their site can judge transferability.”⁶⁴ The descriptions contained in chapter four will assist the reader regarding transferability to their context.

⁶³ Nowell et al., “Thematic Analysis: Striving to Meet the Trustworthiness Criteria,” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 16, no. 1 (October 2, 2017): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

Dependability

Proper procedures have been followed to insure the studies' dependability. Moon et al. stated, "Dependability refers to the consistency and reliability of the research findings...allowing someone outside the research to follow, audit, and critique the research process."⁶⁵ The research process has been documented, is logical, and traceable.⁶⁶ The quality of the participants, combined with triangulation and the researcher's history with the context, all contribute to the study's dependability.

Confirmability

The study follows a logical sequence to ensure confirmability. Confirmability refers to the researcher's ability to "demonstrate that the results are clearly linked to the conclusions in a way that can be followed and, as a process, replicated."⁶⁷ The results directly relate to previously outlined data through quality interview coding, triangulation, and researcher history with the district. Nowell et al. stated, "Confirmability is established when credibility, transferability, and dependability are all achieved."⁶⁸

Ethical Considerations

Precautions concerning ethical considerations were taken before and during the study. Liberty University provided IRB approval for the study. A copy of the IRB approval letter is in Appendix A. Additional permission was granted from the school district in the study to use

⁶⁵ Katie Moon et al., "A Guideline to Improve Qualitative Social Science Publishing in Ecology and Conservation Journals," *Ecology and Society* 21, no. 3 (January 1, 2016), 2, <https://doi.org/10.5751/es-08663-210317>.

⁶⁶ Nowell et al., "Thematic Analysis: Striving to Meet the Trustworthiness Criteria," 3.

⁶⁷ Moon et al., "A Guideline to Improve Qualitative Social Science Publishing in Ecology and Conservation Journals," 2.

⁶⁸ Nowell et al., "Thematic Analysis: Striving to Meet the Trustworthiness Criteria," 3.

district contact lists to recruit participants. A copy of the district approval letter is in Appendix B. All identifying data, such as names and locations, have been anonymized throughout the study. Only the researcher can access all data on a password-protected computer. All study data will be destroyed after a three-year period.

Summary

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to collect parent perspectives related to elementary instrumental music participation in a tuition-based program that meets outside the school day. The researcher used interviews, personal observations, and reflections to gather data. The interview transcripts, observations, and reflections were coded for themes. Chapters four and five will present the resulting codes, themes, and findings.

Chapter Four: Results

This hermeneutic phenomenological study sought to discover the lived experiences of parents involved with a tuition-based elementary instrumental music program that meets outside the school day. The study applied Bandura's social cognitive theory as a framework. Voluntary participants grant semi-structured interviews. The results combined the interview transcripts with observations and reflections from the researcher.

Historical Context

District History

Prior to the 2009-10 school year, the district being studied provided elementary instrumental music teachers to elementary schools. These itinerant positions required most teachers with a 1.0 FTE to serve two or three schools. Most teachers taught music classes as a pull-out program with calendars and schedules agreed upon by teachers and principals. The district piloted a program in which an outside organization would be contracted through the district to offer elementary instrumental music classes either before or after school during the 2009-10 school year; families would provide tuition fees to address the cost of instruction. Elementary instrumental music positions were severely reduced that year, requiring the remaining teachers to work in as many as six schools. In the spring of 2010, the district advertised a request for proposals (RFP) for anyone to apply to provide elementary instrumental music education services. The RFP process resulted in proposals from current employees who wished to teach at individual buildings, the original pilot program provider, and a daycare company seeking to expand its footprint in the district. During the RFP process, two high school band directors chose to offer classes for their feeder area at their school. These two directors were granted the request and provided transportation to the elementary school after classes.

Another high school director applied a hybrid approach: individual teachers and the daycare company served the feeder area, and he also hosted classes at the high school to give families as many options as possible. Currently, the original program provider serves most of the district except for one feeder area, which never resumed classes with the reintroduction of in-person learning. Since its initial introduction, the district has severed relationships with the daycare company; the individual teachers have discontinued their roles at individual schools for various reasons; and the high school teachers discontinued classes during online school due to COVID-19.

Most of the participants in this study live in the original pilot study feeder area. Three additional feeder areas are also represented in this study, for a total of four. This provides representation for approximately half the district.

Participants

All participants are current parents in the school district. Eleven parents participated in the study. Five parents have students eligible to participate in the elementary instrumental music program. The remaining six parents have students who were previously eligible to participate. All eleven parents had at least one student who participated for at least one year. This included a maximum of one parent with four students participating for two years each. Seven of the participants' only role in the district is as a parent of an eligible student. The district employs four participants, including three teachers and one administrator. All participants' names have been redacted, and an abbreviation has been assigned. Participants who are parents with no other role in the district have been assigned the letter "P" with numbers 1 through 7. Parent/teacher participants were given a "PT" with numbers 1 through 3. "PA1" was assigned to the parent/administrator.

Participant Histories

The initial interview questions sought to provide background context for answers to the remaining questions. Questions about participants' personal history with the district, history with music education, and history with the elementary music program were asked first. Personal histories with the district varied from a few years to decades. Individual histories of music education varied from none to multi-generational. Personal histories with the elementary instrumental program varied from one year to over a decade. The variety of personal contexts provided a more complete cross-section of perceptions for the elementary instrumental music program.

P1

P1's history with the district spans over a decade. Four children participated in the elementary instrumental music program for two years each. All children have continued into middle school or high school. P1 and his spouse are both former college music majors.

P2

P2 has lived in the district for three years with two children. The eldest participated in the elementary instrumental music program for two years, with the younger completing her second year. P2 was enrolled in piano lessons as a child for six to eight years of instruction.

P3

P3 has lived in the district for three years with two children. The eldest participated in the elementary instrumental music program for two years, with the younger currently completing her second year. P3 played the trumpet in the school's band program for approximately three years.

P4

P4 has lived in the district for twelve years and has two children who have both been in district schools. The eldest child did not participate in the elementary instrumental music program but started playing the clarinet as a sixth grader in middle school. The younger sibling is completing her second year of elementary instrumental music program instruction. P4 had “a couple” of years of piano instruction as a child.

P5

P5 has lived in the district for nineteen years and has one child who participated in the elementary instrumental music program for two years. The child continued to play in the band into middle school. P5 received no formal music education.

P6

P6 has lived in the school district for ten years and has two children who have participated in the elementary instrumental music program for two years each. P6 played the French horn through high school and college but is not personally involved in music presently. His father was a high school band director for forty years.

P7

P7 has lived in the district for four years and has two children. The eldest child participated in the district-provided elementary instrumental music program for one year. The younger child is in elementary school and attending a charter school in the district. The charter school similarly offers elementary instrumental music to the district-contracted organization. The younger child is completing her first year of instruction in this program. P7 enrolled in piano lessons as a child and played trumpet through high school with some college experience. P7's mother has taught piano lessons for several decades, and currently maintains her studio.

PT1

The district has employed PT1 as an art teacher for twenty years. She has one child who participated in the elementary instrumental music program for two years. PT1 enrolled in piano lessons through her teenage years.

PT2

The district has employed PT2 as a music teacher for thirteen years. In addition to her teaching duties, PT2 taught the elementary instrumental music program as a contractor for two years. PT2's eldest child participated in the elementary instrumental music program for two years, while the younger participated for one. PT2 participated in band throughout high school and college. Interestingly, PT2's father started playing the trumpet after she began with the school band.

PT3

The district has employed PT3 as a music teacher for the past twenty years. PT3 has four children who have participated in the elementary instrumental music program for zero to two years, depending on context. PT3 is a second-generation teacher and first-generation musician who played throughout high school and college.

PA1

The district has employed PA1 as a teacher, principal, and district-level administrator for twenty-two years. PA1 has three children, two of whom have participated in the elementary instrumental music program for one and two years. Music was a family activity for PA1; he did not participate personally but was instead a self-described athlete.

Summary of Findings

The interviews yielded codes that developed into themes through multiple rounds of coding. These themes addressed the research questions. Due to the semi-structured format of the interviews, additional themes were developed. The themes are presented in order of participant-generated emphasis.

Instructor

Quality of instruction was the most prominent theme developed through the coding process. Participants with positive instructor experiences were optimistic about the overall program. Conversely, participants with negative interactions negatively perceived the overall program. Participants who both reacted to the program had similar thoughts about instructor importance. P1 stated, “I would say the instructor is really important...the instructor is a critical component, especially when it’s non-curriculum based...the instructor is almost make or break.” P2 had a negative experience yet had a similar sentiment, noting the “teacher really makes a difference.” PT1 encouraged participation in the program due to prior knowledge of the instructor. This individual stated, “I actually really wanted my son to have him as an instructor and pushed it forward even more because I knew the instructor was going to be really, really good.” Themes developed in this category included the following: Positive Instructor Traits, Negative Instructor Traits, and Instructor Accountability.

Positive Instructor Traits

Families with positive instructor interactions tended to perceive the program more favorably. Other factors, such as transportation issues or schedules, seemed less burdensome in contexts with positive instructors. P5 reflected on the positivity of his experience, saying, “It increased the more we got to know the instructor because the instructor was fantastic. The whole

program seemed like it was great; it had a lot of support.” This was evident during initial meetings with instructors. P2 relayed, “I met Mrs. (redacted), and at that point, I was not really considering orchestra. I didn’t know, and then I got information from her, and she was very outgoing and just delightful about it...It was just her positivity.” PT3 was very complimentary, saying, “She’s done amazing stuff as far as I can tell, with the string players like my daughter...I think she’s doing an outstanding job.” PT3 also discussed the band teacher, stating, “She’s good. She works magic with little kids...She gets them excited, gets them involved...knows how to really reach kind of reach those little kids.” P6 also had a positive experience with their teacher, stating, “We had a fantastic instructor.”

Negative Instructor Traits

Unfortunately, the opposite was also true. Sometimes, the instructor discouraged participation through their interactions with parents and students. P1 was forthcoming about his instructor interactions: “That was challenging, and I think that that actually was frictive (sic) [causing friction] for some parents and caused some parents to not participate after they kind of got to know the teacher a little bit....And it was very clear at that point. There were certain parents that were like, ‘Yeah, no, we’re not gonna do this.’” P2 had a positive experience in her first year with the program, then had a change of instructor during the second year. Reflecting on both years, P2 stated, “When Mrs. (redacted) was there [it] was such a great program, and she was so organized and the kids learned...but now they’re not learning...and my kid doesn’t even know what she’s doing.” P3 reflected, “But it is something where the quality of instruction definitely impacts, I think, the willingness to participate, and she’s down to, I think, there’s only one or two other kids.” Instructors must have a variety of skills, including content knowledge. Classroom management is also a challenge. P4 noticed “the chaoticness and not ever actually

having to like, seriously get anything done.” Through no fault of their own, PT2 acknowledged that some instructors were not qualified: “It was just the high school kids doing the teaching of the kids...using high school students to just be there as a mentor...is such a wonderful concept. But to have them try to be doing the teaching and the classroom management, when...they are not trained at all...to handle younger kids that are a lot of the times very unfocused.” This situation poses numerous potential problems, some of which are not related to music.

Participants identified specific deficits in instruction that influenced instructor effectiveness and participation levels. P2 addressed these issues in one statement: “I know the people who did quit, and they said it’s just so unorganized.” PT2 remembered the same problem in a different program. Her student was “a little bit frustrated with the management piece, like, so the kids are, you know, like, always messing around and things, and some of that is just kids being kids at that age, but a lot of it too is not having a person there that know how to manage this age group.” P4 identified a lack of rigor in instruction, stating, “I think she was getting away with not knowing actually how to play it.” PT3 agreed with the statement but tried to find a positive aspect: “Many of them may be perhaps having a lot of fun and making sounds of blowing and still doing it wrong...like butts in seats does not equal that they got their appropriate instruction.” This common frustration among parents can lead to a lack of faith in the credibility of the program.

Instructor Accountability

Accountability issues can be correlated to some negative instructor attributes and deficits. PT2 taught elementary instrumental students in this context for two years and successfully identified one problem. She reflected that she was “never observed or anything. So she [supervisor] was lucky in a sense that I knew what I was doing and doing a good job with it...no

one from that, that company ever came in to observe me.” PT2 had two of her children in two different programs. She observed that “neither of the two programs were...getting degreed music educators...and so it was a like a toss-up, whether the person was, know what they were doing, really or not, and were effective at working with kids.” PT3 observed: “I don’t really have any obviously control over what that outside company does. Who they hire, how they run things. There’s probably...not a lot of reliability on, I guess, reliability of instruction.” The district’s central office appears to oversee the organization. The organization owns all curricular and instructional oversight. PT2 summarized the issue, stating it “made it hard for me because there weren’t checks and balances on these people that were working with our kids.” These frustrations were clearly understandable. Families should have an assurance of instructor quality and accountability.

Communication

Attitudes toward the program and the instructors are connected to communication. It was separated from the instructor context because communication statements were related to the schools, the organization, and the instructors, either combined or separately. Participants agreed that communication is essential to maintain a quality program. The most important qualities include timing and frequency. The program maintains several options for communication. These include district resources such as email lists, weekly school communications such as Thursday folders, organization websites, and individual teacher communication. Quality application of these resources aids in school participation, whereas a lack of communication can harm the program.

Communication: Positive experiences

There were many positive comments related to communication. P6 praised the level of communication, saying, “Communication was fantastic. It was never a problem.” A higher frequency of communication is often welcome, as observed by P4: “The more, the better, emails don’t hurt my feelings...email from the school, email from the programs, fine. And then our school does a Thursday virtual folder.” P3 indicated a greater willingness to participate in the program due to quality communication. She stated, “I thought the communication has always been good. And yeah, it does. I think it makes us more likely to participate if the communication that’s going on...and what to expect is clear.” PT3’s feeder area made a change to the organization that other feeders use. There was a short timeline to make the change. PT3 stated: “I do think they did a fairly good job of getting the work out this first year in a very short period of time to the kids into the feeder areas. So whatever they did to make that happen, that was great.” The most significant change to PT3’s feeder was a move from centrally located instruction at the high school to individual neighborhood elementary schools. This required assistance from the middle school principal. PT3 stated, “My principal was very helpful. He was all about wanting to make this happen for me because that was something I wanted to do.”

Communication: Negative experiences

Many negative comments focused on consistency and timeliness of communication. Families should maintain a calendar available at the beginning of the year. P2 stated that “just knowing the concert schedule ahead of time” would be helpful. In this feeder area, the teachers maintain a complete performing arts calendar set in the spring before the following school year. PT2 echoed the same sentiment: “So communication was iffy. It was iffy, just to yeah, and a lot of that is just because of the band director being pretty unorganized.” Communication issues can

exert negative consequences on participation. Timeliness can also be a communication issue. P2 expressed frustration with emails and schedule changes on the day of class. She stated, “The communication...will be like the day of, 12 pm. ‘Sorry, actually, they don’t have violin today because I thought that I could. I forgot to ask the school...for the space, and I just assume they could have it today’.” P5 acknowledged that “I think there was times when I had to search out the communication that might have been a little frustrating, but there was nothing that...swayed me one way or the other as far as willingness to participate.” PA1 established some of the onus on parents to know what is happening. In speaking on the topic of not registering for class, PA1 reasoned it, “maybe because their parents don’t know about it. Parents are busy; they’re busy people. Now they may not read the flyer, they may not be inclined to do that.” Communication requires a concerted effort on the part of both parties to be effective.

Recruiting

Recruiting is one of the most important aspects of attracting families to participate in the elementary instrumental music program. Teachers must apply effective communication methods to solicit students who want to participate. Participants in the study were overwhelmingly positive about the teachers' recruiting efforts while offering a few suggestions. P1 mentioned three methods employed for recruiting once school had started. He stated, “I think Miss (redacted) sent something home. So the music teacher [classroom music] sent something home like a paper and then I’m sure that the school also email, did email communication...We had...an informational night where they brought the band rental company in, and they have...an info night.”

P2 mentioned a school-wide event that the music teachers attended: “During the beginning of school, you know how you come in and meet the teachers. That is how we learned

because they were with their desks and displays.” P4 referred to the same event as “open houses or whatever they’re called at our elementary. And he would come, and you’d be just like playing an instrument, you know, and just like, catch someone off guard with that and just like make it fun.” P3 mentioned, “a session where you got to try different instruments.” P5 remembered a school assembly in which, “somebody must have come and done a presentation at the elementary school.” The findings alluded to a partnership between the school and the organization. P5 expanded on the partnership, stating, “I remember (school redacted) would always advertise that join, join elementary band. And I actually specifically remember on the first, it was a meet and greet. That was awesome have they had the band teacher and the violin teacher, the orchestra teacher there at the elementary.” Two participants mentioned specific events that captured their children’s attention. PT3 relayed, “The directors there would take the high school kids around, and they would do little, like demo thing for them at the end of the year for the elementary school kids.” PT1’s student chose to play trombone because “The Star Wars theme song uses a trombone. That really inspired him to want to join, but other than that, I don’t know. That was just something that he clung on to.” Teachers must effectively capture the imaginations of elementary students to build enthusiasm to participate.

Several participants offered suggestions for recruiting that may increase participation. PT1 and P1 both mentioned in-house performances for peers to build excitement. PT1 stated, “I think it would be kind of cool if the kids could maybe play during their music class and show off a little bit...So it’s not just a secret thing they do before school...I think that would give them a little more incentive to ‘Hey, I do this great thing before school’ and to brag about it a little bit.” P1 had a desire “that they will do more performances and get exposure, you know, in the school, because I think that just the one time per semester...didn’t, you know, create as much buzz as it

could probably if they did more of it.” PA1 also spoke to exposure: “But if you could make the program more robust and better for kids by charging more and provide more, maybe more opportunities to do more things, then it might actually encourage more kids to do it. It might be a more shiny, kind of, ‘Oh, I want to do that as well. Oh, I saw that.’ Because maybe it’s exposed a little more.” P2 spoke to the timing of recruiting efforts. She stated, “I think that letting parents know before, I think sending a flyer out before school [meaning before school year starts] so they know what’s coming up is good because a lot of parents in August sign their kids up for fall sports...I got an orchestra email on August 14...So that’s fine, but a lot of sports are already registered for the fall.” Music teachers must consider other activities that attract family resources for their students.

Motivation

Music teachers must follow best practices to motivate students once they have been successfully recruited into the elementary instrumental music program. Students can participate in either one or two years in the district program studied. One task of the music teachers in the middle school program is to maintain student interest and motivate them to continue participation in the middle school program.

Several parents mentioned the feeder festival as a positive motivator. This combined concert includes instrumental music students in fourth through twelfth grade. Elementary, middle, and high schools all independently perform a piece or two during the concert. At the concert's end, there is a grand finale with a piece that all levels can play together as a combined ensemble. Many feeder areas create unique t-shirts for the students to wear for the event. Students build community by eating dinner together. P1 stated, “The Feeder Fest was great. We love that.” P3 said, “The bigger events are kind of a nice way to make the kids feel like they’re

doing a special event.” PT1 stated, “I feel part of the success there was the connections made with the middle school and the high school through Feeder Fest because then he got to see where it can go.” Positive motivation included concerts in a more general way, too. P3 found “he definitely enjoyed that and...they both enjoy the concerts as well.”

Another motivator for students is the social aspect. P4 found “she wanted to do because all her friends were doing it.” P6 agreed, stating, “I think it was just the camaraderie...they were excited too...see who else was their age that was going to be playing with them.” PT2 agreed with the social aspects but perceived them differently. She stated: “If it could have been in the school day...there would have been so many more kids participating and then more kids participating breeds more kids participating because then all of the kids are together in this and it...becomes a little more cool.”

Motivation can present challenges for elementary-age students. This is true despite the context of instruction. PT2 found that “that two years is too long for them to be doing a before school or after school...once or twice a week-type program. They fizzled out by the time they got to middle school...just like they’re over it or they think that they know a whole lot.” P1 found a lack of the social aspect discouraging, stating, “That was actually like a small group. It wasn’t like an orchestra...I just wish there was more happening because I think that the kids would have seen what’s possible in the future and...stuck with it longer.” P4 agreed: “There weren’t enough friends wanting to do it, and she just wasn’t loving it or practicing it.” P2 cited a lack of organization, stating, “I know the people who did quit, and they said it’s just so unorganized.” P3 noted a lack of challenge because her student “is a little bit more advanced, and they have intermediates practicing with the beginners so she was bored for a while. They broke her out with one or two other people and basically had them practicing by themselves, which

they should probably have an instructor the majority of the time.” P6 also cited instructor issues, stating, “My youngest...wasn’t very happy about the instructor and didn’t like the format, how it was just not as structured. So we left and went to [a different youth instrumental music organization].” Concerts and social aspects are the reasons most often cited for motivation among students and parents of the instrumental music program.

Program Outcomes

Program outcomes revolved around several central themes. The researcher asked parents about the benefits they hoped their children would gain from a music education. The results included seven themes, only one of which is musical. Most participants cited several advantages of a musical education for their children. They have been separated by category for this study. A minimum of five out of eleven participants mentioned each of the categories that were included. Five was chosen because it represents approximately fifty percent of the participants. Due to the open-ended nature of the question, participants could direct their answers in any way they preferred. Additionally, themes included here were often alluded to, even when not explicitly mentioned by the participants. Explicitly mentioned examples and citations are the only ones contained here.

Enjoyment

Enjoyment was a common theme among parents. Seven of the eleven participants mentioned this in their answers. PT1 stated, “I just wanted him to have a positive experience and maybe stick with music, which he did.” P2 took a more holistic approach: “I always thought it was a great hobby to have. I’ve always heard it’s good for the brain...and it’s actually a really good de-stressor.” P4 stated, “I just hope they find something they want to do and enjoy.”

Social

Seven parents mentioned social benefits in their interviews, making it another common theme. Interestingly, the parent-only group and the parent/ administrator mentioned them, but none of the parent/teachers did. PA1 stated, “I think the biggest benefits...is a strong supportive friend network.” P7 said, “The friendships, I think, are, you know, very solid in Band.” P6 was hopeful that her students would expand their friend network. She wanted her students “to meet some of the peers that they were going to have class with.” P5 expanded on the idea due to his child’s shy nature. He stated, “I really think that it’s helped him make some friends...He does like to sit back and kind of watch how things are happening.”

Musical Skills

Musical skills were sufficiently mentioned, warranting inclusion as a theme. However, the participants who referred to them were the opposite of those who mentioned social benefits. In other words, two parents and all three participants from the parent/teacher group and two parents mentioned skills specifically. One parent who mentioned skills grew up in a household with a forty-year veteran music teacher. The other parent is a musician whose spouse was also a music major in college. P6 wanted her students to “also love their instruments so that when they came [to middle school], they would be excited to sign up for class and be prepared and know the basics and succeed.” P3 wanted his students to have fun doing with music but also wanted “to make sure they have all the foundational skills and everything too.”

Musical Exposure

Seven of the participants, representing all three categories, cited musical exposure. P3 mentioned “overall exposure to culture and things like that.” P4 wanted her students to “[try] something new, exposing themselves to different kinds of music.” PA1 perceived the long-term

benefit, stating, “He’s developing his skills and his passion for music and for performing arts, and it ties into something that he wants to do in his future as well.” This is an area that could be promoted to greater extent during advocacy efforts.

Confidence

Confidence was cited by the plurality of parents, with nine from across all three categories of participants. PT2 stated, “I know she probably had a little more confidence going into sixth grade than the kids that hadn’t had anything.” P7 cited, “Just increased level of confidence and creativity and appreciation for music.” PA1 was more specific, stating, “I think he’s gained a little bit of a presence in terms of feeling comfortable talking to people, small groups, large groups, stage presence, all of those kinds of things.”

Academic

Music advocacy efforts to connect music education to other academic areas are compelling among this group's participants. P1 stated, “I think that it also...helped them with school, with...just being a general student generally.” P3 wanted her students to balance student sports participation “with more of an intellectual pursuit.” P5 was not musical in school but said, “It seemed like it helped with their education. I really like the idea that music and math seemed to go hand in hand.” P7 also mentioned the music and math relationship, stating, “I think musicians, ...especially early education musicians, like talk about like a math, logic, science relationship with music.”

Discipline

Participants were appreciative of the “life-skill” aspect of musical education. Participants were also hopeful that their students would learn habits of discipline in addition to their academic skills. P4 stated, “I think they’re getting really good skills too, from having to practice,

be on a team, perform. P3 liked to see the development of “a little bit of discipline learning an instrument, practicing an instrument, and even just...confidence.” P1 appreciated “the discipline of practice and understanding...what it takes to be proficient at something.”

Fees

Although fees have been a source of contention for music staff within the school district, the results revealed that they were a non-issue for participation. This study represents the district's four of nine feeder areas with consistent results. The results were consistent across the four feeder areas represented. PA1 provided a brief preface for the feeder with the most significant representation. This individual stated, “Let me say that in this community. I want to preface that because we’re fortunate here...We’re in the most affluent part of the county and one of the most affluent counties in the nation.” PA1 addressed fees related to his family, stating, “It hasn’t impacted us. And we have always been able to pay for it and support it...[speaking of his student] He’s a better deal of a child than a kid who plays club basketball.” Other participants repeated this sentiment. The music fee and instrument rental are cheaper than the average club sport. P3 also compared it to the price of more expensive private music lessons. PT1 stated, “I’d pay whatever it needed to be paid. That didn’t bother me... It wasn’t cost-prohibitive for us at all.” P6 prioritized her child’s education: “For us, it wasn’t an issue. I remember it being pricey. But we wanted our daughters to have that exposure and be a part of it...So we agreed it was a priority for us.” Some participants were resigned to the idea that education is fee-based. P4 stated, “All extracurriculars are fee-based even. I pay a fee at (middle school redacted). Like, digital design has a fee. It’s at school.” In this case, P4 discussed a classroom materials fee for her student's elective class offered through the school.

Some participants provided negative comments related to fees. Some comments were first-hand, but there were also second-hand and theoretical comments. PT3 stated, “When we had it...before school and the cost. That was what we usually heard from parents.” P4 said, “It’s...a little much to also have to rent an instrument. It’s a lot of money.” A few participants reflected on their experiences with instrumental music as a child. P6 stated, “I was disappointed because when I grew up, it was in my own school, and it wasn’t a fee.” PA1 offered a thought related to family priorities. PA1 stated, “When I heard it was outside for a fee, it was even more challenging. Challenging for some families, maybe who can’t afford it or won’t afford it for their kids.” PT2 offered first-hand insight into a feeder area “where there’s over fifty percent of the students on free/reduced lunch...And I guess just a little bit sad because I know so many families and kids whose parents either work and can’t get them somewhere before or after school or don’t have the funds to do that.” In this case, PT2 alludes to schedule and location, which presented a more significant effect on family participation.

Location

Location was another predominant topic. The consensus is that each elementary school should maintain its own program. Asking parents to travel to a secondary location can affect participation numbers. P2 stated, “I definitely signed them up because it was at the school. I wouldn’t have to pick them up and take them to another place.” P3 agreed with the statement, saying, “Yeah, I thought the location was great. Keeping them at the school where they can go to school and...right into class is really convenient.” P6 expanded on this topic to include a relative who lives in a different feeder area. She explained, “I’m glad that we have this in our neighborhood. Because, like I said, my sister doesn’t...I would love it for it to be at each individual school.” One elementary school houses the band program in the one feeder area, while

the other houses the orchestra program. P1 explained how that related to instrument choice. He stated, “Yeah, we opted to not do orchestra...because they weren’t at the school campus that my kids attended. So logistically, it was just easier for them to go to band practice and then go to school and not have to go back and forth.” P4 provided more detail about the logistics, stating, “I’m not going to take her at 7:30, pick her up at 8:20, get her to her school at 8:30. Like, I can’t believe those parents do that.” PA1 thought of working parent situations, explaining it is “also challenging for parents to maybe get them there...if they’re working parents to get them there outside the school day, outside of the transportation that’s provided.” PT2 agreed with this, stating, “I do know a lot of families that couldn’t get their kid to (redacted) high school [for classes] early in the morning because they relied on the school bus taking their kids to their elementary schools because they went to work.” Location is also linked to time. Families must add travel time if classes are located somewhere other than their home school. Depending on time of day, such as rush hour, the additional travel time commitment could be significant.

Location within the school was also problematic in some contexts. The instrumental music teachers borrowed space within the building, which was sometimes less than ideal. P2 described a situation in which beginning and intermediate students would meet concurrently. The teacher would try to separate the two groups, but the sound would bleed between the two rooms. The students “were told...there was nowhere to practice because [the former teacher] used to have them go right outside the classroom and practice on their own...after that [they] started practicing together in the closet.” P1 stated, “There was no storage for instruments. So...the kids...had to...haul their instruments back and forth.” P1 also talked about the rehearsal space, stating, “It was just a gym...they would have to pull chairs and music stands and things out and set them up and tear them down.” This situation required valuable class time away from the

students. This also caused problems with school staff. P4 described, “The PE teacher used to complain because we have...a really nice donated gym floor. And the spit from the brass instrument...is...getting on the floor, and she was just...angry all the time.” The researcher observed a January orchestra class meeting in a mobile building. The building consisted of two classrooms. One side was a regular classroom with some desks that were stored in the room making it very crowded. The other side was a classroom that was being used as storage for desks and other school equipment. There were approximately twelve students crowded in the “storage” room. The most notable feature was the lack of heat in the room. The temperature outside was in the mid-thirties, while the inside was fifty-one degrees. The students joked about the temperature having increased by one degree since arrival.

Schedule

Opinions regarding the schedule were in agreement but equally divided. The pertinent factor included personal context. Families appreciate a before-school schedule if it fits their schedules. The same was true for an after-school schedule. Conversely, a before- or after-school meeting time was a potential dealbreaker if it did not fit parents’ schedules. P4 stated, “So my son did not participate...because...it’s in the morning. It’s...two mornings a week and just seemed like a pain.” PA1’s context made before-school participation very simple. PA1 stated, “The thing that was easy for us with being right across the street...was our kids could go over to [before school childcare]...and then do band when that started. After-school participation garnered similar statements.

Awakening children early, one or two days per week, was the main objection to a before-school program. (Outside of personal context issues such as work or transportation.) PT2 stated, “I feel like before school was harder than the after school. Just because of...trying to get your kid

out of bed early is a little bit tough.” After-school activity conflicts were participants’ main objections to an after-school program. P2 had two children who participated in a before-school program. She explained why after school would not work. P2 stated, “I would say just struggles would be even like if ...there was another sport, [student redacted] was in gymnastics, [student redacted] was in soccer. PT2 offered another perspective: “When they’ve been at school all day, already learning and then have it. It was really fun at first for my stepson, but then...all his friends are going home now, and he’s going to stay and work...because you’re still sitting. It’s another class...To have another class outside the school day is pretty hard for a fifth grader to get jazzed about.” Educators working in this context must be cognizant of the amount time students have been in school. It is helpful to structure fun introductory activities into a music class that meets immediately after school.

PT3 offered the most solution-oriented statement on the topic. As a district employee, PT3 taught three elementary programs before removing them from the school day. One school met before school hours, one after, and one during the day to accommodate staggered start times and lunch schedules. Regarding the during-school program, PT3 stated, “That was my biggest program out of the three schools, was the one that I taught during the day, because the kids were captive audiences in the building.”

Program Changes

Changes participants would like to realize in the program were another topic of conversation. Some answers applied were generalizable, while others were specific to this context. P5 suggested, “If there was a way where it would be really easy for the kids to try different instruments...and really see what they like best. I think that would be a good thing.” PT2 wants music to return to “part of the school day...[with] teachers who are district approved

and coming in with degrees and having had programs where they learn how to teach beginners.” PT3 echoed similar suggestions, stating, “It would be that the program itself transitions to...the district owning it and it being something that they hire FTE for...if we stayed with an outside program, that...if the company would work with the [district] teachers to vet who the instructors are that they’re using...if it could have just been in the school day.” P6 stated, “I would love for it to be at each individual school.” PA1 reflected on his initial reaction to moving outside the school day for a fee, stating, “I just thought it would be horrible for the longevity of the programs. And it has been, I think...it’s been really difficult to gain the numbers, and I think there’s a lot of kids who might be musically inclined, who don’t get the opportunity to do it.” P1 echoed this thought, stating, “I think that because the programs were...like an extracurricular activity, I think it impacts the middle school and high school programs significantly.” P1 continued, “I think something like...band in elementary could have been really, really powerful for [the middle school and] high school program. Because imagine if you had twice as many students...that were interested than you do because that’s ultimately what happens, right?” PA1 concluded, “I think it’d be great if we brought music back into the elementary world.” The findings in the participant interviews agree with this statement. Moving music programs back into the schools addresses many concerns related to instructor quality, accountability, transportation, and time. It also makes program participation more convenient, which can encourage initial enrollment and retention.

Summary

The participants addressed a wide variety of topics. Some topics were familiar to any elementary instrumental music program, such as the program outcomes parents would like to realize. The first-hand nature of these findings is valuable because the participants could speak

freely with their own words. Other topics were specific to an outside-the-school day, fee-based context. There were three significant findings in this area. First, if the students are sufficiently enthusiastic, parents will often find the means to address fees associated with the activity. Second, each school should maintain its program because transportation creates a problem of equal access. Third, an instrumental music program should exist during the school day whenever possible. Programs existing outside the school day also elicit issues with equal access for students.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Introduction

The education landscape is changing, and music education is changing with it. These changes are occurring at a rapid pace, and it is incumbent on today's music educators to be aware of current trends in education and take a proactive position before issues arise. The privatization of education is one of these trends. Hiring, contracting, or promoting outside sources to provide music education within individual schools or districts is becoming more common. Some organizations offer music classes in the school during the day. Other organizations, such as the district in this study, move offerings outside school hours. This study provides an essential look at these programs from a parent's perspective.

Elementary instrumental music courses provide the foundation for later participation in music courses at the secondary level. Music educators and administration should align their goals to maximize enrollment at the elementary level. For the music educator, this creates a healthy, vibrant program with multiple ensembles, which allows grouping by ability to provide the highest quality education. For the school administration, this costs less money and requires a smaller FTE allocation than other programs within the organization.

The first step in this process is equal access for all students. Programs in this study have access issues due to time, transportation, and tuition. There are potential issues related to quality of instruction, although these tend to manifest on a case-by-case basis. A lack of accountability can lead to a program with instructor issues. Preferred outcomes for parents are weighted toward non-musical benefits, while music educators weighted musical benefits more heavily.

Elementary instrumental music programs that meet outside the school day for a fee can provide

an alternative to district-funded models, but they can simultaneously create issues of unequal access for students.

Discussion

The students are the most critical stakeholders of the elementary instrumental music program. The program exists to serve them and provide them with a high-quality education: it would cease to exist without them. Music educators should work to provide equal access to all students, allowing them to participate in any capacity they choose. Many other factors contribute to elementary instrumental music participation, but it is essential to remember that the program serves the student.

Instructor

The most critical factor in the success of the program is the instructor. Interview participants made instructor-related comments more than any other topic. P1 stated, “The instructor is a critical component.” P3 agreed: “If you have a good instructor...it will be a positive experience.” Negative instructor experiences can harm the program. P3’s biggest struggle with the program was “the teacher’s unorganized and not very communicative.” PT2 described issues with the quality of instruction, finding students “had not been taught just very foundational skills.” The school district and the organization could solve many instructor-related matters with increased accountability. PT2 observed, “It [is] not being overseen by the district.” It is not supervised at a feeder level either. PT3 stated, “I don’t really have any control...over what that outside company does. Who they hire, how they run things.” PT2 summarized, “Some of them know more what they’re doing than others. And it’s just such a toss-up on what you’re getting.” This was a recurring theme throughout the interview process. Participants with overall positive instructor experiences engaged with a more positive tone throughout the interview.

Conversely, a negative instructor experience soured the overall tone of the interview. The instructor is the most critical contributor to the success of the program.

Communication

The success of the elementary instrumental music program is directly connected to communication. The majority of communication happens between instructor and student or instructor and parent. Communication has been treated as a separate topic because there is communication or lack thereof among the district, organization, instructor, parent, and student. P3 found open lines of communication “makes us more likely to participate if...you know what’s going on and what to expect is clear.” P7 agreed, stating, “They provided clear, consistent communication, which encouraged you to stay with the program.” It is also important to communicate often and through multiple channels. PA1 attributed to a lack of participation “because their parents don’t know about it. Parents are busy...they may not read the flyer.” The most significant takeaway is to communicate early. P2 provided the most concrete example: “I think sending a flyer out before [the] school [year starts] so they know what’s coming up is good because a lot of parents in August sign their kids up for fall sports.” Communication may be the second most crucial aspect of a successful program. It shows professionalism from the organization and instructor. Families will welcome timely, consistent, clear, and concise communication, which contributes to parents encouraging the students to participate.

Recruiting

Recruiting practices were received positively, with a few participants offering suggestions for improving effectiveness. P1 noted two events: “So the music teacher sent something home, like a paper...and the school also did email communication.” P2 described the first meeting with the teacher at an open house night: “I met Miss (redacted), and at that point, I

was not really considering orchestra...and then I got the information from her, and she was very outgoing and just delightful.” P3 described a session when the students “got to try different instruments.” P5 described an assembly as a “presentation at the elementary school” for students, after which “my son expressed a little bit of interest.” Suggestions revolved around gaining more exposure for the program. P1 wanted kids to “do more performances and get exposure...in the school.” PA1 suggested, “If you could make the program more robust and better for kids...and provide...more opportunities to do more things, then it might actually encourage more kids to do it.” Recruiting efforts seem successful, but music educators should also work to gain more exposure for their programs. With the community more aware of the positive experiences their children can access through music participation, excitement and momentum can bring growth.

Motivation

After successfully recruiting students, the instructors must work to keep them motivated to stay and excited to learn. Participants generally agreed that concerts provided positive motivation. Most feeder areas in the district perform a “feeder festival” concert that includes all fourth through twelfth-grade musicians. The festival has always been a source of excitement for students in the program, however, how frequently it was mentioned was surprising. P1 one stated it most succinctly: “The feeder fest was great. We love that.”

Social aspects were also important to participants. P6 tied the feeder fest to the social, citing “the camaraderie. The fact that they met so many kids in the feeder before they came to middle school.” P7 cited “the positivity of the instructors.” Motivating factors included friendships, whereas a lack of friends had the opposite effect. P4 stated, “There weren’t enough friends wanting to do it, and she just wasn’t loving it or practicing it.” Instructors should try to

bring more performance opportunities for kids and build on the social aspects of the program by trying to recruit groups of friends to join the program.

Program Outcomes

The topic of program outcomes yielded exciting results. The question asked participants about any benefits they hoped their children would receive from participation in the music program. Seven main themes were repeated in this category: enjoyment, social, musical skills, musical exposure, confidence, academics, and discipline. The outcomes contained several unique findings. Social skills were mentioned most often, with confidence appearing frequently; the majority of participants named enjoyment and social benefits as well. Discipline and musical exposure warranted inclusion but were cited less frequently. Other categories included musical skills and music education's connection to other academic areas. Interestingly, the parent-teacher group and parents with the most substantial musical background ranked musical skills as necessary and failed to mention the social aspect. It seems music educators prioritize the musical skills aspect of participation, while non-musician parents are more concerned with social and soft skills such as confidence and discipline. Music educators should focus their recruiting efforts on soft skills, emphasizing the social aspect.

Fees

The topic of fees yielded the most unexpected results in the study. Participants agreed that the fees were not prohibitive for their context. For example, P2 and P3 stated, that the expense was "fine." Some participants acknowledged that we currently live in a fee-based society. P4 stated, "All extracurriculars are fee-based." Several cited that the cost of music instruction is lower than sports participation. P1 said, "If my kids were involved in sports, they'd be paying a pretty significant sports fee and/or equipment fee." Many participants admitted that

some families may have a problem with the cost, but there was almost no first-hand evidence of this. PT3 relayed that some families would wait to start playing in middle school due to the fee structure in the elementary school. PT3 gave a hypothetical example of a parent saying, “Oh, well, I’m just gonna start at the beginning band in seventh grade. Because then I don’t have to pay for it.” Among the participants, if a child is excited enough, the parents will find a way to pay for the cost of participation. This was unexpected because the feeling across the district among music educators is that instruction should be free.

Location

Most participants agreed on the topic of location. In the study, the participants had at least one option for either band or orchestra at their home school. Some participants had both ensembles as an option, while others had only one or the other. Positive comments about location followed P2’s thought process: “It is so convenient when a parent doesn’t have to drive to another location.” P3 agreed: “I thought the location was great. Keeping them at school where they can go to school and just go right into class is really convenient.” Negative comments followed the same thought process. P1 stated, “We opted to not do orchestra...because they weren’t at the campus.” Some parents committed to attending a different school for music classes, but the ensemble representation for those schools was smaller. If music teachers want to maximize enrollment numbers, the data are clear: each school should have its own program.

Schedule

Participants were divided but united on the topic of schedule; in other words, participants spoke positively when the class schedule suited their personal schedule, but negatively when it did not. Unfortunately, everyone has a different schedule, depending on their context. P7 stated, “It wasn’t any problem. It’s just one hour after school. I could imagine if it were before school

that would be a tougher sell.” PT1 had the opposite reaction: “After school would have been harder...but because it was before school made it really easy.” P5 gave some perspective on scheduling in general, stating, “As a family, we’re very busy with doing other things all the time.” The middle of the school day is the standard time that is most convenient for all families.

However, a word of caution is necessary. If instrumental music classes are scheduled as a pull-out program, the music educator must collaborate with school staff to allow maximum student access. Elementary classroom teachers are typically very protective of their math and language arts times and do not want to give those up. PT1 witnessed this as an art teacher in an elementary with instrumental program that met during the school day. PT stated, “The teachers were incredibly frustrated because the kids would get pulled out of math.” The researcher experienced the same phenomenon when working as an elementary instrumental teacher. The best time to schedule instrumental music is during “specials” times, social studies, or group work.

Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights for the music education community. Educators can learn from the critical points of the study. The study confirms several points made during the literature review and adds to others. Hash states, “Numerous factors can affect enrollment in school bands and orchestras, including class scheduling, time commitment requirements, and the cost of participation.”¹ This study confirms Hash’s statement regarding factors related to participation.

The instructor is the most critical aspect of the music program's success. Deisler states, “Though there are many common characteristics of successful music programs, the most

¹ Phillip Hash, “Enrollment in Illinois School Bands during the COVID-19 Pandemic,” 63.

common factor is the teacher.”² Deisler continued, “Director’s personality, teacher interaction style, and management skills in relation to the program are all factors relevant to the success of band programs.”³ This study confirms Deisler’s statement.

One of these critical management skills outlined in this study is communication. This study corroborates Lautzenheiser’s conclusions when he states, “*Communication is the answer. It must be frequent, sincere, selfless, and dedicated to the parents’ greatest concern: the welfare of their child.*”⁴ In the literature review, BOOST stated, “Afterschool programs...are unrestricted by curriculum guidelines, standardized accountability, and, for the most part, state and federal mandates.”⁵ BOOST was speaking about afterschool programs in general. This was also confirmed to apply to elementary instrumental music education programs. A school or district considering a model such as the one outlined here must plan for accountability to ensure the highest quality education for the students. The instructor is the person that students interact with the most; therefore, organizations must create a plan to seek out, recruit, and retain the best candidates with the right combination of personality, skill, and professionalism to work with their students.

This study discovered several recruiting implications. The recruiting efforts currently being implemented by the instructors are effective. For example, the feeder festival concert aligns well with Albert’s research, which cited “exposure to the band program” as a contributing

² Deisler, “A Comparison of Common Characteristics of Successful High School Band Programs in Low Socioeconomic Schools and High Socioeconomic Schools,” 43.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Lautzenheiser, *Music Advocacy and Student Leadership: Key Components of Every Successful Music Program: A Collection of Writings*, 74.

⁵ BOOST Collaborative, “Filling in the Gaps: How Developmental Theory Supports Social Emotional Learning in Afterschool Programs.”

factor.⁶ Participants offered suggestions and recommended building exposure within the community to an even higher level. Motivational efforts are also effective among teachers in the district. The research revealed that instructor and parent program goals and expectations do not always align. This is also true for after-school sports programs. Erikson found that “parents were not explicitly concerned with exercise, but primarily saw sports as a way to reduce excessive screen time.”⁷ Music instructors tend to focus on musical skills and exposure, while parents often value soft skills such as confidence, making friends, and having fun. Recruiting efforts should be geared toward parent and student value systems to recruit more students.

Location and schedule were the two most significant barriers to entry for participants in this study. Schedule has been cited many times in the literature as contributing to participation. Chapter One of this study cited Lautzenheiser, who recognized, “Every discipline has developed an outside-the-school-day agenda, from the debate club to the National Honor Society; there is a huge demand for every student’s time.”⁸ Schedules must work for families so that students can participate. This topic was alluded to in this study by PA1, who stated, “They could be at [childcare] at [the school] and then do band when that started.” Teaching a program outside the school day allowed some parents to have additional before or after-school care for their students, allowing them to accommodate work schedules and other commitments.

The influence of location is a unique finding of this study. When the music program is housed in their neighborhood school, families are more willing to participate in the instrumental

⁶ Albert, “Strategies for the Recruitment and Retention of Band Students in Low Socioeconomic School Districts,” 60.

⁷ Eriksen and Stefansen, “What Are Youth Sports For? Youth Sports Parenting in Working-Class Communities,” 599.

⁸ Lautzenheiser, *Music Advocacy and Student Leadership: Key Components of Every Successful Music Program: A Collection of Writings*, 28.

music program. Some families are willing to add another commute to their busy schedules, but some are not, creating an issue of equal access. Organizations must carefully consider the effect of schedule and location when changing either. Depending on the specific context, the two issues can sometimes be tied together because driving to a different location takes time, thereby adding another layer of complexity.

The topic of fees was far less influential than anticipated in this study. Music educators often cite fees as problematic, however, in this study, fees did not directly affect a decision to participate in the program. This phenomenon is similar to the youth sports movement. In the literature review, Bjork's research found that "the annual cost of playing on a travel team ranged from several hundred dollars to \$15,000, with most parents reporting somewhere between \$1,000 and \$5,000."⁹ Study participants were empathetic of families that may not have the financial means to participate. In the literature review, Black discovered sports participation rates ranged "from 31.2% among children with a family income of less than 100% of the federal poverty level (FPL) to 70.2% among children with a family income of 400% or more of FPL."¹⁰ While fees may not have affected the decision to participate in this study, they may affect others in a different context.

Implications

Practical implications of the study can potentially affect how elementary instrumental music is delivered. To allow the maximum number of students to participate in music programs, barriers to entry must be removed. Benham states, "Districts identified as of qualitative excellence consider 65 percent of grade 5 students as a minimum target level for participation in

⁹ Bjork and Hoynes, "Parents Find Community: Youth Sports as a Mobile Neighborhood," 2290.

¹⁰ Black, Terlizzi, and Vahratian, "Organized Sports Participation among Children Aged 6-17 Years: United States, 2020," 3.

instrumental music, and a maximum of 15 percent attrition between any two grades.”¹¹ There has been a steady decline in participation numbers district-wide since the implementation of this program. Program enrollments should improve once barriers to entry are removed. District-level FTE funding challenges will also improve as program enrollments improve, as outlined in Benham’s work, which is outside the scope of this study.¹² Solving equal-access problems and lowering the barriers to entry is best for students and other stakeholders, such as schools and school districts.

This study confirms much of this topic's research while developing it in critical areas. In the study, the parent group emphasized the social aspects of instrumental music participation, while the parent/teacher group focused on the skills aspect. It is important to note that the sports literature rarely mentions the physical health benefits of sports participation, instead focusing on other benefits, using words such as “social,” “discipline,” “persistence,” “self-confidence,” and “agency.” The topic of location is unique to this study and warrants further investigation. The study confirmed and expanded on the findings related to music participation fees related to one SES population. Eriksen states, “Parents see it as necessary not only to pay for fees and sporting equipment but also to drive the child to and from practice, games, and competitions and take a keen interest in the sport and the team.”¹³ A plurality of participants in the study posited this same sentiment for music education. The research and the study affirm similar findings.

Bandura’s research in a developmental cultural context found, “children’s self-efficacy beliefs...include perceived efficacy to regulate one’s own learning activities and master

¹¹ Benham, *Music Advocacy: Moving from Survival to Vision*, 152.

¹² Ibid. 136.

¹³ Eriksen and Stefansen, “What Are Youth Sports For? Youth Sports Parenting in Working-Class Communities,” 594.

academic coursework; perceived social efficacy to develop and manage interpersonal relationships; and perceived self-regulatory efficacy to resist peer pressure to engage in detrimental activities.”¹⁴ This study demonstrated that desired program outcomes included confidence, social skills, discipline, and other soft skills. Lowe Vandell et al. found that students who participated in after-school activities had increased academic achievement and better social skills, with reduced problematic behaviors compared to their non-participating peers.¹⁵ The results of the study are representative of Bandura’s social cognitive theory.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. The study was limited to one school district with a unique delivery model. Other schools and districts have similar models, but each context is unique. All participants had some experience with the elementary instrumental music program. Participant sampling yielded only eligible parents with a history with the program. Methodological limitations include the diversity of the data. Due to location and SES, the participant population is homogenous. The significance of the findings is applicable in the current context but may have limited generalizability to others.

Recommendations for Future Research

The current study could be repeated with several variations, serving as a starting point for future research. For example, an area with a different SES population may provide different results. A quantitative study across an entire district of similar size would yield wider-ranging results. A reliable quantitative analysis survey could be developed using this study's content.

¹⁴ Albert Bandura, “Social Cognitive Theory in Cultural Context,” *Applied Psychology* 51, no. 2 (April 1, 2002): 280, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1464-0597.00092>.

¹⁵ Lowe Vandell, Reisner, and Pierce, “Outcomes Linked to High-Quality Afterschool Programs: Longitudinal Findings from the Study of Promising Afterschool Programs Background on the Study,” 5.
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Research dedicated to non-participants would be helpful. Understanding why families choose not to participate is essential for music educators to better understand their context's specific barriers to entry.

There are several ways to apply the investigation's findings to practice. Educators can use the study to develop a plan for improving their context. For example, many of the schools in this district house their own elementary instrumental music programs. Therefore, adding programs to other elementary schools is a small change that would yield positive results. Because music programs are currently established in many schools, adding elementary instrumental music to these other schools would make curricular offerings equitable between them. This is beneficial because it gives the program positive momentum.

Other organizations provide music classes during the school day. The teachers work for the organization, which contracts with the schools to offer general music classes using district facilities. In other words, it is a "specials" class that the district does not fund. It would be beneficial to study this model because it shares some of the same characteristics, such as using an outside contractor, with a different delivery model.

Summary

There are various instrumental music program models. The traditional model is district-funded and meets during regular school hours, however, there are a plethora of variations. The most common variables include funding models, teacher credentials, schedule, and location. Ideally, schools would adopt the traditional model because it allows the most significant access to students. Alternatively, different models can be viable but create issues of equal access with each additional layer of complexity. A district contracting with an outside organization must meet accountability challenges to ensure the children receive quality education. Licensed

teachers must have proven educational qualifications and complete background checks to work as district employees. Unlicensed teacher qualifications are at the discretion of the program provider. Outside-the-school-day schedules create conflicts with other activities; during-the-school-day options should work around academic courses. A fee-based program must decide who pays and how much. Finding a convenient location is also a high priority if a neighborhood school is unavailable. Hopefully, this study will encourage music educators in any context to proactively improve music education to benefit their students.

Appendix A: IRB Approval

Date: 3-31-2024

IRB #: IRB-FY23-24-475

Title: Parent Perspectives Contributing to Elementary Instrumental Music Participation

Creation Date: 9-18-2023

End Date:

Status: **Approved**

Principal Investigator: Scott McGowan

Review Board: Research Ethics Office

Sponsor:

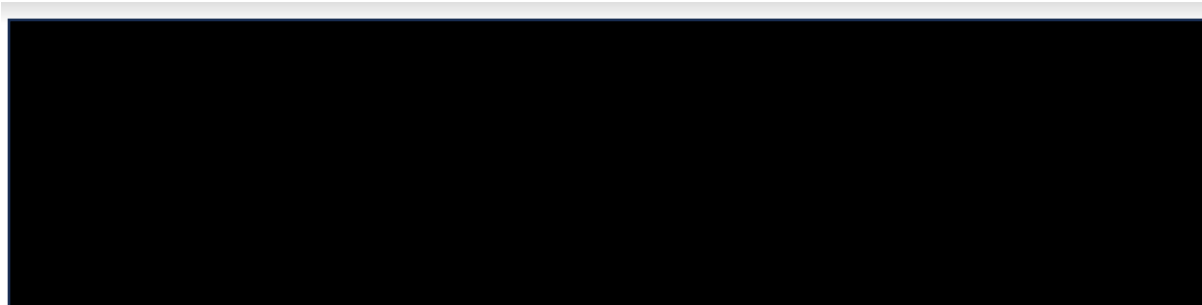
Study History

Submission Type	Initial	Review Type	Exempt	Decision	Exempt
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Key Study Contacts

Member	Nathan Street	Role	Co-Principal Investigator	Contact	[REDACTED]
Member	Scott McGowan	Role	Principal Investigator	Contact	[REDACTED]
Member	Scott McGowan	Role	Primary Contact	Contact	[REDACTED]

Appendix B: Letter of Permission



To Whom it May Concern:

In conjunction with his Doctoral Thesis and the ongoing work to provide high quality music education at [REDACTED] and within the [REDACTED] system, Scott McGowan has been granted permission to utilize his class contact lists for current and former Band/Orchestra students as a means of gathering information through parent interviews.

All interviews are completely voluntary, and seek perspective primary level music education opportunities in [REDACTED] elementary schools.

Please feel free to reach out with any questions,

[REDACTED]
Principal – [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Appendix C: Recruitment Letter

Dear [REDACTED]

As a graduate student in the School of Music at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Music Education degree. The purpose of my research is to understand issues surrounding participation in an elementary instrumental music program that meets outside the school day, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be parents of students who have been or are currently eligible to participate in an elementary instrumental music program that meets outside the school day. Student participation in the elementary instrumental program is not required, only eligibility. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in an individual interview using open-ended questions related to their personal experience with the elementary instrumental music program. It should take approximately thirty minutes to an hour to complete the interview, which may be conducted either in person or through an online platform such as Zoom or Teams. Once interviews are completed and data compiled, follow-up or clarification questions may be asked. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, contact me at [REDACTED] to schedule an interview. In your reply, please include the best way to reach you (if different from this email address), preferred days/times, and your preferred way to meet (in person, via Zoom, Teams, etc.) A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, please save a copy of the consent form to your computer, type your name and the date on the form, save the completed form, and return it to me as an emailed attachment before the study procedures begin.

Sincerely,

Scott McGowan
DME candidate, Liberty University

[REDACTED]

Appendix D: Consent

Consent

Title of the Project: Parent Perspectives Contributing to Elementary Instrumental Music Participation

Principal Investigator: Scott McGowan, Doctoral Candidate, School of Music, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be the parent of a student or students who have been or are currently eligible to participate in a tuition-based elementary instrumental music program that meets outside the school day. Student participation in the elementary instrumental program is not required, only eligibility. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to determine factors related to participation in the elementary instrumental music programs that are provided outside the school day. Educational aspects such as perceived academic benefit will be considered. Non-musical factors such as time commitment, tuition, and transportation will also be considered.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. Participate in an in-person, audio- and/or video-recorded interview that will take no more than 1 hour. If you choose to utilize an online platform such as Zoom or Teams, the meeting will be recorded using that platform as well.
2. If necessary, a follow-up interview will be scheduled to ask for further clarification of any answers, not to exceed 30 minutes.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include improved music education experience for all students and families who choose to participate in elementary instrumental music programs. Other benefits include potential increased access to elementary instrumental music programs for students.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

I am a mandatory reporter. During this study, if I receive information about child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others, I will be required to report it to the appropriate authorities.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then deleted/erased. The researcher will have access to these recordings.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Scott McGowan. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Nathan Street, at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, [REDACTED]

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

Appendix E: Interview Questions

Interview questions for semi-structured interview:

Parent Perspectives Contributing to Elementary Instrumental Music Participation
By Scott McGowan

Thank you for participating in this interview! The questions are intended to be answered in the elementary instrumental music program context. The word “program” refers to the elementary instrumental music program.

1. Please describe your history in the district.
2. Please describe your family history with music education.
3. Please describe your history with the program.
4. What do you hope children will gain from program participation?
5. (where applicable) How does your role as a teacher or administrator affect your decision to participate?
6. What was your first thought upon discovering the program was offered outside the school day for a fee?
7. How did communication affect your willingness to participate?
8. How did the instructor affect your willingness to participate?
9. How did the location of classes affect your willingness to participate?
10. How did the schedule of classes affect your willingness to participate?
11. How did the costs affect your willingness to participate?
12. Were there any other experiences or circumstances that encouraged participation?
13. Were there any other experiences or circumstances that discouraged participation?
14. Describe any benefits your children experienced from participation.
15. Describe any struggles your children experienced during participation.
16. Describe any changes you would like to see in the program.
17. Is there anything else you would like to add?

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