

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

WHAT DO THE STUDENTS WANT?
AN INVESTIGATION OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' MUSIC CLASS INTERESTS

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Spring 2011

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements
for a baccalaureate degree
in Music Education
with honors in Music Education

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ABSTRACT

Secondary school students seem to be musically engaged during their daily lives. However, only a small percentage of high school students choose to participate in school music programs. Perhaps for this reason, it is often difficult to pinpoint what students may enjoy or need to learn to accomplish their musical goals. However, as the age of electronic instruments and mass communication continues, so must the search for relevancy in the music classroom. This reality of relevance has come to the attention of a variety of researchers and educators, many of whom feel that there is a disconnect between what is being taught in the secondary music classrooms and how students musically interact in their daily lives. Unfortunately, the “traditional” music programs of large bands, choirs, and orchestras performing Western Art Music may not be serving the population in our secondary schools in a way that is applicable to their daily, musical lives.

The purpose of this study was to investigate what music courses would be of interest to students who are and are not currently enrolled in their high school’s music program. Four main research questions were posed: How many students are currently or have ever been involved in the high school music program; In what ways do the students participate musically outside of school; Why do the students choose not to be involved musically in school; and, How might the music program better suit the needs of these students. Determining these students’ interests may inform music curriculum that would meet the needs of a larger percentage of the high school student population.

Forty-eight high school students completed a questionnaire developed by the researcher and administered via the internet. Among this sample, 87.5% did not participate in their school’s music program. However, over half of the students had at

one time participated in a school music elective course. Interestingly, most of the students indicated that music is “extremely important” or “very important” in their lives and cited listening to a large amount of music per week. However, the majority of students indicated that they feel the music taught in their school does not interest them.

Many of the students reported a strong desire to sing outside of school with their friends, but in steep contrast, very few students indicated interest in singing in organized choirs. This same trend was noted in instrumental music. Another trend found was the high interest in Rap and Rock genres of music. However, there was very little interest in genres most typically found in secondary music programs, including Jazz and Classical genres. When asked to create their own, ideal music class almost every respondent to this question had a very clear idea of what they would like to be taught in music class. It should be noted that no two students had the same answer when asked this question. Instead, the answers were highly personalized and provide support for the argument that students are interested in music, but school programs do little to meet these students’ interests.

Since this study was limited to only 48 students who all attended the same high school, further research should include more students who represent a wider geographical area. As each area and culture has its own musical traditions, the answers to this questionnaire could vary greatly.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Dr. Ann Clements and Dr. Joanne Rutkowski: Thank you for all of your wisdom, helpfulness, and encouragement. This thesis would not have been possible without both of you.

To my parents: Thank you for all of your support, encouragement, and for promoting my education and musical endeavors throughout my whole life.

To Gerry Heckman: Thank you for instilling a sense of imagination and adventure in me.

To John Heckman: Thank you for singing at me, especially Irish tunes.

To Alice Rickenbach: Thank you for singing and listening to my music through every stage of my life so far.

To Edwin Rickenbach: Thank you for coming to every concert, humming along, and shedding a tear.

To Dan: Thank you for being an unending source of support and motivation.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

Introduction

My Grandmother Rickenbach loves to sing and currently, at 80 years of age, sings in an all-women's group that has traveled throughout the United States and Europe. She loves buying CD's of classical and religious music and enjoys singing along as she cooks. My Grandfather Rickenbach hums and taps his foot to patriotic selections to honor his country. In addition, he has always attended my concerts and recitals and often ends up shedding a tear because music deeply affects him. My Grandfather Heckman also loved to sing pretty much anything that was new, interesting, or beautiful. Although never vocally trained, he also sang in his church choir for years. He loved Frank Sinatra, Christmas tunes, and anything that he could sing loudly to his family. Finally, my Grandma Heckman loved music perhaps as much as someone could. She could not sing one note or play an instrument, but she could dance. In addition, she listened to tapes, the radio, and songs in church with passion and love. She always mentioned that she wished she could sing, that the notes were in her head, but wouldn't come out of her mouth the right way. It was the one skill that she most wished to possess. My grandparents illustrate to me the variety of ways in which persons engage with music.

Variety of Musical Engagement

When considering the diverse musical interests found from person-to-person, I begin to realize that my four grandparents exhibited very different musical tastes and

interests. Therefore, they are a wonderful example of how music participation and interest varies greatly among individuals.

In the 21st century world, people engage in music in a variety of ways. This is due to the fact that music is becoming increasingly individualized (Krautus, 2006). Krautus expanded by noting that “A student’s iPod tunes are his or hers alone, and a young composer or performer no longer needs bandmates to create a pop song or symphony” (2006, p. 45). As noted by Williams (2007), “The lines between the traditional roles of listener, performer, and composer are blurring” (p. 59). Many other new music-making trends have been noted by researchers. For example, the best selling instruments in the United States are the electric keyboard and guitar (Krautus, 2006). Ferguson (2009) noted, “Nearly every town in America has at least one guitar shop that caters to teen-aged musicians in rock bands” (p. 105). Many of these guitar and electric keyboard players compose their own music, sing while playing, and use their instruments in a wide variety of genres for a lifetime (Krautus, 2006).

Traditional Secondary Level Music Offerings

When I imagine my grandparents as high school students, it is hard for me to imagine any of them, except my Grandmother Rickenbach, participating in the “traditional” high school music program. Although not every high school in the nation has the same high school music classes, Krautus (2006) noted some trends, “The music made in schools [is] largely based on classical, folk and sometimes jazz traditions” (p. 45). According to Jones (2006), “It must also be noted that the opportunities to perform in all but the symphony orchestra, choir, and the concert and marching bands are generally limited to a select few students” (p. 1) As noted by Reimer (2009),

At the secondary level, our elective offerings, which mean overwhelmingly, band, orchestra, and chorus, are far more visible to the public, including the professional education public, than anything else we do, despite the fact that only a very small percentage of students are involved in them. (p. 38)

The primary goal of many high school curricula is a single cumulative performance at the end of the year (Krautus, 2008). In addition, many secondary performance groups rely heavily on a single leader, who makes most of the decisions pertaining to the music (Ferguson, 2009). Despite technological advances, most schools do not use technology to connect their students with the music makers of the world (Krautus, 2008).

Regardless of not being interested in the aforementioned “traditional” music programs, it would be fair to say that all of my grandparents were interested in certain aspects and genres of music and loved to participate in this aural art form. My grandparents, and other “nontraditional” musicians love music in their own way just as much as professionally trained musicians.

As a professionally trained musician, I have had a wide variety of musical experiences. Some of my experiences were associated with school music and others were not. For example, I was able to take private violin lessons from a woman who taught me both traditional and fiddle styles of playing. I also was a member of a Chamber Orchestra as well as a Full Orchestra that both rehearsed a 45-minute drive away from my home. Within the setting of my church choir, I learned to sing in the styles of gospel, traditional hymns, and religious music from other countries. Additionally, I learned music theory both from someone in my hometown and in the school setting. Some other opportunities I had in the school setting included choir, band, and jazz band. When

looking back on all these experiences, it is interesting to note how much my formal music education was enhanced by experiences outside of the school setting.

As my story, my grandparents' stories, and the sources presented above demonstrate, the musical interests of people are varied and diverse. For this very reason, some high school students, who are very interested in music, may not be involved in their performance-centric school music programs (Jones, 2006). In other words,

The trend in the interest of teenagers away from large ensembles and toward smaller music ensembles is also a reflection of a greater societal shift in preference away from highly structured large-group activities based on a leader/follower dynamic and toward less structured individual and small group activities fostering more active participation. (Jones, 2006, p. 74)

Many secondary students most likely have their own, unique reasons for not participating in school music. However, one statement rings clear: "the nature of music in the world and the nature of music in school are, then, quite different things" (Krautus, 2008, p. 45).

Purpose of the Study

As a future music educator, I am specifically interested in what offerings may be missing from secondary music programs that potentially cause 72.5% of high school students to not participate in school music (Department of Education, 2009). For this reason, the purpose of this study was to investigate what music courses would be of interest to students who are and are not currently enrolled in their high school's music program. Determining these students' interests may inform music curriculum that would meet the needs of a larger percentage of the high school student population.

Students who do not participate in school music may be disinterested in music; however, evidence suggests otherwise. In fact, research suggests that teens listen to two to four hours of music per day (Krautus, 2008, p. 49). It is important to note that participation in music by teenagers in the United States is a booming, multi-million dollar business. According to Jones (2006) “Teenagers love music. This is evidenced by production and marketing within the music industry and its use by manufacturers in marketing and branding their products” (p. 74).

Perhaps the problem lies within what genres of music are being taught in schools compared with the music teens listen to outside of school. As noted by the Neilson Corporation, the top ten genres of radio stations that teens across the globe listen to are as follows: Pop Contemporary Hit Radio, Rhythmic Contemporary Hit Radio, Country, Urban Contemporary, Alternative, Hot AC, Active Rock, Adult Contemporary, Classic Rock, and Album Oriented Rock (Nielsen, 2009). However, the primary genres of music taught in schools include “classical, folk, and sometimes jazz traditions” (Krautus, 2007, p. 45). This seems to represent a disconnect between students’ musical interests and what many music educators are teaching in schools across the United States.

The aforementioned disconnect is reflected nationally in the participation rate of students in secondary music programs. Only 27.5% of secondary school students in public schools in the United States participate in their school music program in any way (Department of Education, 2009). This low participation rate is most likely a result of many issues but should be of great concern to all music educators. According to the National Standards for Music Education, music educators should provide a music

education to all students at all stages of their public school careers (Consortium of National Arts Education Association). Additionally, according to Lehman (2002),

In many schools, the music curriculum should be revised to reflect better the balance and comprehensiveness called for in the National Standards for Music Education. But perhaps the most widespread curricular shortcoming today is the lack of an adequate general music program in the high school. Every school, regardless of size, should offer at least one music course without prerequisites for those students who, for lack of background, time or ability, are not enrolled in the large performing ensembles. . . (p. 48)

For this reason, music educators should begin to inspect the issues surrounding this lack of participation in secondary school music.

In order to connect with the musical ‘doings’ of today’s youth, we must take into consideration the meanings of music, the nature of students’ musical ambitions and what they choose to do musically. This may require all of us—both faculty members and pre-service teachers alike—to expand our thinking and embrace new experiences. . . (Clements, 2009, p. 103)

Through this study, I hope to gain insight into what offerings secondary students would like to see in their school music programs. Ideally, the feedback received from these students will allow me, along with other music educators, to learn more about the music in which students would like to participate in the school setting. Through this knowledge, it is my hope that a greater number of students will be included in public music education on the secondary level. Therefore, the specific research questions were:

1. What percentage of students is currently involved in their school's music program?
What percentage of students were voluntarily involved in their school's music program in the past three years?
2. In what ways are students involved in music outside of school?
 - a. How many hours per week do students listen to music?
 - b. In what ways are they involved in making music?
3. What reasons do the students who do not participate in their school's music program report for not participating in music courses?
4. Based on the interests of these students, how might the current music program better suit the needs of students?
 - a. In what course offerings would the students have interest?
 - b. In what genres do the students cite most interest?
 - c. How do the students' school course interests compare to typical offerings at public schools?
 - d. Do differences exist in course interest between those students already enrolled in high school music courses and those not enrolled?

Chapter 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In this chapter, the viewpoints of various music educators as well as research studies are presented and summarized. The studies are placed into two categories for this review: the perceived problem and proposed actions to resolve this issue. This chapter serves as a source of information and offers suggestions by various music educators.

Current Music Programs and the Need for Change

The works in this subcategory focus on a problem that each of these researchers feel is facing music education. Each researcher offers his/her own, unique assessment and definition of the problem. However, one trend remains clear, a disconnect between in school and out of school music at the secondary level seems to exist.

Reimer (2009). Bennet Reimer advocated for a change in general music, particularly at the high school or secondary level. He stated,

It is crucial in our profession that we take a new direction in general music. Why? We are at a strategic moment in our history. We are coming to awareness that our long-standing program in the schools, which has remained the same for over 75 years, has become dangerously obsolete. (p. 38)

Reimer mentioned that the secondary music offerings are typically limited to band, choir, and orchestra. In addition, he notes that general music offerings at the secondary level are unusual and, when they exist, they are a scattered collection of non-performing groups. According to Reimer, it is time for us to “evolve beyond the old, no longer sensible notion that general music is defined by being “not performance” (p. 38). For, in fact, this is the very notion that is limiting our school music program from being extremely

relevant to students' lives. In addition, Reimer quotes a sentence from the MENC Centennial Declaration: "Our curriculum must reflect more than our own desires: it must reflect that needs and desires of the students we serve" (p. 39). Reimer continues by saying "In one short sentence it tells us that it is high time we get real" (p. 39).

Bartel (2004). Bartel discussed the need for the expansion of the traditional Junior and Senior high music programs. Bartel noted that traditional music programs tend to be for everyone, up until the high school years. Sadly, only a select few students are included in the high school music programs. Traditional music programs at the secondary level tend to include "orchestra, band, or choir" (p. 228). Additionally, Bartel wrote, "Those supporting traditional music programs do not really want "everyone"-- they only want those talented, motivated, or well-disciplined students who make good ensemble members" (p.228).

Bartel advocates the problem spans beyond such considerations as talent, motivation, and discipline but, additionally, has much to do with cultural relevance. Bartel identifies the problem as "knowing what to do with those students who do not fit neatly into the traditional performing programs dominated by both the musical and pedagogical tradition of Western Europe" (p. 228).

"General music" is often touted as a solution to musically involve students not currently involved in secondary music programs. In fact, after citing many definitions of "general music", Bartel chose the following definition with reluctance: "music classes in middle and high schools for students not in orchestra, band or choir; music classes for the differently-motivated students; music classes for students who may lack interest in the kind of music performed by the traditional performing ensembles" (p. 229).

Bartel mentions, “Teachers teaching general music with the primary objectives of developing conceptual knowledge and aesthetic response are experiencing problems” (p. 230). The two main problems, according to a survey from the Georgia chapter of the Society for General Music includes “setting realistic goals” and “motivating students in music” (p. 230). Bartel asserts, that these two problems could be solved by teaching music-making in general music, instead of conceptual understandings of music. The issue of motivation can be solved if the student's agenda is relevant to the students' “lives, desires and expectations” (p. 230).

Pertaining to cultural relevance, Bartel feels that “the music-making approach to music education addresses the problem of motivation by creating experiences for students that are culturally relevant and situated at the centre of music as human activity-- music-making” (p. 230). Bartel cites the example of “A student living immersed in Soca music may find an appreciation class focused on the music of Bach. . . boring, irrelevant, and highly un-motivating. But, the opportunity to play steel pans in music class may result in enthusiastic participation and an openness to many other learnings” (p. 230).

The difference between performance and music-making is a differentiation that Bartel feels is of great importance. Bartel defines a performance-oriented class as one that “generally focuses on the learning and rehearsing of music to be performed at a concert” (p. 230). This is in contrast to a music-making class that “can fill most of the time in music class but the students in that class may rarely perform for an audience other than themselves or each other” (p. 230). Often times, a music-making class lends itself to a social environment that promotes the creation of “community music” even though it is not performed publicly.

Ferguson (2009). Ferguson believes, “there is a serious disconnect between the music found in our society and the music used in education” and “while music in a culture tends to shift and change. . . the micro-culture of 'school music' has remained rather insular” (p.105). The fact that our 'school music' is deeply rooted in “primarily historical genres” contributes to the very small percentage of high school students involved in the school music program (p. 105). Placing this estimate at around 19%, Ferguson candidly points out that, in steep contrast, almost every community has a thriving guitar shop, popular music store, or teen-oriented music shop and has found this through her research. She has also found that while popular music scenes are thriving, the school music programs are not.

Jones, (2007). Jones conducted a study of the musical offerings in Philadelphia, both in and out of school. To document in school activities, Jones, asked questions of a curriculum director in charge of the Philadelphia public schools music program. Jones, his graduate students, and undergraduate students also documented the radio broadcasts and live music performances taking place in Philadelphia at that time.

The results of this study indicate that there may be a major disconnect between in school and community music. As such, “the results indicate that the majority of performances in both live and broadcast media during this study period were musics unique to the Americas. . . this is not the music typically offered in K12 school music programs” (p. 105). Instead, Jones notes, the music found in most K12 music programs include Western European ensembles. These typically involve choirs, symphony orchestras, and wind bands. These large ensembles typically only serve a few students in the school system” (p. 105). In addition, Jones writes “The only uniquely American

ensembles widely offered in US schools and Football Marching Bands, Big Band Jazz Ensembles, Show Choirs, and annual productions of Broadway styled musicals” (p. 106). However, these groups are typically very selective and incorporate very few students. In addition, some teachers give a nod to “multicultural” music, but most are inauthentic, inaccurate representations of the music that are likely not relevant to the students' lives.

Williams (2007). David Williams advocates that traditional, large group performing ensembles may not be the best way to musically educate students at the high school level. Although some attention has been given to this issue, Williams discusses this problem further.

Williams discusses the impact of the National Standards on secondary music education and notes the following: “Although the National Standards have had more than ten years to influence the profession, it's questionable how pervasive their implementation is in music classrooms day-to-day” (p. 137). Williams has observed that many teachers incorporate very few of the standards equally in their teaching and, therefore, are not fulfilling students' musical needs. This observation has been supported through research done by Norma Kirkland. This study, “determin[ed] what achievement levels of the National Standards were being met and to determine what ratings music teachers gave the standards as goals for student achievement” (p. 138). Interestingly, standards 1 and 2 (singing and playing) were rated the highest. However, improvising and composing were last place in ranking in the survey. Unfortunately, this indicates that music teachers are placing more importance and time in constructing traditional ensemble settings.

The lack of incorporation of all of the National Standards may be due to the fact that “at both elementary and secondary levels, pressure to maintain both the size and quality of performance groups is often similar to the pressure athletic coaches experiences” (p. 139). However, the reality is that large ensembles at the secondary level may not be very effective in educating our youth. Williams quotes Bennett Reimer, “some 15 percent or so of our secondary school students choose to participate in our performance offerings” (p. 139).

Williams cites a reason for this low participation rate: “Our fascination with large-group performance has limited our access to students, and at the same time has cut us off from multiple other involvements with music that many students might find exciting” (p.139). In addition, these large performing groups have a high dropout rate and do little to enhance the performance skills of each individual student. Furthermore the material being taught in large performing groups have more to do with performance technique and skill, which is of little use to students after they leave the group or high school.

Williams continues to share his concern for music education and shares, “while our ambition has been to produce performers, we have been successful to only a very limited extent” (p.139). Also, “we haven't addressed the real needs of our society in preparing students for a lifetime full of music-listening experiences, to say nothing about providing them with skills to approach music interactions in any creative way” (p.140). This lack of societal influence can be attributed to the fact that secondary music education is reaching very few students.

As Williams also mentioned that we are entering a time of increased digital technologies. Therefore, musical interactions are becoming more complex and the lines

between “listener, performer, and composer are blurring” (p. 140). In addition, music is appealing to more senses than ever and is increasingly incorporating visual stimuli.

Unfortunately, the music education system does not utilize these new technologies to a great enough extent in order to enhance and support the education of our students.

Summary. All of these educators acknowledged the disconnect between in school and out of school music experiences for students in our society. In short, the “traditional school music program” of large, Western ensembles is not serving the students in our schools in a way that is relevant to their current or future lives (Reimer, 2009). As noted, many of these programs are serving very few students, with estimates ranging from 15-19% involvement in high school music programs (Ferguson, 2009; Reimer, 2009). In their own, unique way, each of these individuals asserted that music taught in schools is irrelevant to the lives of our students. For example, mostly Western Classical styles of music are taught, but the students are living in America and playing electronic instruments (Ferguson, 2009). Related to this is the fact that technology has transformed our musical world, but rarely does technology permeate the music education we find in schools (Williams, 2007). As a result, music education is positioned to become even more irrelevant as years pass, technologies are developed further, and trends in music styles change. All of these individuals are calling for action and a solution, so that music education becomes directly linked to students out of school musical lives.

The Proposed Changes

Reimer (2009). Reimer suggested that music offerings be guided by the following three goals: comprehensiveness, balance, and sequential learning. To accomplish these three goals, Reimer first suggests that music educators focus on the roles people play in

our culture when they are being musical. In doing so, educators would be educating students for the role music will play in their own lives in the future. Teachers must “develop programs of instruction that focus on each role. . . what it requires of those who play it, how each role “feels” when playing it. . . and how each role contributes to and is dependent on the other roles for it to be genuine” (p. 40). One might imagine this is an insurmountable goal; however, Reimer proposes that it is quite doable if school learning is connected with outside of school learning, experts in the various music fields are consulted and invited as classroom guests, and students are taken to where the music is being authentically created.

Reimer also addresses the outcomes of a comprehensive, balanced and sequential music curriculum. Through this type of program, students will be culturally empowered, have the democracy of choice, accept diversity rather than uniformity, and each individual will be musically fulfilled. Therefore, students will know the way music is performed in their culture, will be able to choose how they will be involved musically, will realize the vast amount of diverse music that exists in the world, and will leave programs being musically fulfilled. In conclusion, the outcome will be “a life lived well musically at every stage, both in childhood and in adulthood” (p. 41). In short, “The gift of musical fulfillment is the greatest gift music education can provide” (p. 41).

Bartel (2004). Bartel identified some music making alternatives for his proposed general music classes. First, he notes “to be a viable alternative to non-performance general music, the content of a music-making course must meet several requirements” (p. 233). These include accessibility to all students, possibility of satisfying musical

experiences in a relatively short time, and potential cultural relevance to the students' musical interests.

Bartel then posed the following question, "What is the need for these alternatives in the schools?" (p. 234). His answer to this question was a group of four realities Bartel perceives in current schools. The first reality is politically fueled. Because of scheduling and academic requirements, many students only have room in their schedules to take a single credit music course during a portion of the year. This reality creates the requirement of having a musically-fulfilling experience in a very short amount of time. The second reality is an economic consideration. Sadly many schools have very little funding for any programs. However, a general music program of cultural relevance is much cheaper than performing classes. "For the cost of a tuba and set of tympani a classroom can be equipped with enough guitars or steel pans for 25 students" (p. 234). The third reality is that of cultural diversity. Many communities are very diverse, but few current programs enhance or support this reality. All of the performance alternatives suggested by Bartel have "cultural adaptiveness" (p. 234). The final, and fourth reality is the small portion of students currently involved in secondary music. New performance-alternatives will increase the number of students involved in music-making.

Bartel provided ideas, alternatives, and content which may fuel this new, "general music for all," concept. Pedagogically, teachers will be required to see students as very unique individuals and cater to each student's needs. In other words "People are the course of teaching, not perfect performance!" (p. 237). The primary goal of every musical class will not be a perfect performance; instead, it will be that of engaging in relevant

music making. The possibilities are endless, but Bartel summed up his argument with the following statement:

Music class ought to be playful as well as engaging students in musical play. That does not mean the students are not to gain specific and important knowledge. It does not mean music class is merely an entertainment for students. It does not mean that there is not rigorous hard work involved in learning to play music. But the process of making music should be play at its best-- playful in spirit. The joy of making music is what we want to share with students. It is the joy and playfulness of music that captures the soul of the general student and prepares them for a lifetime of musical enjoyment.” (p. 240)

Ferguson (2009). Ferguson notes that it is no surprise to most music educators that there is a disparity between the music taught in schools and the music in which students participate outside of school. As a model solution, Ferguson proposes looking toward two trends in music education: those of the praxial education movement and the multicultural movement. The multicultural movement “deals with what kind of genres we bring to students” (p. 105) and the praxial “deals with specific strategies and approaches of teaching” (p. 105). These two movements can work in harmony with one another and, according to Ferguson, will connect school music and other music.

First, the multicultural movement places importance on “choosing music that is authentic to a culture and presenting it with respect” (p.105). This idea, according to Ferguson, means “our Western musical preferences for doing it 'correctly' must be suspended while working with culturally unfamiliar music” (p. 105). In addition, teachers

need to be prepared to learn alongside their students. The role of the teacher also will change: instead of acting as an expert, all teachers become facilitators.

The praxial education movement places “the emphasis on the creation, rather than the perfection, of music” (p. 106). This emphasis on “doing” requires bringing “emergent or unusual music into the classroom in addition to the great works of music that have stood the test of time” (p. 106). As a result, teachers will need to become comfortable with the end product of their students being ordinary instead of great.

When praxial and multicultural models are used in tandem, the result could be very constructive for the students. In addition, “this framework also places a premium on the authentic replication of those practices and values when working with that culture's music in the classroom” (p. 106). Additionally, this model encourages teachers to work with genres outside their own culture or training.

Ferguson noted that, “The idea of the 'outside genre' is usually applied to the music of foreign cultures, but it can also be applied to the sub-genres of music found with-in our own society, especially those sub-genres usually absent from school music” (p. 106). Therefore, if the music education profession aims to bring these genres already found in our culture into the school music realm, it is time to teach “rock, country, hip-hop, and pop genres in our curriculum as they reflect the preferred musical choices of our own culture” (p. 106).

A series of “IF/THEN” questions highlight the rest of Ferguson's assertions on this matter. Through these questions, she sheds light on implications of a new system of music education, which includes all students. Some examples follow.

“IF we believe that music is an expressive reflection of the culture, THEN we need to be cognizant and respectful of the cultural changes reflected in a society's music” (p. 106). Therefore, music educators need to recognize the importance of electronic music in our culture in order to authentically represent the music of our society. In other words “music educators literally need to 'plug in'” (p. 106). This would mean creation of rock ensembles, using electronics, computers, sounds systems and mixers. Interestingly, this is exactly what Ferguson did in her own classroom. “I purchased a drum kit, electric guitar and amp, an electric bass, all beginning line models” (p. 107). As the years went by, more equipment was acquired, models were updated, and more students became involved.

“IF we believe that learning is socially mediated, THEN we need to be willing to create learning spaces that are student-centered” (p. 108). Ferguson describes in detail the process of making student-centered spaces. This process can be facilitated by administrative conversations, space considerations, and building students' communication skills. In addition, the instructor has a significant amount of work in regards to “creating enough physical spaces for group work, having flexible dues dates and expectations outlined in the syllabus, and choosing which students would work best in each group (p. 108). However, when the groups are rehearsing, the teacher's role does not appear to be as an active participant. It is of utmost importance for the teacher to make clear to students, other teachers, and administration that, although their role is different from a formal ensemble director, they are needed to guide and facilitate student learning.

“IF we believe that students bring intelligence and experience with them in the classroom, THEN our classrooms will allow spaces for their intelligence and experience

to enrich our teaching practices” (p. 108). As a teacher of a popular music making course, the teacher will find himself/herself dealing with talented students with a wide array of skills such as “audio engineering, electronic instruments, and/or being in pop/rock/country bands” (p. 108). Therefore, the teacher should allow these students to “take the wheel” on their area of expertise. In this way, the class is best informed and the teacher has the opportunity to enrich his/her teaching and knowledge. Furthermore, students benefit from this system, as the knowledge is “culturally situated” and a diverse array of teaching styles are used (p. 108). Ferguson concluded by saying,

New methodology is scary, but it's not dangerous. We have a wonderful safety net woven of intelligence, musicianship, research, past practice, supportive colleagues and philosophical positions and, if we fall, we can bounce right back and try it another way another time. New methodology feels like pedagogical suicide the first time you try it, but it's really just an extreme sport. I'm glad I conquered my fear and jumped, because nothing matches the crazy surge of adrenaline and the breathtaking view. (p. 109)

Jones (2007). Patrick Jones provided a multi-step solution to remedy the disconnect between in school and out of school music. Jones suggests that the first step to establishing a productive music program is to look to the community for musical suggestions. “This will bridge the gap between school and community so students can develop life wide and lifelong musical participation skills and habits” (p. 7).

As the first step of looking at the community for musical suggestions, Jones advocates the need for a musical ethnography. In other words, educators must determine what music is found within the community in which they teach. Jones established the

musical ethnography of Philadelphia and found that broadcast media included “29.5 stations devoted to adult rock, alternatives, or jazz; 19 devoted to contemporary hits, rock and urban music; 14 dedicated to religious programming; 2 Spanish language, 1 oldies; 0.5 programming dedicated to classical music, and 14 “other,” which includes 12 talk, 1 children's and 1 ethnic programming format” (p. 7). An inspection of the live music performances yielded results that indicate that rock, jazz, and urban styles predominate in Philadelphia.

Third, Jones notes the need to inspect what is actually being taught in the in-school music programs. After speaking with the Lead academic Coach for Music Education for the Philadelphia public schools, Jones found that the school only tracks large performing groups, such as band, choirs, or orchestras. When Jones asked if other groups exist, the answer was ambiguous.

After conducting the survey, Jones made a number of suggestions. First, he suggests “music education should connect students with the musical environment in which they live” (p. 12). Second, “music instruction should also focus on the benefits of music to the cognitive, social, and physical health of students” (p. 12). Third, “students should be educated in such uses of music in order to prepare them to fight against being manipulated by music in advertisements” (p. 13).

In conclusion, through his study, Jones found that the music of Philadelphia in the school is disconnected with that of the community. In addition, he suggests that school music offerings should be changed to reflect the community in which students will participate in the future as musicians and adults. In this way, the music education of

students will “foster musical participation of all students in both lifelong and lifewide activities” (p. 15).

Williams (2007). Williams proposed that technology may be part of the solution which will link in school and out of school music. Through the use of many different technologies, Williams asserts that music educators could cater to the computer-driven and technological lives of many students. In short, he feels that it high time music educators get on the band wagon and start using the technology that is available in society. In addition, he firmly believes that, “we must begin to offer substantial opportunities for students beyond the traditional large ensembles” (p. 150). As an example of these new opportunities, Williams proposes incorporation of electric and electronic instruments. Further, he urges the exploration of multimedia programs in classroom instruction to link the classroom to the outside world. These courses would be designed by students and teachers alike and could incorporate groups of varying size, audio and visual technologies, computers, and much more. In addition, although entirely scrapping traditional programs is not William’s assertion, he does believe that educators should be focusing on programs relevant to all students so music education will be “truly applicable to the society we serve” (p. 151).

Summary. All of these educators proposed a solution to link in and out of school music. Although all are their suggestions seem very feasible, there are marked differences throughout the ideas presented. However, some clear themes emerge from which other music educators can take action. First, in school music should be more relevant to music in the students’ future lives (Bartel, 2004; Ferguson, 2009; Jones, 2007; Reimer, 2009; Williams, 2007). In other words, teachers need to be responsible for serving the unique

community in which they teach by noting what students in their community will need to know to participate in the musical life of the community (Jones, 2007). In addition, many of these educators call for an increase in technological involvement in the music classroom (Williams, 2007). In conclusion, no matter what steps a teacher takes to solve this problem, it is time to increase the cultural relevance of our secondary music programs and include the population which we are to educate (Bartel, 2004; Ferguson, 2009; Jones, 2007; Reimer, 2009; Williams, 2007).

Chapter Summary

The disconnect between in school and out of school music is evidenced in many ways (Bartel, 2004; Ferguson, 2009; Jones, 2007; Reimer, 2009; Williams, 2007). For example, only a small percentage of students currently are involved in their secondary music program (Ferguson, 2009; Reimer, 2009). However, in steep contrast, popular music stores boom (Ferguson, 2009). Very few students choose to take these musical electives offered, but many participate actively in their community's musical traditions (Jones, 2007). As technology and electronic instruments boom, the student's seem to have less of an interest in the "typical" in school music programs of band, choir, and orchestra (Williams, 2007). These in school programs tend to hang on to an outdated model of large performing groups which perform repertoire from the Western musical traditions (Bartel, 2004).

Once this lack of synchronization between in school music and out of school music had been established, solutions needed to be addressed. The solutions are numerous and varied between a variety of educators (Bartel, 2004; Ferguson, 2009; Jones, 2007; Reimer, 2009; Williams, 2007). However, it is of utmost importance that

school music becomes relevant to students lives so they can be musically competent members of society (Jones, 2007). First, educators must inspect the cultures in which students live and then modify the curricula to match this culture (Bartel, 2004). This can be done a variety of ways; some educators offer ideas such as observing the music scene and completing an ethnography of the city in which the school district operates (Jones, 2007). In addition, the programs must be technologically connected (Williams, 2007). Although many solutions are touted, all of the educators advocate that keeping the instruction relevant to students' interests and communities is of utmost importance.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this investigation was to determine what music courses would be of interest to students who are and are not currently enrolled in their high school's music program.

Design of the Study

This was a descriptive study. Data were collected via a questionnaire.

Subjects

The subjects involved were students in the 9th grade at a high school located in central Pennsylvania. All of these students were enrolled in Computer Applications, a mandatory course for all 9th grade students at this high school. I received permission from the Penn State Institutional Review Board to conduct this study. All students, under 18 years of age, were given written permission by their parent/guardian to participate. Students gave their assent by completing the questionnaire.

Questionnaire Design

I collected my data via an online questionnaire. All questions on the questionnaire were placed into one of the following response categories: open-ended, multiple choice, and short answer (See Appendix A).

The questionnaire first indicates that students should select if they are or are not current participants in their school music program. In addition, students are to note if they have ever been involved in their school music program. I chose to create these

differentiations so I could categorize student's interests expressed later in the questionnaire according to their current school music participation.

Next, I chose to have students answer questions about their current level of interest in music participation or music listening in or outside of school. This was intended to support the hypothesis that all students do have an interest in music. In addition, I asked students to indicate if they participate in any music ensembles or groups outside of the scope of the school music program. Students noted how recently they participated in these groups and what these specific groups were. After this, students indicated if they have ever composed or created their own music or lyrics. They also indicated how recently they participated in these activities. The last item in this segment of the questionnaire, asked the students to identify their three favorite genres of music.

In the second segment of questions, students who are not involved in music were asked to indicate why they have chosen not to be involved in school music. Then, all students were asked to indicate what music courses that are not currently offered in their school would be of interest to them. Finally, all students were asked to create their "perfect" music class. In other words, if they could design a music class what would it be?

I created all of the questions included on the questionnaire. I chose to make the questionnaire long enough to gain the information needed, but not so lengthy that students would lose interest. Along with my advisor, I reviewed the questionnaire to check for clarity and completeness. The questionnaire was configured on SurveyMonkey, an online survey service. Through this website, I was able to direct students to certain questions based on their previous responses. In addition, SurveyMonkey permits a

variety of question and answer formats which I utilized including multiple choice questions with one answer, multiple choice questions with three answers, and a question which required a short, written response.

Procedures

In September of 2010 I made preliminary contact with the principal of the high school at which I intended to recruit students to participate. After discussing the specifications of my project, the principal indicated she would grant permission for the study to take place at the high school. In January, 2011, the principal wrote a letter granting permission for my research to take place. Beginning in September I also contacted the three Computer Applications teachers to request students' completion of the questionnaire during their class periods. All 9th grade students are required to take this course so it seemed an appropriate means of recruiting the largest number of students. After they agreed, we also discussed the specifications of the research and the procedure for distributing materials to the students.

Once these events took place, I placed a request for clearance with the Penn State Institutional Review Board. After receiving clearance from the Institutional Review Board, I immediately contacted the high school principal and computer applications teachers to inquire what date would be convenient for the students to complete the questionnaire. We established that the first full week of March would be acceptable for all involved parties.

All materials were placed in envelopes for each individual student. These packets included the informed consent form (see Appendix B) and a letter of introduction to the parents and students (see Appendix C).

Students were given these packets approximately one week before they were to complete the questionnaire. The envelopes were placed on a pile at the front of the computer classroom and students were instructed to take one envelope and place their name on the envelope. They were asked to read the contents and return the forms at their earliest convenience to the teacher.

As the teachers received the completed envelopes, they stored them in a file. On the days of the survey, March 10, 11, and 15, the students were instructed to access the SurveyMonkey questionnaire if their forms were signed, or to work on homework if the forms were not signed. Students who had complete informed consent forms, and who assented to participate, completed the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

All quantitative data was analyzed using SurveyMonkey and resulted in number of responses and percentages. When reviewing open ended question responses, I categorized each response and then grouped them by similarities.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

This chapter is organized by first providing a summary of student responses to each question on the questionnaire and then a discussion of the possible meaning of these results.

Specific Questionnaire Analysis

1. Most of the students who participated in this study are not involved in school music (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1

Responses to Question #1

Are you currently involved in any school music classes or ensembles?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	12.5%	6
No	87.5%	42
<i>answered question</i>		48
<i>skipped question</i>		0

2. Over half of the students have taken an elective music class (see Table 4.2)

Table 4.2

Responses to Question #2

Prior to this year, have you ever taken a music class in school that you were not required to take?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	51.1%	24
No	48.9%	23
<i>answered question</i>		47
<i>skipped question</i>		1

3. The results from this question may suggest that the largest portion of the questionnaire participants listen to 15 or more hours of music per week (see Table 4.3). This seems to indicate that a good portion of the survey participants choose listening to music as a leisure activity.

Table 4.3

Responses to Question #3

I listen to music approximately ____ hours per week.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
No	2.1%	1
1-4	18.8%	9
5-9	27.1%	13
10-14	10.4%	5
15 or more	41.7%	20
<i>answered question</i>		48
<i>skipped question</i>		0

4. The majority of students indicated that music is either “very important” or “extremely important” in their lives (see Table 4.4). This is in keeping with the last question, where many of the students indicated spending a large amount of time per week listening to music. This trend suggests that many of these students value music greatly.

Table 4.4

Responses to Question #4

In my life music is...		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Not at all important	2.1%	1
Somewhat important	27.1%	13
Very important	33.3%	16
Extremely Important	37.5%	18
<i>answered question</i>		48
<i>skipped question</i>		0

5. The results from this question suggest that the majority of the students who answered this question participate in singing alone or with others outside of the school day (see Table 4.5). This is somewhat surprising, considering the small percentage of students who are currently participating in any music activities in this school district. This result could suggest that students enjoy singing and participating in music, just not in school. However, it is also interesting to note that only 60% of the total sample responded to this question.

Table 4.5

Responses to Question #5

Outside of school I participate in (check all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Singing (alone or with others)	82.8%	24
Dancing (alone or with others)	41.4%	12
Playing an instrument (alone or with others)	31.0%	9
<i>answered question</i>		29
<i>skipped question</i>		19

6. Responses to this question may suggest that students have quite a diverse and large amount of interest in participating in outside of school activities (see Table 4.6). In fact, it seems many of these students enjoy participating in multiple activities. The most frequently cited activity was “Singing alone (such as with your ipod tunes, etc.). This is in-keeping with the trend of increasingly individualized music making, as noted by other music educators. The second most popular activity in this question was “Singing with

friends.” However, this is in stark contrast to the much smaller response of “Singing in choirs.” Perhaps students enjoy singing more with their friends and alone because they can choose their own repertoire. Or, perhaps students have the freedom to choose when they want to participate in the activity, as opposed to a choir that may have scheduled rehearsals. Whatever the reason, these students indicated a strong interest in singing alone or with friends but not in choirs.

The third highest cited activity was “Playing an instrument alone” was cited by 18 students. Again, participating in an activity alone is in-keeping with trends of lone music making cited by other researchers. As such, it is important to note that participation in “Garage bands/self run groups” was cited by only 4 students. This marked decrease leaves room for speculation as to why students may prefer participating in musical activities alone.

Table 4.6

Responses to Question #6

Outside of school I currently am or have been involved in the following (check all that apply)			
Answer Options	In the past year	In the past three years	Response Count
Garage bands/ self run groups	2	3	4
Private music lessons	8	5	11
Church/ Synagogue/ religious music	9	5	13
Country Music Groups	0	0	0
Drum groups	3	2	3
Choirs	4	7	9
Community musical theater	3	0	3
Singing with friends	23	10	25
Singing alone (such as with your ipod tunes, etc.)	29	11	32
Playing an instrument alone	15	6	18
Teaching yourself how to play an instrument	12	4	14
<i>answered question</i>			40
<i>skipped question</i>			8

7. The highest cited activity in this question was “writing lyrics/poetry” (see Table 4.7). With 18 respondents, this choice received over double the responses of the second most highly cited activity. This was extremely interesting, as this is an area that is often not addressed in many “traditional” music making classes found in the United States. Perhaps providing an outlet for these students would be beneficial to these students for future music making and writing endeavors.

Table 4.7

Responses to Question #7

Outside of school I am or have been involved in the following (check all that apply):			
Answer Options	In the past year	In the past three years	Response Count
Writing instrumental music	2	0	2
Writing vocal music	6	1	7
Writing vocal music accompanied by instruments	1	0	1
Writing lyrics/poetry	17	1	18
Composing entire songs	2	0	2
Creating my own “computer music”	3	0	3
Recording musical performances	2	0	2
<i>answered question</i>			18
<i>skipped question</i>			30

8. The top two genres chosen as an area of interest by the participants were Rap and Rock with 33 students indicating interest in both of these categories (see Table 4.8). Country music and Pop received the next most number of responses, with 25 students indicating interest in both of these categories. It is very interesting to note these responses in contrast to what is being taught in most “traditional programs” in the United States. In addition, it is important to take a look at the decreased responses of interest in the genres most typically taught in public schools (Classical, Jazz, Broadway Music). In

these three categories there were only 12 indications of interest. This could indicate the disconnect between in and outside of school music.

Table 4.8

Responses to Question #8

Answer Options	Choice 1	Choice 2	Choice 3	Response Count
Rap	14	11	8	33
Rock	12	14	7	33
Broadway Music	1	0	2	3
Heavy Metal	4	5	7	16
Country	10	4	11	25
Bluegrass	1	0	2	3
Folk	1	0	2	3
Gospel	3	1	2	6
Jazz	1	0	2	3
Classical	2	3	1	6
Pop	8	7	10	25
Reggae	1	1	4	6
World Music	1	0	2	3
New Age	0	0	5	5
Techno	1	1	3	5
Rhythm and Blues	2	0	2	4
Other: please list _____	0	2	2	4
Other: please list _____	0	0	1	1
Other: please list _____	0	0	0	0
<i>answered question</i>				48

9. It is possible that students who answered this question did not read the previous questions in their entirety or feel that their responses were not clearly indicated via these questions (see Table 4.9). Regardless, these students shared their additional interests.

Table 4.9

Responses to Question #9

Please list any other musical activities or interests you have that were not included on this survey:		
Answer Options		Response Count
<i>answered question</i>		4
<i>skipped question</i>		44
Number	Response Date	Response Text
1	Mar 10, 2011 3:29 PM	R&B
2	Mar 10, 2011 4:11 PM	playing the guitar
3	Mar 11, 2011 3:01 PM	I have played the drums for a couple years in school
4	Mar 11, 2011 7:02 PM	R&B

10. Even though approximately 50% of the participants have taken a music elective course in school (see Table 4.1), it is interesting that only 6.3% are currently involved in school music (see Table 4.10).

Table 4.10.11

Responses to Question #10

Are you currently involved in school music?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes (skip question 2 and 3 go to question 4)	6.3%	3
No (go to question 2)	93.8%	45
<i>answered question</i>		48
<i>skipped question</i>		0

11. Out of the 48 participants in the questionnaire, 45 answered this question.

The most highly cited reason for not participating in school music was “The music taught

does not interest me,” with 40% of respondents indicating this answer (see Table 4.11). This is very interesting and may provide support for the hypothesis that school music is often irrelevant to the lives of many students in secondary or high school. The second most highly cited reason for non-participation in the music program was “It does not fit into my schedule.” Sadly, this is an unfortunate reality of scheduling conflicts in high school. This may indicate that solutions to this issue of scheduling need to be explored.

Table 4.11

Responses to Question #11

I am not involved in school music because (check all that apply):		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Not applicable (for those skipping to question 4)	2.2%	1
I do not like music	4.4%	2
The music taught does not interest me	40.0%	18
I dislike the teacher	4.4%	2
My friends are not involved in school music	2.2%	1
It does not fit into my schedule	26.7%	12
Other _____	20.0%	9
<i>answered question</i>		45
<i>skipped question</i>		3

12. The largest percentage of students indicated that they would be involved in school music if they were taught “A class about my top three favorite kinds of music” (see Table 4.12). With 59.5% of respondents indicating interest in such as class, it may be that students wish to have a music class which relates more directly to their musical lives. This would represent further support for the hypothesis that proposed a possible disconnect between school music and music. It was interesting to note, however, that the least cited area of interest was “A class where I could create or compose music.” Several reasons may contribute to this lack of response. Perhaps students do not know what

composing or creating may entail, what they would do to get started, or perhaps they really just do not like composing music. Perhaps they do not see composing as something everyone can do.

Table 4.12

Responses to Question #12

I would be in school music (regardless of the reasons in #1) if my school offered (choose all that apply):		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Not Applicable (for those skipping to question 4)	4.8%	2
A class about my top three favorite kinds of music	59.5%	25
A class where I could create or compose music	2.4%	1
A class that involved dancing	11.9%	5
A class where I could learn to play the instrument of my choice	28.6%	12
Performing popular music class (of any of my favorite kinds of music)	23.8%	10
Music history course (of any of my favorite kinds of music)	7.1%	3
Dancing to my favorite kinds of music	19.0%	8
A music class involving computers or electronic instruments	9.5%	4
A class about my favorite style of singing	16.7%	7
<i>answered question</i>		42
<i>skipped question</i>		6

13. At the beginning of the questionnaire, only 3 students indicated participation in music class in school. However, 38 students responded to this question, although those not participating in school music currently were instructed to skip this question (see Table 4.13). This fact renders this data inaccurate.

Table 4.13

Answers to question #13

I would be interested in additional school music courses if my school offered (check all that apply):		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Not applicable (for those that answered questions 2 and 3)	7.9%	3
A class about my top three favorite kinds of music	55.3%	21
A class where I could create or compose music	10.5%	4
A class that involved dancing	18.4%	7
A class where I could learn to play the instrument of my choice	10.5%	4
Performing popular music class (of any of my favorite kinds of music)	15.8%	6
Music history course (of any of my favorite kinds of music)	10.5%	4
Dancing to my favorite kinds of music	15.8%	6
A music class involving computers or electronic instruments	13.2%	5
A class about my favorite style of singing	18.4%	7
<i>answered question</i>		38
<i>skipped question</i>		10

14. It is of interest that 67.4% of students feel that the school's music offerings do not relate to their musical lives (see Table 4.14). In addition, no students felt that their school's music offerings really related to their musical lives. This provides support for the idea that music classes in schools need to change in order to be relevant to students' lives.

Table 4.14

Answer to Question #14

Currently, I feel that my school's music offerings		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Do not relate to my musical life	67.4%	31
Somewhat relate to my musical life	32.6%	15
Really relate to my musical life	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		46
<i>skipped question</i>		2

15. Of the 48 questionnaire participants, only 23 students answered this question. Their individual answers are listed in Table 4.15.

Table 4.15

Responses to Question #15

If I could create my own music class it would be (Please explain in detail):	
Answer Options	Response Count
	23
<i>answered question</i>	23
<i>skipped question</i>	25

Student answers (answers are quoted directly from the questionnaire):

1. I would teach about music that i know the kids are interested in. Also, i wouldn't make the concerts for chorus so uptight, and just let us have fun.
2. about rock n roll and heavy metal
3. my music class would involve newer types of music by more popular artists and you could choose the type of music we wanted to learn about
4. a class that you could play whatever instrument you wanted and also wasn't graded. also the instruments would be provided by the school
5. It would be of all of the types of music that I like!
6. about country music an the history
7. One in which students could discuss and listen to their preferences of music.
8. My music class would have any instrument students wanted to use. A place for electronics and mixing music
9. danceing class
10. If i could create my own music class, I would make sure that it did not cost money to play any school instruments because many people dont have the money today.
11. a class with more modern and popular music
12. Not just the classical music classes schools have.
13. Learning about popular music groups and how they got started and how they write their music.
14. none
15. If i were to creat a music class, i would teach students about music theory. I would teach them keys and how to properly sing these keys and each note, while also involving classical music to modern day music. For students who do not like to sing publicly, i would have a one on one teaching session to help them if they wanted to take the option. i would have the students writing poems, then expressing it into music with what i have taught them about the music theory. i myself have wished our school had offered a class much like that.
16. It would be on dancing and have all tpyes of music that people can be inspired on making music.
17. It would be rap about my life.
18. ??

19. A class that involved dancing & singing at the same time. And something that the school likes. [:
20. It would include instrutment leasons and singing lessons.
21. I would have class that covered newer musical styles. I would start around the 60's and teach up to current music. I would cover areas like rock, rap, and pop.
22. About my favorite kind of music, and we would get to choose what we do each class.
23. a lesson on how to create music backgrounds. (the beats of the music... creating music basically)

All of these answers were unique and very interesting. It is impossible to group every single answer into a category and difficult to establish trends. However, it is easy to note that all of these students, with the exception of two of them who answered “none” and “?,” have a idea about what kind of music class they wish to have. Some suggest only learning about popular music, others cite instrument lessons and singing lessons. Two students cited respect for monetary concerns in their ideal music class and another wants to create a rap about his/her life Perhaps the most significant realization from these answers is that many of these students really know what they want. They have ideas, areas of interest, and many wish to learn more about these things. Many of these students indicate that this would involve popular musics, music that they like, and music that is unlike what is found in “traditional” music programs. This may indicate that they wish to see a change in school music, which would render school music more relevant to their musical lives outside of school.

1. What percentage of students is currently involved in their school's music program? What percentage of students were voluntarily involved in their school's music program in the past three years?

Currently, 12.5% of the students are involved in their school's music program. In the past, 51.1% of students indicated taking a music class voluntarily. These numbers may suggest that students have more time to take voluntary music classes earlier in their academic careers, or that the classes disinterested them so there was no motivation to participate in another voluntary music class.

2. In what ways are students involved in music outside of school?

a. How many hours per week do students listen to music?

b. In what ways are they involved in making music?

The most frequently cited number of hours per week of listening was 15 or more hours. In this category, 41.7% of students indicated participation. The rest of the responses were scattered among the other options ranging from 0 hours per week to 14 hours per week.

Students indicated a diverse array of music involvement. In one of the questions answered by the students, 32 students indicated interest in singing alone and 25 indicated interest in singing with friends. However, only 9 students indicated participation in choirs. Regarding instrumental music, 18 students indicated playing an instrument alone, while only 4 responded to performing in a garage band/self run group. In addition, 14 students participated in teaching themselves how to play an instrument and 11 indicated participation in private music lessons. Out of the participants, 13 indicated participation

in church/synagogue/religious music. There was very little participation in drum groups, community musical theatre, and no participation in country music groups.

Furthermore, 18 students, or 60% indicated participation in writing lyrics/poetry. Writing vocal music received 7 responses of participation. However, very few students indicated participation in writing instrumental music, writing vocal music accompanied by instruments, composing entire songs, creating their own computer music, or recording their musical performances. This may suggest that students do not have these opportunities in their community, that they are disinterested in these activities, or that they do not feel they have the skills to participate in these activities.

3. What reasons do the students who do not participate in their school's music program report for not participating in music courses?

The highest portion of students, 40% responded that they are not participating in their school's music program because the music taught does not interest them. This provides hefty support for the idea that school music programs are irrelevant to the lives of the students. The second most cited reason for non-participation was that the music classes do not fit into the students' schedules. This is unfortunate, but indicates a need for inspecting the scheduling system. Very few students indicated that the reason for not participating was that they do not like music, do not like the teacher, and have few friends in the music program.

4. Based on the interests of these students, how might the current music program better suit the needs of students?

a. In what course offerings would the students have interest?

The students identified a large variety of course offerings in which they would have interest. These answers were very diverse and unique to each student.

b. In what genres do the students cite most interest?

Students cited the most interest in the genres of Rap and Rock. After this, students demonstrated interest in Country and Pop genres. However, it was interesting to note that the smallest percentage of students were interested in Bluegrass, Folk, and Broadway genres. Pertaining to Classical music, 6 students were interested, and 3 students were interested in Jazz.

c. How do the students' school course interests compare to typical offerings at public schools?

As noted previously, "traditional" high school music programs incorporate band, choir, and orchestra. Most often, the repertoire in these groups stems from the Classical and Jazz genres. Interestingly, these two genres attracted little interest from the students who participated in this study. Only 6 students indicated interest in Classical music, while 3 indicated interest in Jazz music. In addition, only 6 students participate in any type of choir and most students seem to prefer making music on their own or with their friends.

d. Do differences exist in course interest between those students already enrolled in high school music courses and those not enrolled?

Unfortunately, this question was unable to be answered due to an inconsistency in the data. This research question will have to be answered in a future study.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, CONCLUSIONS

Summary: Methodology and Results

Approximately 72.5% of high school students do not participate in their secondary school music programs (Department of Education, 2009). This participation rate is low, considering the amount of interest students have in music when they are not in school. For example, students are cited as listening to hours of music per week (Kraut, 2008). Perhaps the problem lies within what genres of music are being taught in schools compared with the music teens listen to outside of school.

For this reason, the purpose of this investigation was to determine what music courses would be of interest to students who are and are not currently enrolled in their high school's music program. In this descriptive study, Data was collected via a questionnaire. The subjects involved were students in the 9th grade at a high school located in central Pennsylvania.

The questionnaire was completed by 48 students over the course of the three days. The results were diverse; however, some common trends were noted. For example, 12.5% of the survey participants were currently involved in their school's music programs. Interestingly, the most frequently cited number of hours per week of listening was 15 or more hours. Students indicated a diverse array of music involvement. In one of the questions answered by the students, 32 students indicated interest in singing alone and 25 indicated interest in singing with friends. However, only 9 students indicated participation in choirs. Perhaps most significant was the fact that students showed very

little interest in the genres most typically taught in school music programs. Instead, they indicated most interest in Rap, Rock, Pop, and Country genres.

Many of the results indicated support for the hypothesis that there may be a disconnect between in and out of school music. Many of the students in this survey indicated that they felt this way and also noted that they would participate in school music if the music courses more closely matched their interests.

Recommendations

Future research. Giving this questionnaire to the same students a second time is suggested, to check for consistency throughout the answers. In addition, it is suggested that the question on which there was an error be reworded and clarified to the students. The question was “Do differences exist in course interest between those students already enrolled in high school music courses and those not enrolled?” These changes would produce more accurate results as to what additional music courses interest students already involved in the music program in this high school.

In addition, it would be advantageous to give this same questionnaire to students in a variety of school districts. The responses found in this particular school district would be only indicative of that population and the community in which they live. Because musical interests are often socially and culturally mediated, the results of this study may be different if conducted with a different population of participants.

It would be worthwhile to conduct a longitudinal study of the musical interests of a group of students in their high school years and then five years later. This could suggest musical interests that people may have long term and may participate in for a

lifetime. With this information, the future musical interests of students could be deduced in order to prepare students for lifelong musical engagement.

Practice. Perhaps the best way to provide this relevant music education would be to take into account the preferences of the students enrolled in this school. By discovering what genres, activities, and musical endeavors interest these students, educators would be able to provide a much more relevant musical education for these students which would prepare them for their musical lives in the future. Remaining open to new ideas will benefit both the educator and the students.

Conclusions

Through the students' responses to many of these questions, it is apparent that they do have an interest in music. In fact, many of them cited participating in a variety of musical interactions outside of school. Students also indicated that they listened to music 15 or more hours per day and 70% of participants indicated that music is either "very important" or "extremely important" in their lives. With such a strong interest in music, what is the reason that only 12.5% of participants are currently involved in their school's music programs?

The data suggest a variety of answers, but leave room for further and more detailed investigation. It could be that students do not have the scheduling space to enroll in a music class. This was the most commonly cited reason for not participating in the school music programs.

However, the most popularly cited reason for non-participation is school music was that the music offerings do not interest the students. In addition, students are interested in other genres that are not taught in the "typical" music program. With the

highest interest indicated in Rap, Rock, Pop, and Country music, it should not be surprising that students do not wish to participate in music programs that are heavily emphasizing the Western Art genres. In addition, it is interesting to note that many students, when asked to “create” their own music program, chose activities found in these more popular genres.

When this data is inspected, it could be easy to feel overwhelmed by the number of activities which interest these students. This questionnaire was completed by 48 students. Imagine what diversity would be found in a larger, more comprehensive sample! However, it seems that students are asking for a music education that is relevant to their outside of school, diverse, thriving musical lives.

For these specific students, it seems that many of the courses designed would need to incorporate Rap, Rock, Pop and Country genres. In addition, singing in small groups where students feel welcomed and encouraged would be considered. There seems to be a general interest in dancing to many kinds of music, with a specific concentration on popular styles. In addition, these students seem to be asking for instrumental experiences that allow them to play guitar, or other instruments of their choosing.

As educators look to the future, a survey such as this could be used to determine the musical interests of students within a school. In doing so, teachers would learn the answer to the question “What do the students want?” and perhaps find that the students want to be musically educated in a way that is most relevant to their current and future musical lives.

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Appendix A:
Questionnaire

Preliminary Questions

1. Are you currently involved in any school music classes or ensembles?
Yes
No
2. Prior to this year, have you ever taken a music class in school that you were not required to take?
Yes
No

Establishing level of interest in music:

1. I listen to music approximately _____ hours per week.
 - a. No
 - b. 1-4
 - c. 5-9
 - d. 10-14
 - e. 15 or more
2. In my life music is...(check one)
 - a. Not at all important
 - b. Somewhat important
 - c. Very important
 - d. Extremely Important
3. Outside of school I participate in: (check all that apply)
 - a. Singing (alone or with others)
 - b. Dancing (alone or with others)
 - c. Playing an instrument (alone or with others)

Specific musical interests:

1. Outside of school I currently am or have been involved in the following:

	Currently	In the past 3 years
Garage bands/ self run groups		
Private music lessons		
Church/ Synagogue/ religious music		
Country Music Groups		
Drum groups		
Garage bands/ self run groups		
Private music lessons		
Choirs		
Community musical theatre		
Singing with friends		
Singing alone (such as with your iPod tunes, etc.)		
Playing an instrument alone		
Teaching yourself how to play an instrument		

2. Outside of school I am or have been involved in the following:

	Currently	In the past 3 years
Writing instrumental music		
Writing vocal music		
Writing vocal music accompanied by instruments		
Writing lyrics/poetry		
Composing entire songs		
Creating my own "computer music"		
Recording musical performances		

3. My three favorite kinds of music are (please number your top choice as 1, second choice as 2, and third choice as 3):

Number	Genre
	Rap
	Rock
	Broadway Music
	Heavy Metal
	Country
	Bluegrass
	Folk
	Gospel
	Jazz
	Classical
	Pop
	Reggae
	World Music
	New Age
	Techno
	Rhythm and Blues
	Other: please list _____
	Other: please list _____
	Other: please list _____

4. Please list any other musical activities or interests you have that were not included on this survey:

School music concerns

1. Are you currently involved in school music?
 - a. Yes- skip questions 2 and 3
 - b. No-go to question 2
2. I am not involved in school music because:
 - a. I do not like music
 - b. The music taught does not interest me
 - c. I dislike the teacher
 - d. My friends are not involved in school music
 - e. It does not fit into my schedule
 - f. Other _____
3. I would be in school music (regardless of the reasons in #1) if my school offered:
 - a. A class about my top three favorite kinds of music
 - b. A class where I could create or compose music
 - c. A class that involved dancing
 - d. A class where I could learn to play the instrument of my choice
 - e. Performing popular music class (of any of my favorite kinds of music)
 - f. Music history course (of any of my favorite kinds of music)
 - g. Dancing to my favorite kinds of music
 - h. A music class involving computers or electronic instruments
 - i. A class about my favorite style of singing

**Note: students who answered this question should skip to question number five.
4. I would be interested in additional school music courses if my school offered:
 - a. A class about my top three favorite kinds of music
 - b. A class where I could create or compose music
 - c. A class that involved dancing
 - d. A class where I could learn to play the instrument of my choice
 - e. Performing popular music class (of any of my favorite kinds of music)
 - f. Music history course about (of any of my favorite kinds of music)
 - g. Dancing to my favorite kinds of music
 - h. A music class involving computers or electronic instruments
 - i. A class about my favorite style of singing
5. Currently, I feel that my school's music offerings:
 - a. Do not relate to my musical life
 - b. Somewhat relate to my musical life
 - c. Really relate to my musical life
6. If I could create my own music class it would be (Please explain in detail):

Appendix B:
Informed Consent Form

Title of Project:

What do the students want? An investigation of high school students' music class interests

Principal Investigator:

Kailyn Rickenbach, Honors Student
1007 North Park Avenue
University Park, PA 16803
(570) 765-0178; klr5144@psu.edu

Advisor:

Dr. Joanne Rutkowski
206 Music Building I
University Park, PA 16802
(814) 863-0419; rvi@psu.edu

Other Investigator(s):

1. **Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this research study is to explore the musical interests of high school students. This includes musical experiences both in and outside of school. Additionally, students' interest in various music classes will be explored.
2. **Procedures to be followed:** Your son/daughter will be asked to answer questions on an online questionnaire completed during his/her Computer Applications course.
3. **Discomforts and Risks:** There are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.
4. **Benefits:** Your son/daughter might learn more about yourself by participating in this study. You might have a better understanding of how important music is to you.

This research might provide a better understanding of what genres of music are of interest to high school students. It may provide a better understanding of what music classes interest high school students. This information could help shape the educational decisions made in music classrooms and programs.

5. **Duration:** It will take about 10 minutes to complete the survey.
6. **Statement of Confidentiality:** Your son/daughter's participation in this research is anonymous. The data will be stored and secured digitally in a *password protected* file. The Pennsylvania State University's Office for Research Protections, the Institutional Review Board and the Office for Human Research Protections in the Department of Health and Human Services may review records related to this research study. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared.
7. **Right to Ask Questions:** Please contact Ms. Rickenbach at (570) 765-0178 with questions, complaints or concerns about this research. You can also call this number if you feel this study has harmed you. If you have any questions, concerns, problems about your rights as a research participant or would like to offer input, please contact The Pennsylvania State University's Office for Research Protections (ORP) at (814) 865-1775. The ORP cannot answer questions about research procedures. Questions about research procedures can be answered by the research team.

8. **Voluntary Participation:** Your son/daughter's decision to be in this research is voluntary. He/she can stop at any time. He/she does not have to answer any questions he/she does not want to answer. Refusal to take part in or withdrawing from this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits he/she would receive otherwise.

Your son/daughter must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study without a parent/guardian signature. If your son/daughter is under 18 years of age, he/she must obtain a parent/guardian signature to take part in this research study. If he/she agrees to take part in this research study and the information outlined above, the parent/guardian must sign and indicate the date below.

Participant or Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Person Obtaining Consent

Date

Appendix C:

Letter of Introduction to Parents and Students

Parents and guardians:

I am currently a senior at The Pennsylvania State University and am majoring in Music Education. As a member of the Schreyer Honors College at Penn State, I am required to write an undergraduate thesis in my area of study.

A few years ago, when I began to consider what subject my thesis would address, I began to look back on my education in the public school system. I graduated from _____ High School in 2007 and was actively involved in the music program. Because I have such fond memories of this program, I began to consider how my high school music education has shaped my life, musicianship, and future career. Although it is evident how music has changed my life, it is also true of students who choose careers not in the music field. Music surrounds our daily lives in ways we often don't stop to think about: in the car, at celebrations, on ipods—the list goes on. This realization is what led me to choose my thesis topic and conduct a study entitled “What do the students want? An investigation of high school students' music class interests.”

Through my study, I hope to gain insight into what every student would like to learn through music classes. By identifying what music and music courses are of most interest to them, I hope to identify what music is most relevant to their current and future lives. Because music will surround each student's life in one way or another, it is my hope that music programs continue to adapt to these wishes and educate based on students' needs.

I am asking that you allow your son/daughter to take part in my survey. The questionnaire takes approximately 5-10 minutes to complete and would be done online during the Computer Applications course in which your student is currently enrolled. _____, _____, and _____ have all agreed to allot a few minutes of class time for the students to take the survey. No students will be identified in any way—they will remain anonymous.

Attached you will find a letter of consent. If you choose to allow your son/daughter to be involved in the questionnaire, please sign the letter and have your son/daughter return it to their Computer Applications teacher. An additional signature page is included for you to keep for your records.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any questions on this matter, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,
Kailyn L. Rickenbach

Appendix D: Academic Vitae

Academic Vitae of Kailyn L. Rickenbach

Education:

Midd-West School District, Middleburg, Pennsylvania, 2007

Bachelors of Music Education, Honors in Music Education
The Pennsylvania State University,
University Park, Pennsylvania, 2011

Thesis Title:

“What do the students want? An investigation of the musical desires of secondary students.”

Thesis Supervisor:

Dr. Joanne Rutkowski

Student Teaching:

Hollidaysburg Area School District, Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania

Martha Miller, cooperating teacher

Elementary general music

Jennifer Pappal, cooperating teacher

Junior high orchestra, instrumental lessons

Stephanie Everett, cooperating teacher

Senior high orchestra

Valerie Montgomery, cooperating teacher

Elementary orchestra, instrumental lessons

Work experience:

Americorps Volunteer, Central Susquehanna Chapter. Beavertown, PA, Summers
2009 and 2010

Child Care Personnel at Middle Creek Area Community Center. Beavertown,
PA, Summers 2009 and 2010

Private Studio Violin Teacher. Richfield, PA, 2007-2010

Child Care Provider, Privately Employed. Richfield, PA, 2006-2008

Math Tutor, Privately Employed. Richfield, PA, 2008

Membership in Professional Organizations:

American String Teacher's Association, Collegiate Chapter 2007-2011

President, Penn State Collegiate Chapter, 2009-2010

Pennsylvania Collegiate Music Educator's Association 2007-2011

Pennsylvania State Education Association 2010-2011

Awards:

Member of the Schreyer Honors College, The Pennsylvania State University, PA,
2009-2011

Deans List every semester 2007-2011

Annebelle Manbeck Scholarship 2007-2011
Pi Kappa Lambda Membership
Pi Kappa Pi Membership