

“Tuba buddies,” triumphs, and teamwork:  
meaningful learning and accomplishment  
in school band and orchestra

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**Dedication:**

To my students of music: you have made me a student of you.

### **Abstract:**

Agreeing on a “single, philosophical position to support music education” (Bowman, 1994) appears to be a distinct and ongoing educational battle in the United States. A continuing debate among administrators, parents, music teachers, and educational policy makers about the benefits of music education in school versus the costs, time, and resources it requires has yielded copious amounts of advocacy and action efforts. This paper describes a study of middle school students' perspectives on participating in school band and orchestra. Through student interviews and observations, themes emerged about participating in band or orchestra in school. The findings of this study indicate that students participating in school music: 1.) like band and orchestra the most because of the intrinsic gratification of learning that they feel through their own personal accomplishments; 2.) find the classes to be challenging yet enjoyable school subjects; 3.) can independently identify a need for teamwork and actively chose to team while learning; 4.) it was easy to make friends, keep friends, and find band and orchestra classes are a place where they felt they could belong in school; 5.) feel participating in band and orchestra group learning is safe, comfortable, and fun; and 6.) enjoy exploring and making their own choices while learning in a challenging yet enjoyable school subject. Implications for music education, advocacy, and research are discussed.

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"The trouble with our common school education is that it is concerned too exclusively with the things of knowledge, and that it leaves the deepest powers in the children undeveloped. This unused part is his spirit; the realm of Motive and Creative Life. The boy whose powers are merely physical is but a fraction of his true self. Add his mental powers and still you have only half your boy, for besides what he knows and does there is what he is. To fully fit your child for life, then, you must complete him; body, mind and spirit. Already his physical and lower-mind powers are active. Now awaken his intellectual and spiritual ones. Make him alive in his inner and innermost being, and soon he will pulse with the great world-life all about him, soon he will be filled with the joy of living, tireless in energy, just as when a little fellow he was in touch with his little play-world. In bringing this three-fold power of the child into harmonious expression you complete the circle of his individuality. Almost instantly there will come to him the awareness of this fuller life within and all around him. It is simply a question of completeness; of a complete bell which rings out its life, as against a cracked one which cannot and whose voice is but a dead chink. The effects of this transformation come quickly to view and are seen in self-reliance, initiative, purposefulness and many other things which make for character building. In a word, the child's powers are approached from within as well as without, and thereby he is lifted so above and beyond his former powers as to be out of all comparison with them."

- William L. Tomlins, 1890

"And also, as, like, as a result and stuff, I was reading it somewhere, they say that the most successful of people, like, Albert Einstein and all of those people, they all played an instrument." – Elena

## Preface

I recently finished teaching another year of school music. The momentum of the school year is like a steamroller, and shutting it down at the end leaves adrenalin in your veins with no place to go. On the last day of school, one of my students, a fourth grader with long dark brown hair, came to the orchestra room to pick up her viola to take it home for the summer. As she half-heartedly reached for her instrument case off of the now almost empty shelves, I wished her a safe and fun summer. She looked back at me and didn't need to say a word. The almost forlorn look in her eyes asked me: "now what?" She thanked me for my well wishes, politely returned them to me, and slowly walked out of my classroom.

I have encountered countless individuals in my years of teaching orchestra and band. From Wisconsin to Georgia to Minnesota, my orchestra and band students have captivated me with their mysterious motivation to do what it is that I was there to help them learn how to do. For years I have had a deep interest in what their motivation to play a musical instrument in school meant in their lives, what it meant to music education and to schooling. As an orchestra and band student from the age of seven and then eight through adulthood, I feel that my participation in school music has shaped me substantially. The most vivid memories I have of school are visual and emotional bookmarks of life which happened while playing in my schools' orchestras and bands.

## **From My Music Education to Theirs**

My parents met playing trombones together in their college wind band. They stood next to each other when they played in the trombone section, and my mother often ended up holding up the pep band music for both of them to see, sort of like a human music stand. My mother, being a strong-willed perfectionist of sorts, would “kick” my father when he played an incorrect rhythm or a played a note out of tune. Somehow, this correctional kicking practice led to them dating, getting married, and then about six years later, to my birth. Fast forward to 1987 and I am seven years old, sitting outside of a small music lessons room in a dark, wood paneled and narrow hallway, drawing pictures on a piece of paper on the floor to pass the time while my father took fiddle lessons from Brian Wicklund at the Homestead Pickin’ Parlor in Richfield, MN. Soon my father would put the fiddle in my hands and teach me to press my second finger on the second tape on the third string, and I would learn to use a shuffle bow to play “Boil ‘Em Cabbage Down”. One year later, a friendly-looking, freckled, blonde-haired woman holding a thin stick stood in front of my third grade in the gymnasium and introduced me to many violin players who were in the grade older than me, all playing violins and other stringed instruments together. It was called an orchestra, Mrs. Collins explained, and I could sign up to play in it if I wanted to, which I wanted to and excitedly did.

When my parents were dating in the early 1970’s, music had a major role in their lives. My mother’s side of the family had a dance band called the “Luick Combo”. As Chris Anderson (1975) describes, the group was born from my young uncles and aunts playing instruments in the school band and having little to do at home on “dull winter

nights on their parents' farm." To entertain themselves, they started playing their school band music together at home to: "try some homemade entertainment." Their father (my grandpa) often helped choose the songs and their mother (my grandma) occasionally stepped in to settle "musical disputes." The family soon began to perform around the wider area. As word spread about this group, they began to perform more widely throughout Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota, at church halls for wedding dances and as the band's big red fire truck rolled down the street in parades, playing timely melodies like "Rock Around The Clock" and "Swingin' Safari." It followed then that if you dated someone in the Luick family, it impressed my grandparents if you too also took up an instrument and played it in the group. Lucky for my father, his trombone playing skills made him a shoe-in with the brass-based dance band. The Luick Combo played for my parents' wedding dance and in their wedding gown and tux, my parents even sat in on their trombones and enjoyed performing a few toe-tapping numbers for their guests.

My grandparents' farmhouse is still full of musical instruments today, and still was, on the cool fall day in 1990 that I sat outside on top of the picnic table with my Uncle Gordie (Gordon Junior) and told him I thought I wanted to play in the school band. I didn't know what I wanted to play, but I was pretty sure I wanted to play the flute. Almost magically, out came an Artley flute out of a closet upstairs, which he assembled for me from the dark blue padded case and held up in the glinting afternoon sunlight, as I tried clumsily to hold it for the first time and put my fingers on what I thought might be the correct keys. I would soon learn to play the infamous song "Let's Go Band!" and

meet one of my lifetime best friends, a freckled, energetic, red-haired girl percussionist who played in the back of the band where the drums were set up.

Other students in school frightened me. I was one of the shyest girls in my class from elementary through high school, rarely saying a word to anyone, to the point at which it would affect my grades because I would not speak up in class discussions. Speaking in front of others terrified me, but playing sounds through a musical instrument with a group of students did not. Sitting in my middle school band room as a 7<sup>th</sup> grader, our band director Mr. Ankrum looked out over the group and chastised us for not practicing enough while the weighted silences between his statements turned our naïve 7<sup>th</sup> grade faces white with panic. We knew how important a job it was to sound good together and we wanted to show him we could rise to his expectations. We could feel the determination and energy course through the group: we would all practice, we would play well, and that was all there was to it.

As an impressionable and enthusiastic undergraduate college student pursuing my bachelor's degree, it came time to decide on a major, something to devote my life and career to, in a field that especially resonated with me. I felt that I wanted to teach something I loved, that which I felt had made a positive impact on my life and which I wanted to share with the world by teaching it back to the world. The more I thought about it, the more I realized that music education was the field I would best and most passionately represent as a teacher, in a way that reached students and motivated them to pursue their own creativity and potential, because it had made so much of an impact in my life and I hoped it would make a positive impact in theirs. Each year over my last

nine years of teaching, whether it was in a high school jazz band as they were comping changes for a soloist who was improvising during a run through of “In The Mood”, or a group of elementary orchestra students trying their best to finger through the notes of “Hot Cross Buns”, I felt that something amazing was happening right in front of me in my classroom; something I might have one explanation for, but that I suspected the students probably had another. Even though I had been a music student myself, I didn’t pretend to know what the student musician experience was like. I feel that only the students can actually explain that to us adults.

## **Introduction**

### **The Problem: Traditional music education advocacy efforts are not winning**

Most readers are familiar with the ongoing national dialogue around whether or not instrumental music education should be part of the regular educational school day. From the times of Greek education until today, advocates of music education in school have been defending for its legitimacy to stay part of the school day. The continuing debate among administrators, parents, music teachers, and educational policy makers about the benefits of music education versus the costs of time and resources it requires continues to yield a never-ending amount of music education advocacy, action, and response efforts, ranging from Letters to the Editor (*Daily Bulldog*, April 8, 2010) to VH1’s “Save the Music” (2011) foundation and annual campaigns to marches at local school board meetings (*AJC*, March 8, 2011). Much advocacy supporting music education is developed from an “outsider” research or advocacy view, wherein students

are objects about whom inferences are drawn to reinforce why music education belongs in school. For example, Joan Schmidt (2006) says that “whether we are seeking ways to build brain connections in young children or ways to prevent at-risk students from dropping out, music makes a difference.” Outside of band and orchestra teachers, whose careers and personal goals often depend on the existence of music education in the schools (Catterall & Rauscher, 2008), it is their students who are directly affected by the presence and functioning of a band and orchestra in school. “What you see depends on where you stand,” says James L. Gentilucci (2004), in “Improving School Learning: The Student Perspective.” He asserts that within an “objectivist research paradigm”, such as that present in music education advocacy, we have not yet produced yet a satisfactory theoretical explanation for a problem because the paradigm fails “to consider what students think and feel” as participants in the learning (pg. 133). This “objectivist research paradigm” that Gentilucci describes has not yet produced a “single, philosophical position to support music education” as Bowman (1994) says. What it has produced is a substantive and varied body of literature, citing adults’ perceived benefits for students of participating in music education in school. However, we still know little about what learning in band and orchestra actually means to students, or why they are actually there in the first place.

### **A Need: Advocacy efforts favor adult rationales over student learners’ perspectives**

Music education advocacy has not been able to agree on a single, philosophical reason for why music education belongs in school. In addition to that, traditional music

education advocacy often leaves out the voices of the student participants in favor of the adults' voices who are in and around the classroom, most often represented by the voices of teachers, parents, administrators, researchers, and other area advocates. On the considerations of declining continuation of music education in school, wrote John Kratus (2007): "it needs to become sticky, meaning that it must become potent and irresistible. It must also connect people to music in ways that are both personally fulfilling and educationally valid (46)." I would argue that the most popular rationales for the existence of music education in schools is most often designed to be "sticky" to the adults outside of the participation in the music classroom in order to continue it in their school program offerings. However, music education may already be quite "sticky" to students, and they can tell us why if we would just ask them.

The 2001 legislation of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) seems to have initiated a march of a culture of assessment in which all learning activities in school validate themselves as legitimate parts of the school day when viewed through a lens centered on achieving high standardized test scores on state and federally mandated student achievement tests. Within the cultural momentum of educational credentialism and competition within schools today (Larabee, 1997, 1999; Demerath, 2010) is embedded a large amount of music education advocacy citing music education's "extra musical benefits" (Catterall and Rauscher, 2008) for students as a reason to participate in band or orchestra in school. Increasing students' standardized test scores and improving their academic performance have become ever more prevalent.

Several studies now suggest that music education does not have an impact on students' standardized test scores or have any outside influence on student achievement. In their research studies, music lessons were not shown to improve mathematics achievement for all students or for at-risk students (Catterall and Rauscher, 2008), band student test score differences have been found to remain stable over time (Kinney, 2008), and research suggests that public school instrumental music classes may simply be attracting students with higher test scores (Fitzpatrick, 2006). Catterall and Rauscher (2008) concluded through their study on the cognitive effects of music exposure on children and the brain, stating "we do not know the duration of the effects of music on children," at least not the cognitive effects which they studied. However, they conclude, "the valence of music experience in the long run is probably positive for many participants and in ways that have not been fully unpacked." (p. 198) This research study aimed to start unpacking the valence of students' music learning experiences.

## **Rationale**

If music advocacy efforts through history have not cemented music education a permanent place in the school day, multiple studies suggest that music education does not improve student test scores, and high achievement may not be linked music education participation, it may be time to look differently at music education in school. Despite the literature devoted to trying to explain how music study benefits students in school, music education seems to be questioned for its importance, despite its actual importance to the students who choose to participate in it. A school band would not be a band or a school

orchestra an orchestra without participants to take up the instruments and make the music. If students in school did not find their own values or meaning in participating in band and orchestra, the classes probably would not exist. Campbell and Connell (2007) note that in their study on music education in school, one 15-year-old asked, “there are so many subjects students don’t want to learn about, why not keep the ones they do?” (pg. 231). To understand the meanings and motivations behind why students participate in band and orchestra in school, it may be time to “enter the child’s world” (Corsaro, 1985) and instead of imposing adult values on students, the opportunity exists to learn from the students instead.

By exploring students’ perspectives on their experiences in instrumental music education, findings may be used by teachers, administrators, local and state board of education representatives, state and federal government agencies, researchers, and anthropologists in order to better understand the motivations, reasons, and meaning of students’ experiences of participating in instrumental music education in school. Within a culture of assessment and a forecast of future annual budget cuts that the country has not seen since the Great Depression (Petrilli and Roza, 2011), the policies and practices defining what is the most meaningful programming for students to attend in school continue to be discussed, and funding and attention will be shifted accordingly.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore student perspectives and personal meanings for participating in band and orchestra in school. Especially concerning within

the bulk of the music education advocacy literature was a lack of student perspectives and a preference for citing perceived “extra-musical benefits” (Catteral & Rauscher, 2008) for students to be involved in band and orchestra in school. Through this study the researcher hoped to reveal a more authentic understanding of how band and orchestra participation matter to students in schools today.

### **A Central Assumption**

Students are not objects. Students can relate their own experiences in music education, and from learning their perspectives about participating in band or orchestra, meanings may emerge from which reliable conclusions will be made clear about the roles traditional instrumental music education plays in the lives of students in school.

### **Methods**

Any research method must arise out of trying to be responsive to the phenomenon, according to Giorgi (1971). No method, then, can be imposed on a phenomenon, lest it do injustice to that phenomenon (Hycner, 1985, pg. 280). In response to the phenomenon of students choosing to and participating in band and orchestra in school, a qualitative phenomenological and ethnographic research method was used to conduct an in-depth analysis of student perceptions of participating in band and orchestra in school. To provide further context, the study also considered the adult, or teacher and administrator perceptions, of students’ reasons for participating in band or orchestra.

The goal of qualitative phenomenological research is to describe a “lived experience” of a phenomenon and is concerned with the meaning which those experiences hold for the participants (Waters, 1987). Trying to understand lived experience and how participants themselves make sense of their experiences is the goal of qualitative phenomenological research, with the participants giving as full of a description of their experience as possible and the researcher having the ability to ask follow up questions without suggesting types of answers (Hycner, 1999). This research position recognizes the significance of locating the research within a particular social, cultural, and historical context while also considering the identities participants construct within them. Ethnographic techniques acknowledge that “people experience and act on the world at multiple points, times and places and, strung together throughout their/our life-courses, these experiences and actions form different biographies and self-identities” (pg.7), explain Ian Cook and Mike Crang (1995) in “Doing Ethnographies.”

The research design is a case study, which is a concentrated analysis of an individual unit which stresses the developmental factors in relationship to the case environment (Walsham, 1993). In the analysis the researcher strove for a deep understanding to faithfully communicate “what it means for participants to be in that setting... what their meanings are...” to others who are “interested in that setting” (Merriam, pg. 6). “People experience and act on the world at multiple points, times and places,” (Cook and Crang, 1995) ...“and, strung together throughout their/our life-courses, these experiences and actions form different biographies and self-identities.”

The objective was to explore the meaning of participating in band and orchestra for students in school. Implementing the research followed a process of receiving permission to conduct the research from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Minnesota at Twin Cities; receiving consent from the Department of Health and Human Services to conduct the research with human subjects from the IRB, receiving permission from the school district to conduct the research, receiving permission from the school principal, receiving parental assent for research with the students, and receiving student assent, teacher consent, and administrator consent forms for permission to conduct the research.

The study involved students from a suburban middle school in a suburb near St. Paul, Minnesota with a student population of over 900 students were enrolled in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. The students met as classes for Band or Orchestra rehearsals every other day, during the school day, for about 45 minutes per class period. They presented concerts together as a performance ensemble once every Trimester. The study included six students (6-8th graders), three teachers, and two administrators who volunteered to participate based on an interest in the study.

The researcher visited all 6th, 7th, and 8th grade band and orchestra classrooms over the course of seven visits to the school, in order to directly invite students to volunteer to participate in the study. At each visit to each classroom, the researcher presented the study's description in the same way using the same prepared speech. At the end of each presentation, the researcher handed out an introductory letter and a Focal Student Assent Form (see Appendix 3) and Parent Consent Form (see Appendix 4) forms

to all eligible students in attendance. Assent and Consent Forms were disbursed to all 6th, 7th, and 8th grade Band and Orchestra students at the middle school. Students who were interested in participating returned their signed Parental Consent and Student Assent forms to the envelope placed in the Front Office at the middle school, where they were later obtained by the researcher. The researcher individually contacted each consenting interviewee by telephone to arrange for individual interview time with that student. Participation in the study was not required by teachers, students, or parents and was based on the consent with no penalty to non-participants. The case study was confidential and information was used for the purposes of this research study.

Canadian developmental psychologist James E. (1966) believed that subject interviews tap a prime sphere of ego functioning which is referred to as the psychosocial realm of the individual. In studying identity, interviews help to evaluate “the meshing of the individual's needs and capabilities with society's rewards and demands” (557). Twelve student interviews (two per student) and one interview per teacher or administrator took place during the months of April – June 2010 and were conducted by the researcher at the appropriate district school or site of the individual, in a separate meeting space away from the band and orchestra classrooms, other students, or instructors. The first round of student interviews consisted of a set of 23 questions, the second round were follow-up questions based on the answers given by each student. The teacher and administrator interviews consisted of a set of 23 different questions. All interview questions were asked, audio-taped, and transcribed by the researcher for the researcher to analyze in response to the questions. To gain further insight into the lives of

all of the focal students, over fifteen hours of field observations were performed by the researcher in Band and Orchestra classrooms as well as controlled settings outside of Band and Orchestra such as study subjects' Language Arts and Mathematics classes, and field notes were recorded.

Open Coding qualitative data analysis was utilized in analyzing transcribed the focus student, teacher, and administrator interview data. Open Coding requires the researcher to examine the data, break down the data into pieces to examine closely, and then compare data for relationships, similarities, and dissimilarities, and different parts of the data are marked with appropriate labels or codes to identify them for further analysis (Seidel & Kelle, 1995). The study utilized descriptive, qualitative methods to examine the following research questions:

- 1) In what ways do middle school students perceive and experience instrumental music education in school?
- 2.) How do those perceptions and meanings compare with those that their teachers and administrators believe to be true?
- 3.) What do identity exploration and participation in band and orchestra have in common?
- 4.) How is achievement defined or experienced qualitatively by students in band or orchestra?

**Figure 1: Focal Student, Teacher, and Administrator Descriptions**

|              |        |                   |               |               |
|--------------|--------|-------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Reanna       | Female | Asian-American    | 6th Grade     | Student       |
| Amy          | Female | European-American | 6th Grade     | Student       |
| Elena        | Female | European-American | 8th Grade     | Student       |
| Jamie        | Female | European-American | 6th Grade     | Student       |
| Parker       | Male   | European-American | 6th Grade     | Student       |
| Olivia       | Female | African-American  | 7th Grade     | Student       |
| Mrs. Carlson | Female | European-American | Middle School | Teacher       |
| Ms. Tanner   | Female | European-American | District-wide | Teacher       |
| Mr. Ward     | Male   | European-American | District-wide | Administrator |
| Ms. Fontaine | Female | European-American | Middle School | Administrator |

Figure 1: Focal Student, Teacher, and Administrator Descriptions.

**Limitations:**

The conditions which are beyond the researchers’ control and may restrict both the conclusion and future application of the study are limitations. Research limitations are described by Marshall and Rossman (2011) as how the results “can and cannot contribute to understanding” (pg. 42). The limits to this study include:

1. The study will be limited to information gained from the response of the students, teachers, and administrators.
2. The study will have the potential to be limited because participants could be students, teachers, and administrators that have a positive perception about instrumental music education such as Band or Orchestra.

3. The expressed meanings of music may be “gleaned from directed research questions created by adult” researchers, and this could “possibly steer adolescent perceptions into preordained categories” (Campbell & Connell, 2007).

## **Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of students to discover the meanings behind participating in band and orchestra in school amidst a culture of assessment, national music education cuts, and “extra-musical benefits” advocacy efforts (Catteral & Rauscher, 2008). The appropriateness of instrumental music education within the regular school day has been a focus of educational policy making for decades. Well documented in the literature by researchers, educators, parents, administrators, policymakers, and activists are efforts to define why music education is a worthwhile school subject to study in school, and why it should not be trimmed down or eliminated from being part of the school day. This review of literature will first provide context with an overview of music education advocacy which showed a lack of student perspectives. Among the ongoing doubt in the school subject lives a growing educational culture focused on standardized assessments and achievement. Next the literature review includes work around aspects of identity, school engagement, and student identity formation in school, to provide a context for understanding a potential relationship between participation in music education and identity formation in school. Finally, we

look at recent research in students' shared experiences in music making in providing a starting point for this research study.

### **Music Education on the Defense**

Edward Bailey Birge (1937) retells the philosophy of early American choral teacher William L. Tomlins when, in early in America in the 1890s, William wrote to advocate for the value of music education in school:

"The trouble with our common school education is that it is concerned too exclusively with the things of knowledge, and that it leaves the deepest powers in the children undeveloped. This unused part is his spirit; the realm of Motive and Creative Life. The boy whose powers are merely physical is but a fraction of his true self. Add his mental powers and still you have only half your boy, for besides what he knows and does there is what he is. To fully fit your child for life, then, you must complete him; body, mind and spirit. Already his physical and lower-mind powers are active. Now awaken his intellectual and spiritual ones. Make him alive in his inner and innermost being, and soon he will pulse with the great world-life all about him, soon he will be filled with the joy of living, tireless in energy, just as when a little fellow he was in touch with his little play-world. In bringing this three-fold power of the child into harmonious expression you complete the circle of his individuality. Almost instantly there will come to him the awareness of this fuller life within and all around him. It is simply a question of completeness; of a complete bell which rings out its life, as against a cracked one which cannot and whose voice is but a dead chink. The effects of this transformation come quickly to view and are seen in self-reliance, initiative, purposefulness and many other things which make for character building. In a word, the child's

powers are approached from within as well as without, and thereby he is lifted so above and beyond his former powers as to be out of all comparison with them."

In a beautiful and almost poetic account of the observations of his music students, Tomlin's is one of the first fully documented American accounts of music education advocacy, citing the benefits of music education for his students as he perceived them. He was continuing a discussion that had been part of Western intellectual culture since the early 1800's, and which is found so far back in history that it even plagued the expansion of school subjects within the Greek educational system, note Catterall and Rauscher (2008).

"Why study music in school? There is not one singular reason," explained Wayne Bowman in 1994. The field still has not decided on its singular philosophical reason for inclusion in the public school curriculum. For example, music is considered a "universal language", as research on the brain shows (Pattel, 2003). In a widely heralded research report published in 2004 entitled "*Music Lessons Enhance IQ*" it was concluded that music enhances general intelligence (Schellenberg, 2004), including improving individuals' spatial-reasoning abilities and Verbal and Performance IQs. Scientists even know that cognitive functions are shown to be stimulated by playing musical instruments together, and new research shows how EEG readouts become more synchronized, showing that when musicians play along together in time, their brain waves are in time, showing that our brains interact when we do (Lindenburge, Li, Gruber, and Muller, in press). In his study, "Music Structure and Emotional Response: Some Empirical

Findings,” John A. Sloboda (1991), gathered data from respondents which supported the theory that “music allowed a level of intensity of emotional response rarely experienced in everyday life, with beneficial psychological consequences for motivation and self-image,” because, as he described, “music structures can often provide a type of therapeutic means of experience, similar to storytelling, but without the semantic content” (110). “Whether we are seeking ways to build brain connections in young children or ways to prevent at-risk students from dropping out, music makes a difference,” noted Joan Schmidt (2006).

Wayne Bowman would not be pleased if he performed a Google search about music education on June 23rd, 2011. However, in a Google search performed by the researcher on June 23rd, 2011 with the search query “does music education help students”, over 75% of the search results including research studies, papers, and websites which made up the first most popular twenty Google search results included words or phrases such as “music helps”, “can music help”, “music helps”, “music increases”, or “benefits of music education,” and each search result suggested a different reason for the importance of music education in school. Contrastingly, when the same search was done on the same day with the words “does math education help students”, none, or 0% of the studies, papers, or websites in the first twenty most popular Google search results included the words “math can help”, “math helps”, “math increases”, or “benefits of math education”. Rather, the first twenty results in the Google search included words and phrases such as “math education practices”, “effective mathematics instruction”, the “role

of calculators in math education”, “math websites”, or outlined popular approaches to math instruction.

The first twenty most popular Google search results using the word “music” as the variable (all other search words constant) showed a vast majority of the most relevant findings were citing the “benefits of music education”, while the first twenty results using the word math as the variable (all other search words constant) resulted in zero relevant results citing the “benefits of math education” and which instead focused on math instruction, practices, or resources. The most relevant twenty search results in a search query titled “does music education benefit” were almost all created to defend music education with how it is perceived to benefit students, which the search query shows. It seems that math education has not had enough requests to explain its benefits or to justify any defensive research studies, papers, or websites relevant enough to be found in the Google search results. Not only was there no need for math education advocacy, there also were not a host of reasons for why it was important. Math has already arrived.<sup>1</sup>

The advocacy is created for a reason. For example, one of the largest cuts to music education in the last decade happened in the state of California during a five year period, as noted by John Kratus (2007). Using 1999 – 2004 data from the California

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<sup>1</sup> As of March 31, 2011, there were 2,095,006,005 World Wide Web internet users worldwide which is roughly 30% of the world’s population (World Internet Use Statistics, 2011), and it was calculated by [comScore.com](http://www.comScore.com) in March 2008 that roughly 60% of users use the Google search engine, with Google logging 1 billion search requests a day (Eric Kuhn, 2010). Google, a trademarked internet search engine since 2001, helps persons obtain information from the World Wide Web (Merriam-Webster). Tom Krazit explained that “Google likes to think of itself as the world’s information barometer, the most complete repository of human intent as measured by the Internet search query” (November 2, 2010). Google does this using a “citation graph of the web... which contains millions of hyperlinks, allows rapid calculation of a web page’s “PageRank”, [which is] an objective measure of its citation importance that corresponds well with people’s subjective idea of importance. Because of this correspondence says Google creator Larry Page, PageRank is an excellent way to prioritize the results of web keyword searches” (1997).

Department of Education, Music for All Foundation produced a report showing that during a period when the total California public school student population increased by 5.8 percent, the percentage of all California public school students who were involved in music education courses fell by 50 percent. This decline represented 512,366 students not participating in music education, four times the largest loss of any other academic subject, including a loss of 1,053 music teachers which was a decline of 26.7% of teaching staff. Interviews with policy makers as to the reason of the programming cuts represented two major factors: 1.) a shift of a focus on reading and mathematics as a result of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and 2.) cuts to the public school system budgets resulted in cuts to school music education. The Music For All Foundation study's authors rejected these explanations, as the authors noted that, regarding the NCLB rationale: "music programs have been limited in a manner vastly disproportionate to other curricula. At a minimum, therefore, other forces must have been at work." However, music was the only arts course to receive these drastic cuts, as the study describes, student enrollment in art, dance, and drama increased during the same time period, and students were not using the schedule time which was freed from music education to enroll in "more pragmatic classes;" computer education course enrollment decreased by 0.7% during the same time period.

Music advocacy as we know it will continue as long as doubt and cuts in music education programs around the country continue. In a recent study by the Council for Basic Education, "Academic Atrophy: The Condition of Liberal Arts in American Public Schools (2011), it was found that instructional time for music and the arts will be further

squeezed in the coming years. In a survey of one thousand principals, one-third of the principals surveyed in Indiana, Maryland, New York, and New Mexico anticipated further decreases in instructional time, and 42% predicted this would happen in schools with high minority populations. With so many students still participating in music education in school and many potential students to open the doors of music education to, it may be time to open the doors of student perspectives on instrumental music education if we are going to learn the real reasons for maintaining its presence in schools today.

### **A Lack of Student Perspectives**

Despite a large body of research and advocacy literature citing the benefits of music education for students in school, and large national cuts in music education programs in the last decade, there are still further coming reductions forecast for music education. Despite this, it is notable that the majority of the advocacy literature is still developed from an “outsider” or adult perspective. Implicit in this view and throughout the literature is the notion that students are objects who can be drawn inferences about, in this case, to reinforce why music education belongs in school as explained by adults and adult rationales.

However, student perspectives have been shown to illuminate various dimensions of schooling (Cusick, 1973; Foley, 1990; McLeod, 2003; Demerath, 2011). This study takes it upon itself to “interrogate” the students in the schools, “rather than the teachers, parents, and politicians who so often take it upon themselves to speak with such alacrity and confidence on their behalf,” explains Michael Fielding (2001). He explains that we

are “in danger of taking ourselves too seriously” and that “humility and openness are the *sine qua non*” of responsive and successful policy making. In policy making, he says, it is time that we “took stock in a way that looks more carefully and more imaginatively at different kinds of evidence bases,” such as considering students’ perspectives: they are different standpoints than those we are used to (145).

### **An Ongoing Doubt**

Music education advocacy, much of which lacks the student perspective but cites perceived benefits of music in school carries on, as budget cuts and the trimming and cutting of school music programs continues. Bennett Reimer, Emeritus Professor at the School of Music, Northwestern University, Chicago in his article, *The Danger of Music Education Advocacy* (2006) asks us:

“Given the widespread enjoyment, even fulfillment, music provides to people all over the world and has provided throughout history, it would seem that there would be little if any need for advocacy for it, especially now when it is so easily available to all who choose to be engaged with it in whatever ways they prefer. Yet those whose profession it is to teach music in schools have always had to plead in favor of it, to offer whatever arguments they could imagine to gain support for their endeavors. Why would something so widely regarded as a valuable component of human life, particularly among youngsters of school age, need such intense, ongoing efforts to plead its cause as being a worthy school subject?”

In his Keynote Address at the Third Symposium on a Sociology of Music Education, Brian A. Roberts (2004) responded to what Bennett Reimer described as a current state of affairs in music education. Roberts stated: “many have argued that music lacks a solid support amongst educational power groups because it does not seem able to present a clear and unified reason for its inclusion in schools in the first place.” Despite the intense advocacy about the benefits of music education for students today, Roberts pointed out, it has become almost commonplace to hear of school districts across America cutting or trimming music programs to save money or expand school day time for math, reading, sciences, language, or a combination thereof. Why, after half of a century of belonging to the school curriculum, Roberts asked, is music education not a secure and even promoted part of every district’s curriculum? Geography, for example, Roberts noted, followed a similar path into the school curriculum but whose path led it to a more stable position in the curriculum than did music. However, as a school subject, Geography was widely questioned as relevant in the school curriculum by scholars in the early 1960s, noted Goodson (1981).

To examine the path of geography or music education into the school curriculum requires a look at the theories on how knowledge is prioritized and built into a curriculum for use in school. As Roberts noted, it would be helpful to turn back to the work of Bourdieu (1971) who carried out empirical work to test his theoretical assertions on the reproduction of knowledge through education by discovering themes within the educational system which ultimately determined the subjects taught in school. Similarly, Young (1977) used historical approaches to test themes of knowledge and control within

the educational system. He said: “one crucial way of reformulating and transcending the limits within which we work, is to see... how such limits are not given or fixed, but produced through the conflicting actions and interests of men in history” (pg. 248-249). In his essay, “Becoming a School Subject,” Ivor Goodson (1981) noted that “scrutiny of the process by which unspecified dominant groups exercise control over presumably subordinate groups in the definition of school knowledge” is a theme mentioned in Bourdieu’s book, *Knowledge and Control*, and which, he noted, are themes which need to be further explored (pg. 157). Based on Layton’s (1972) Model of Curriculum Development, in how knowledge becomes a school subject in several steps, Goodson notes that because of the process, “subjects and disciplines are in constant flux” in school. Therefore, says Goodson, “the study of knowledge in our society should move beyond the ahistorical process of philosophical analysis towards a detailed historical investigation of the motives and actions behind the presentation and promotion of subjects and disciplines” (pg. 160). Curriculum and pedagogy are considered message systems, as sociologist Basil Bernstein (1973) wrote about in his book, *Class, Codes, and Control*, and curriculum defines what counts as valid knowledge. Bernstein (1971) believed that “how a society selects, classifies, distributes, transmits and evaluates the educational knowledge it considers to be public, reflects both the distribution of power and the principles of social control” (47).

## **America's Focus on Achievement**

“Achievement is a dominant motivation in American culture” Cornell University’s (2005) article, “What Is a US American?” explains to newly arrived students to Ithaca College in Ithaca, NY when the students visit the school’s website. The “primary medium” through which Americans express their goals for schools has been the “market for educational credentials” explains David F. Larabee (1999, pg. 50). His book, as a study of educational consumerism and credentialism, shows how the “market perspective has come to dominate our view of education” (pg. 252). Through his research in the field with students in Ohio, Peter Demerath (2010) illustrates this at work in his recent book, *Producing Success*, says that young Americans “seem to be increasingly aware of their status relative to others and to be preparing themselves at ever earlier ages for the sort of individualistic competition that is ever more central to American life” which fits with contemporary views of a rising focus on competition and individual achievement in American schools today (Elkind 2001; Rosenfeld and Wise 2000; Schneider and Stevenson 1999). David Labaree (1997) also explains that where education may once have been seen as a “public good” which could provide collectively beneficial gains for society, it now may be looked at by many as a “private good” meant to be a tool for individual advancement (p.2) which may also threaten to “transform the public educational system into a mechanism for personal advancement” (p. 12).

Though a focus on achievement, credentialism, and standardized testing seems to be permeating the culture, “intense controversy” exists about the impact of standardized tests on teaching and learning (Luna and Livingstone, 2001). Within a culture of

assessment, educators today have had little choice but to tailor their attention and efforts in the classroom towards fulfilling the requirements of standardized testing and standards-based assessment, explain Michael Sadowski (2003). He argues that while this approach has its merits, it is limited in that it only pertains to factors external to students. “While tests, curricula, and state frameworks can be standardized, students never can and never will be. If we want students to succeed- not just as test takers, but also as thinkers, as learners, and as people who make valuable contributions to our society- we need to know more about them than their scores on standardized measure of achievement” (pg. 1). Educators may find that accountability-based measures have a place in setting basic benchmarks for what students should learn in school. Nonetheless, Sadowski describes that these baseline levels bring the risk of labeling students with numbers, percentile rankings, or a test score or a group label such as “proficient” or “needs improvement.” Standardized tests are limited to the extent to which they can capture the essence of students’ learning in school.

### **Music Education within a Culture of Assessment**

Within a cultural climate of educational credentialism with a heightened focus on assessment, further difficulties may be rising which may present further hurdles for establishing music education permanently as a non-contested subject area in school:

*“Does not tested equal not important?”* First, music education such as the subjects of band and orchestra are not included in state and federally mandated standardized tests. This fact may contribute to their being seen as “less important” than

those subjects that are tested under No Child Left Behind (2001). Of all factors potentially contributing to declining music education opportunities in schools, standardized testing and the effects of No Child Left Behind (2001) have been thought to have the most negative effect on music education programs (Abril & Gault, 2008).

*Defining Achievement:* Second, because music education is not included in standardized tests such as those under NCLB and as the public further aligns with an educational culture of credentialism, a stranglehold may be growing. It may become more and more difficult to agree on what achievement and accomplishment look like within music education, if schools rely more and more on standardized test scores to validate whether or not learning happened in the classroom. This concern may further isolate music education as an extra, add-on area of education not worthy of the budgetary allocations it requires to be successful.

However, if you ask music educators, achievement may be easier to define than a non-music maker might think. Music students can demonstrate what achievement actually “looks” like; in a very real comparison to a letter grade. Instrumental music education classes such as band are one of the only places in students’ lives which demand perfection from them, explained Dr. Jack Stamp, on March 4, 2000 at the Region V Band Festival in Pennsylvania. In his speech, made available by a video posted on YouTube, professor Dr. Stamp explained to his audience:

“I get tired of people talking about that band, in particular, is easy. It is not easy. It is my feeling that sometimes we’ve got our priorities out of whack. Today,” he says, in front of a live audience, speaking about the group of band students in front of him, “we’re going to deal with one

aspect: right and wrong. So what we're going to do is to demonstrate what the band would sound like on a small passage, if we were operating somewhere between 90 and 95 percent. Because of the odd number of notes... some of them are actually above 95 and some of them are around 90. But we're going to play it for you, just a section of Shenandoah, with my great apologies to Frank Ticheli [audience laughs], we're going to play a short section, first we'll play it for you correctly, then we'll play it for you at 95 or so percent, which in most academic classes is an A. Okay, so here's Shenandoah, correctly. [The band performs the music selection]. Then Dr. Stamp announces: "95... 94 percent." [The band performs the music selection again with less correct notes; they finish, the audience laughs]. "And that will get you an A," says Dr. Stamp [audience laughs again]. "You see, music demands perfection," says Dr. Stamp. "Now we don't always get there, in fact, we seldom get there. But it's the one of the few things in their [the students'] lives that demands that they be perfect. So what you heard are 146 mistakes. No one really made more than one mistake. But 146 happening, at a 94 percentile. This is so important, ladies and gentleman. And you can't let someone who doesn't know about music take music out of our schools" [audience applauds loudly].

According to Jack Stamp's example, achievement and the demand for perfection in the students' work is very real in band. But the vast amount of music education advocacy literature often shows a justification of the inclusion of music education in school by claiming that music education has a residual benefit for students; that students who participate in music education benefit by raising their test scores and achievement in other academic areas like reading, mathematics, and standardized test scores. Catterall and Rauscher (2008) note that this refers to the popularized notion that "music makes

you smarter” and refer to these benefits as “extra-musical benefits” (p.172). An example of a type of popularly cited type of “extra-musical benefits” advocacy reads as follows:

“Students of the arts continue to outperform their non-arts peers on the SAT, according to reports by the College Entrance Examination Board. In 1993, SAT takers with coursework/experience in the arts performance scored from 38 to 62 points higher on the verbal portion of the test and from 24 to 32 points higher on the math portion than did students with no coursework/experience in the arts” as described by the Student Descriptive Questionnaire, a component of the SAT that provides information about students’ academic preparation. This information was included in the MMEA Advocacy Workbook for Music Education in Minnesota on page 17, whose source is The College Board (Profile of SAT and Achievement Test Takers for 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993).

In the National Association for Music Education’s publication entitled “Music Makes the Grade”, the Executive Harris Poll (2007) stated that: “there are many reasons that music has a place in America schools- remember, for example, that increases in SAT scores correlate strongly with participation in school music... and that music learning is associated with intelligence measures for acquisition of math and science concepts” (pg. 3). Furthermore, in their research, Christopher M. Johnson and Jenny E. Memmott (2006) concluded that students in high-quality school music programs score higher on standardized tests compared to students in deficient music programs, and concluded that students in schools with excellent music programs had higher English and math test scores than students with lower quality music programs, regardless of socioeconomic level of the school or school district. Advocacy citing this particular type of extra-musical benefit of music education is often shared in popular culture to speak to the value of

music education in schools. For example: "kids who have access to music education do better on reading and math," said 36-year-old Gordon Singer, who heads Elliott Management's London office and joined the board of the VH1 Save the Music Foundation in 2007 (*Wall Street Journal*, July 23, 2010). In an effort to explain "what the lieutenant governor is responsible for" in a debate between five candidates for Louisiana's lieutenant governorship, Republican Jay Dardenne described that music education and arts education are what he is responsible for because "children educated in the arts do dramatically better on standardized tests" (*WDSU*, September 25, 2010).

However, research is still inconclusive about whether or not music education actually does raise students' test scores or academic abilities. In a 2008 study by Darly W. Kinney, music participation and the achievement test scores of urban middle school students were examined. It was concluded that, over time, band students' test score differences remained stable. Kate R. Fitzpatrick (2006) found through her study, "The Effect of Instrumental Music Participation and Socioeconomic Status on Ohio Fourth-, Sixth-, and Ninth-Grade Proficiency," that her research suggested that students with higher test scores may simply be attracted to instrumental music classes. In their study, "Unpacking the Impact of Music on Intelligence," Catterall and Rauscher (2008) also examined the effects of music lessons on the proficiency of mathematics. They did not find that music lessons improved mathematics achievement for all students in the study and "music showed no greater effects on mathematics proficiency for at-risk students than for non-at-risk students" (pg. 198). Their study looked at comparative gains in general intelligence reported for music students and found gains in general intelligence

for keyboard students caused by gains in visual-spatial reasoning skills versus verbal skills gains (pgs. 196-197).

### **Adolescent Identity Development**

For the past 60 years, the early developmental psychology work of Erik Erickson (Erickson, 1950, 1968, 1970), rooted in the psychoanalytic tradition of Freud, have been the grounding for work in identity theory and the identity concept. James E. Marcia (1966) described Erikson's view of adolescence as a: "time of growing occupational and ideological commitment," because as the child grows up and sees the "imminent adult tasks" of becoming a citizen and getting a job, he is "required to synthesize childhood identifications in such a way" so that he can "both establish a reciprocal relationship with his society and maintain a feeling of continuity within himself" (551). The process of identity development is gradual and continuous through a series of dynamic interactions between the adolescent and social context, which results in a commitment to multiple, temporal selves integrated into a unified whole, according to Erickson (1968). Marcia (1980) says that:

"Identity has been called a "sense," an "attitude," a "resolution" and so on. I would like to propose another way of construing identity: as a self-structure - an internal, self-constructed, dynamic organization of drives, abilities, beliefs, and individual history. The better developed this structure is, the more aware individuals appear to be of their own

uniqueness and similarity to others and of their own strengths and weaknesses in making their way in the world” (159).

Lev Vygotsky (1986) believed that a child's development cannot be understood by a study of only the individual. He believed that we must also examine “the external social world in which that individual life has developed... through participation in activities that require cognitive and communicative functions, children are drawn into the use of these functions in ways that nurture and 'scaffold' them" (pp. 6-7). Kublin et al (1998), in their book, *Transitions in prelinguistic communication*, echo Vygotsky that learning is “embedded within social events and occurring as a child interacts with people, objects, and events in the environment" (p. 287). Defining themselves in relationship to others through social comparisons has a heavy influence on a child’s self understanding (Higgins and Parsons, 1983). The sense of one’s self is built on personal views of oneself and also derives from one’s public and social experiences (Hudspith & Williams, 1994). Identity is the one’s “sense of self” constructed from “available social categories” which is “taken up by individuals and ascribed by cultural groups and social settings” explains Nasir (2011). In their book, *Rousing minds to life: Teaching, learning, and schooling in social context*, Tharp and Gallimore (1988) show that out of social interaction, higher order functions develop.

Marcia (1980) proposed that it is not that an individual “has” an identity, as it is not something one possesses, but that individuals have an ongoing “identity formation” process which they are continually a part of (159). He said that identity is a “fairly stable structure” whose “referents are observable sets of problem-solving structures” (160).

Berman et al (2001) said that while achieving identity, Marcia identified exploration as one of the two basic dimensions of status, and while also considering an individual's level of commitment, four statuses emerged which characterize the development towards a mature identity (513). Marcia (1980) describes that some "styles of resolution" within decisions the individual is making as they grow up can be observed in adolescence and he referred to these as the "identity statuses." He developed the identity statuses as a methodological device which helps to "provide for a greater variety of styles" than Erickson's "dichotomy" of identity or identity confusion when looking at the identity issue as an advantage of the identity statuses (160-162). Compared with Erikson's theoretical writings, Marcia explained, the statuses "are relatively objective" and they "can be determined with a fair degree of inter-observer reliability" (1976b). Marcia's identity statuses are: Identity Achievement, Foreclosure, Identity Diffusion, and Moratorium (160-162) Individual identity formations are classified by these modes and are defined in terms of the "presence or absence of a decision-making period, or crisis, and the extent of personal investment, or commitment, in two areas: occupation and ideology" (162). He hypothesized that individuals' status of identity formation is characterized by their level of crisis and commitment in both occupation and ideology in their lives. Marcia's identity statuses, criteria, and characteristics are shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Marcia’s Identity Statuses: Descriptions and Criteria**

| <b>Status</b>        | <b>Occupational or Ideological Location</b>         | <b>Decision-making period</b>                            | <b>“Styles available” in dealing with the identity issue</b> | <b>Crisis</b>     | <b>Commitment</b> |
|----------------------|---|--|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| Identity Achievement | pursuing self-chosen occupation or ideology         | have experienced a decision-making period                | Strong or self-directed or highly adaptive                   | Present           | Present           |
| Foreclosure          | committed to occupational and ideological positions | choices were made by parents                             | Cooperative or conforming or steadfast or rigid              | Absent            | Present           |
| Identity Diffusion   | no set occupational or ideological direction        | may or may not have experienced a decision-making period | Carefree or careless or charming or unstable                 | Present or Absent | Absent            |
| Moratorium           | struggling with occupational or ideological issues  | not applicable   | Sensitive or anxiety-ridden or highly ethical                | In Crisis         | Present but Vague |

Figure 2: James Marcia’s (1980) Identity Status descriptions and criteria (pp. 162).

“The identity formation of an individual reaches its peak during adolescence,” explain R. Nasir, M. B. Mustaffa, W. S. Wan Shahrazad, R. Khairudin and S. S. Syed Salim (2011). The process of identity formation becomes particularly salient during adolescence (Fredricks et al., 2002). “American adolescents live in a world where almost everything revolves around belonging to a social group of friends or a ‘clique’,” explain Laura Leets and Sunwolf (2005). With advancing cognitive development, adolescents become actively concerned with opinions of others, particularly sensitive to social comparison,

and attentive to their various social roles (Harter, 2003). This prompts reconsideration of early identities with either their subsequent abandonment or reorganization in developing cognition. Erikson (1980) states that re-evaluation of early childhood identifications occurs when “a variety of social roles become available and increasingly coercive” (p. 96). Tajfel (1982) described self-identity as having positive conceptions of the multiple dimensions of oneself (Tajfel, 1982) and as “a set of meaningful definitions that are ascribed or attached to the self, including social roles, reputation, and structure of values and priorities, and a conception of one’s potentiality” explain Baumeister and Muraven (1996, pp. 406). Indeed a change and increase in domain opportunity arises within the social context of adolescence (Eccles et al., 1989; Fredericks et al., 2002; Jacobs, Lanza, Osgood, Eccles, and Wigfield, 2002; Kroger and Green, 1996). In researching student identity, Ann Locke Davidson’s findings with adolescents are consistent with contemporary theories (Anzaldúa, 1987; Clifford, 1988; Hall, 1987; hooks, 1992; Okamura, 1981, Roosens, 1989; Rosaldo, 1989) which show that adolescents constantly recreate identity in response to changing social situations.

### *Student Identity Formation in School*

In *Becoming somebody: toward a social psychology of school*, Philip Wexler (1992) says schools are organizations with economies which present individuals with “social instruments” that typify identity through the build-up of one’s signifying repertoires of language, speech, and action (109). Wexler suggests that school activities such as athletics, for example, are a “channel of social mobility” for students in their

identity development (118-119). In her book, *Making and Molding Identity in Schools: Student Narratives on Race, Gender, and Academic Engagement* (1996), Davidson closely examines individual students in day-to-day experiences and interactions within school settings to reveal how identity is molded and created in school environments. Within certain microsystems in school, Alexandra Lamont (2002) also shows that each individual student is engaged in shared processes of the negotiation of meaning (*Musical Identities and the School Environment*). Na'ilah Suad Nasir and Jamal Cooks would agree with the notion that learning and identity are "intimately related to one another" (58) but would assert that they also hold distinct differences. In "Becoming a Hurdler: How Learning Settings Afford Identities" (2009), their study gathered the story of a high school track team which presented data which helped them to build a model of how to think about the resources that are provided by learning settings for participants to develop practice-linked identities. Music education classrooms, and the participants within, could be studied in this way.

A convincing case can be made to show that a student's success or failure in school in academic, social, and personal terms is heavily centered not on the external factors, but on questions of identity, such as questions that Sadowski suggests: "Who am I?" and "What kind of student do I want to be?" "What do others expect of me?" "Where do I want to go with my life?" Sadowski believes that adolescents wrestle with these questions more than any other age group (2). If we wish to truly help students succeed, to achieve in their daily lives and not just on tests, we need to try to better understand who they are and where they are coming from, concludes Sadowski (5). "In order for

educators to help adolescents *as students*, we must develop a better understanding of the issues that affect them *as people*” (2) explains Sadowski (1991). Teacher Karen Hume reminds us that, as the saying goes: “they won’t care how much you know until they know how much you care” (TEACH Magazine: June 1, 2011). She reminds us that when students are asked about the qualities of good teachers, they confirm the truth of that statement- caring is always at or near the top of the list.”

### *School Engagement through Student’s Identity Development*

The relationship between identity and learning, we were told by Frederick Douglass in 1894, are deeply tied to realizing one’s full humanity through education. “At its best,” notes Nailah Nasir (2011), “education should involve helping one to actualize one’s unique innate potential and to become equipped to enact one’s unique contribution to society and the world.” Students engage in school through their identity development, believes Nilda Flores-Gonzalez (2002). She explains her findings from studying high school completion and drop-out rates of Latino students at Hernandez High with the role-identity theory, in her book, *School Kids/Street Kids*. Her work develops the way in which schools produce “school kids or street kids” by offering or denying students certain conditions they need to become engaged in school (12). She argues that the “kinds of identities students take on for themselves in school has much to do with staying in or dropping out of school” (4, 14-19). Phelan, Davidson, and Cao (1992) cite Stafford University’s Center for Research on the Context of Secondary School Teaching’s study (CRC) which asks: what is important to students about schools and classrooms, and what

makes adolescents want to come to school? Through interviews, observation, and analysis, the researchers identify factors that “affect students’ engagement with schools and learning.” They found that “students respond more academically and more fully” in classrooms “where personalities are more allowed to show” (2).

### *Music Education, School Engagement, and Identity*

Douglas Foley (1990) said that “most students came to school for the extracurricular activities... school was football games, band practice, and hassling teachers...” (101). The challenge for teachers was to engage students in school through an activity that the students chose to engage in. Foley tells of the story of Dante Aguila, a marching band director who grew a band program that was so popular with the students for its excellence that it was more popular to students to join band than to join the football team. Despite existing in a culture where “machismo was everything”, “real males” wanted to play in the band more than to play football because Dante had made music and playing well attractive to all students and which appealed to students of all differences, from “goodies” to “jocks” to “homegirls”, band was the classroom to participate in. In band, cultural themes that manifest themselves in the behavior patterns of the group include a sense of identity, organizational hierarchies, shared experiences, and the transmission of traditions and rituals, according to Steven Morrison (2001), music education chair at University of Washington in Seattle.

More recently, music and the concept of identity have begun to be discussed together. In looking at music study in school, Hargreaves, Miell, and MacDonald (2002)

believe that “the concept of identity enables us to look at the widespread and varied interactions between music and the individual. They say that “the idea of the self” as a focus which was static and unchanging “has given way to a much less static and much more dynamic view of the self as something which is constantly being reconstructed and renegotiated according to the experiences, situations and other people with whom we interact with in everyday life” (1-2). On music lessons taught in school, they believe that: “music clearly enables children to define themselves in relation to others” (56). Through phenomenological and ethnographic field work, themes emerging from this study may allow a better understanding if so and if what school music participation and identity might have in common.

#### *Students’ Perspectives on Music Making*

A few studies in the literature are starting to approach the student perspective around school music topics. For example, students’ perceptions about orchestra performance (Eckel, 1995, 1998; Shaw 1998) and inquiring among students to find out if they are interested in music education as a future career choice (Bergee, 1992; Davis, 1990; Cox, 1999; Krueger, 2000; Bergee, Coffman, Demorest, Humphreys, & Thornton, 2001; Gillespie & Hamann, 1999) are notable. One study in particular asked middle and high school students who were both involved and not involved in school music to explain through written essays what participating in music both in and out of school meant to them. Through an inductive approach undertaken through a national essay contest, middle and high school students were asked questions which reflected the meaning of

music in their lives in and out of school. Patricia Sheehan Campbell and Claire Connell (2007) found through their study on student essays about students' value of music in their lives both in and out of school that music had meaning to students, through (a) identity formation, including individual identities (such as instrumental, vocal, listener) and group identities (band, choir, orchestra, etc.), (b) emotional benefits, (c) music's life benefits, including character-building and life skills, (d) social benefits, and (e) positive and negative impressions of school music programs. In her study, "Uncovering adolescent choral singers' philosophical beliefs about music-making: A qualitative inquiry", Elizabeth Cassidy Parker (2011) interviewed fourteen participants for 40 minutes each to investigate adolescent choral singers' philosophical beliefs regarding music-making. After transcribing and coding for themes from the interviews, four themes were prominently discovered: (1) music-making as a simultaneously feelingful experience for participants; (2) musical knowing as interpersonal knowing; (3) expressed music as expressed feeling; and (4) music-making as enlightening. She suggests that future studies investigate the perspectives of individual performers and participants in music ensembles to gain a stronger understanding of the contextual factors at work. It is though these types of studies that the student perspective will continue to emerge and hopefully be moved to the forefront of the advocacy discussion if we are really to understand band and orchestra in school.

## **Materials and Methods**

### *Introduction*

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of band and orchestra students to discover the meanings behind participating in band and orchestra in school amidst a culture of assessment, national music education cuts, and “extra-musical benefits” advocacy efforts (Catteral & Rauscher, 2008). The study also identified the perceptions of teachers and administrators as related to the experiences and perceptions cited by the students.

The study utilized ethnographic, qualitative methods to examine the following research questions:

- 1) In what ways do middle school students actually perceive and experience instrumental music education in school?
- 2.) How do those perceptions and meanings compare with those that their teachers and administrators believe to be true?
- 3.) What do identity exploration and participation in band and orchestra have in common?
- 4.) How is achievement defined or experienced qualitatively by students in band or orchestra?

### **Research Design**

The research design is a case study, which is a concentrated analysis of an individual unit (Walsham, 1993) in which the school as a whole was the case study unit

of focus. According to Yin (2003), a case study “is appropriate when investigated by desire or forces circumstances (a) to define research topics broadly and not narrowly; (b) to cover contextual or complex multivariate conditions and not isolated variables; and (c) to rely on multiple and not singular sources of evidence” (p. xi). Through qualitative phenomenological inquiry, this case study sought to discover what participating in band and orchestra meant to students. Band and orchestra students, teachers, and administrators were asked to articulate their perceptions about students’ meanings found through participating in band and orchestra in school.

Merriam (2001) says that the key to getting meaningful data is asking good questions (pg. 93). Merriam identified several types of questions to stimulate responses from an informant, including questions to avoid, like yes-or-no questions, and questions to include, which consider the using of words and questions that make sense to the interviewee which will reflect the interviewee’s worldview and which will improve the quality of the interview data (pg. 76). The open-ended questions in the interviews took into account qualitative characteristics which would improve the quality of the interview data while attempting to capture the essence of the meaning for each participant.

The objective of the research was to explore the meanings and values of participating in band and orchestra from the student perspective. Implementing the research followed a process of receiving permission to conduct the research from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Minnesota at Twin Cities; receiving consent from the Department of Health and Human Services to conduct the research with human subjects from the IRB, receiving permission from the school district

to conduct the research, receiving permission from the school principal, receiving Parental Consent for research with the students, and receiving Student Assent, teacher Consent, and administrator Consent forms for permission to conduct the research.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The researcher visited all 6th, 7th, and 8th grade band and orchestra classrooms once for each Band or Orchestra class to present the purpose of the study to all potential students. At the presentations the researcher handed out Parent Consent (see Appendix 4) and Student Assent (see Appendix 3) forms to all eligible students in attendance. Students who were interested in participating returned their signed Parent Consent and Student Assent forms to the middle school, where they were collected and obtained by the researcher. The researcher individually contacted each interviewee to arrange for individual interview time. No additional visits or repeat introductions of the study were made in the classrooms by the researcher after the initial visits.

An introductory letter (see Consent and Assent Forms, Appendices 3, 4, and 5) was handed out to all students, teachers, and administrators introducing and explaining the information that would be gathered for the study. Participation in the study was not required by teachers, students, or parents and was based on the consent with no penalty to non-participants. The case study was confidential and information was used for the purposes of this research study. Teacher and administrator participants were recruited based on the students that volunteered to participate in the interviews. The researcher focused interview questions on student perceptions of band and orchestra, including: why

students chose to participate in band and orchestra, perceptions and preferences for making music alone or with others, what students like the most/the least about band and orchestra, and if teamwork was or was not important in their opinion, in band and orchestra.

## **Methods**

The data collection process for this study was in three steps; pre-interview, interview, and post-interview collection. The role of the researcher was pre-interview observations of the participants, interview facilitator, and interpreter of collected data. Twelve student interviews (two per student) and one interview per teacher or administrator took place during the months of April – June 2010 and were conducted directly by the researcher, at the school, in a separate meeting space separate from the band and orchestra classroom, students, and teachers. Sets of questions guided the student (Appendix 1) and teacher/administrator (Appendix 2) interviews, which were audio-taped and transcribed by the researcher to use to analyze and respond to the research questions. The first round of student interviews consisted of a set of 23 questions, the second round were follow-up questions based on the answers given by each student. The teacher and administrator interviews consisted of a set of 20 different questions.

The recordings and transcriptions, which become the research data, were approached for whatever meanings emerged (Hycner, 1985, pg. 280). The goal of the phenomenological reduction is to bracket the responses of the researcher so as to “let the event emerge as a meaningful whole” (Keen, 1975, pg. 38) in trying to understand the

meaning of what is trying to be said instead of what the researcher may expect a person to say (Hycner, 1985). After the interview has been transcribed and the researcher has “bracketed” their own presuppositions in order to stay as true to the data as possible, Hycner explains, the interview is taken as itself a “context” and the next step in the process involves Delineating Units of General Meaning . This process requires the researcher to get “at the essence of the meaning expressed” uses as much as possible of the “literal words expressed by the participant” while crystallizing “what the participant has said” (pg. 282). According to Patton (1990), the “assumption of essence,” such as the essence of being a participant, “becomes the defining characteristic of a phenomenological study” (pg. 70).

Once units of general meaning have been noted by the researcher, the analysis is ready to Delineate Units of Meaning Relevant to the Research Question to determine if the response “responds to or illuminates” (pg. 284) a research question. After Eliminating Redundancies in the data, the researcher Clusters for Units of Relative Meaning (pg. 287). Finally, explains Hycner (1985), the researcher then “interrogates all of the clusters of relative meaning” to determine if there are central themes that “express the essence of the clusters” (pg. 290).

After these initial steps, Hycner finds it helpful to write a summary of each individual interview, and then return to the participant with the summary, review what has been discovered so far, and conduct a second interview based on the findings of the first interview (pg. 291). Next, following the protocol outlined by Hycner (pg. 292), the researcher identified themes general and unique to all interviews. Finally, the researcher

furthered the process by “contextualizing the themes” (pg. 293) and building a composite summary (pg. 294). A composite summary describes the “world” in general, according to the participants.

Twelve student interviews (two per student) and one interview per teacher or administrator took place during the months of April – June 2010 and were conducted directly by the researcher, at the student’s middle school, in a separate meeting space independent from the band and orchestra classrooms, teachers, or the participants’ classmates. The first round of student interviews consisted of a set of 23 questions, the second round were follow-up questions based on the answers given by each student. The teacher and administrator interviews consisted of a set of 23 different questions. All interview questions were asked, audio-taped, and transcribed by the researcher for the researcher to analyze in response to the questions. The researcher was provided with permission from the IRB to use the submitted interview questions prior to the interviews. Data were generated from the transcribed interviews with students, teachers, and administrators. Transcribed focus group data were then coded.

## **Findings**

Through an Open Coding data analysis process, themes emerged based on consistent responses given in individual interviews from the participating students, teachers, and administrators. Figure 3 illustrates the three central themes that were identified through the data analysis process.

**Figure 3: Focal Student Themes**

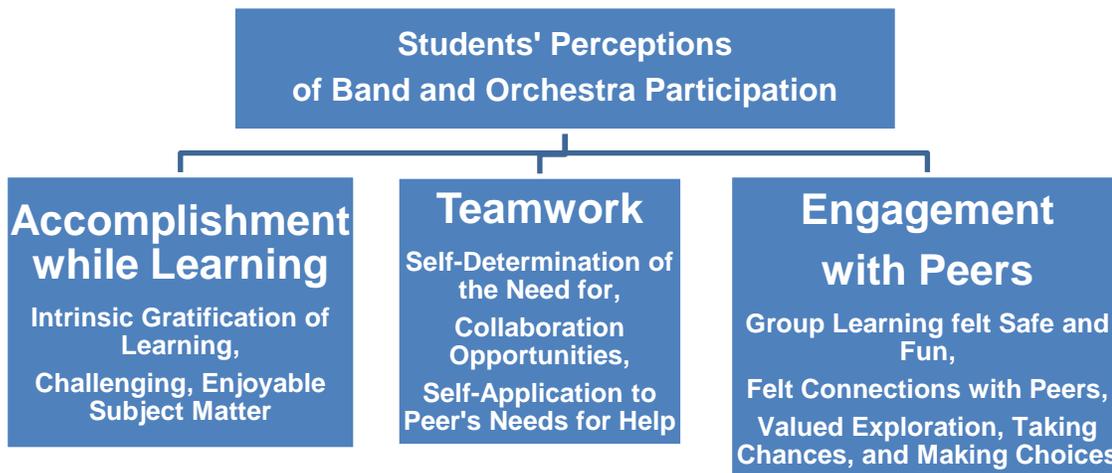


Figure 3. An illustration of the three central themes identified during student, teacher, and administrator interviews through the Open Coding data analysis process.

#### *The Intrinsic Gratification of Self-Accomplishment*

When all students in this study were asked in their individual interviews what they liked about being in band or orchestra, every student noted the inherent gratification of personal accomplishments they felt while participating in the band or orchestra which they each described in their own ways. According to Jamie, “it’s fun when you get new pieces in band”, and “you get confused the first time you play it when everybody messes the whole thing up” and “then to see your progress at the concert, it sounds really good.” According to Elena, playing an instrument in the ensemble was fun and she “liked to feel that she was improving” when she played with the group. According to Jamie, it was fun to learn new notes, and then “when you get it down, you can erase [the fingerings] and

you don't have to mark [the fingerings] down on your paper anymore." According to Reanna, what was important was "learning new songs, seeing how you've improved over the years." She felt excited to be able to look back and see that she had "learned a lot of big songs." According to Jamie, when she chooses to play a solo line she knows that she has to play it well and "can't mess up because everybody will hear me" make a mistake. According to Amy, performing in orchestra meant "being able to show people that I'm not lazy, like, that [I'm] willing to try... like when you show people you can play the violin, then they probably think, oh, that's cool, then you've probably been working on that and want to do it – and have a little bit of determination." Parker described that for last year's graduation, the bands got to play, and he and his friend and fellow tuba player ("tuba buddy")... "made up a solo for that part, we made up a solo.... and we made it extra awesome." Reanna said that playing in the orchestra helped to "think that you are talented and know what to do" and be able to think "I can teach you!" This finding was similar to a particular finding found by Campbell and Connell (2007) when a 13-year old essayist also professed: "I like knowing how to read music so that when a piece of music is put in front of me, I can be like, 'Yeah, I can play that!' It makes me feel so good! (pg. 226). When Olivia was asked about what she liked about band, she said she often tried to exceed her teacher's expectations, saying "it feels good to be an over-achiever sometimes."

Erickson (1968) wrote that children in adolescence, in or moving through Latency, are capable of exploring, learning, and accomplishing new abilities and skills to develop a "sense of industry." A "sense of industry" is the feeling that one gains as he

accomplishes new things. In this social development stage it is vital that children do not have unresolved feelings of inferiority among their peers, lest they develop competency and self-esteem hurdles going forward and rather than a sense of industry, feelings of inferiority can instead develop. What Erickson and Marcia hypothesized as a relationship between attaining a sense of industry and developing one's identity was explored through several studies. In all three studies with students, "feelings of competence were related to the attainment of identity" (Gillmore, 1971; Bauer and Snyder, 1972; Rothman, 1978) (169).

When asked what they thought students liked about Band or Orchestra, the teachers and administrators in the study also all thought that band and orchestra gave students a personal sense of accomplishment through participating. Noted Mrs. Carlson, to some students orchestra "might be ... freeing, if they're good at it" so "they can always be showing that they know what's going on" and "become a leader... maybe they don't have that feeling in other classes." She believed orchestra was good for students, to "be able to show off" and that it could "bring out the best in students" because they "kind of have to perform every day." According to Ms. Tanner, students like the sense of accomplishment; and that they can perform in front of other people and they feel that other people like it. According to Mrs. Carlson, band or orchestra was a place for students to explore another type of intelligence that they might not be able to express in their language class, that it's an "opportunity for them to show that [they] can do something well, and show themselves that they're good at something. Just because they're not good at math doesn't mean that they're stupid. They have their intelligence someplace else."

Ms. Fontaine believed that band and orchestra “must tap something that we don’t tap normally.” Mr. Ward believed that students liked the sense of accomplishment they received from playing in band or orchestra, and based on his own experience: “every once in a while you’d hit the right note, and it’s like a golf game; every once in a while you’d hit the right shot and it keeps you coming back.” All students in this study liked band and orchestra the most because of the intrinsic gratification of learning that they felt through their own personal accomplishments. Each student shared several personal examples illustrating their pride in achieving and knowing they were accomplishing, such as hearing their own and the group’s improvement over the short and long term, feeling like they were improving, and showing others that they “were talented,” “determined”, and could “work hard.”

### *Challenging and Enjoyable School Subjects*

All students in the study believed that band and orchestra were challenging and enjoyable classes. This type of “flow”, explain Shernoff et al. (2003) is created through a culmination of concentration, interest, and enjoyment, which they concluded through their study was reached when students reported being the most engaged while learning in school (pp. 158-161). “I think I like [it] because mostly because of the challenge, because when it’s challenging, you have to work hard for it”, explained Parker, and “if I like something, I do good in it.” Olivia reported liking band, but being nervous to try to pass a scale quiz while playing “all of the right notes at the right times.” But she described her quiz experience, and said “I knew I could do it because I was working on the notes all

year.” Jamie, Parker, Amy, and Reanna also recalled that music performance was rewarding because it was challenging. For example, Jamie and Parker each told stories about how their band director switches the students around so that they are not all with their same section, so they can hear different sections. For example, Jamie described that in band:

“you get to hear everybody and sometimes you switch around so that we’re not all sitting with our sections so you can hear the different sections ‘cuz we have different parts and that’s really cool, but it also gets confusing. They’ll, like, the people sitting next to you will be doing something different than you, so then you really have to focus on what you’re doing. Yeah, and it’s confusing.”

Parker also commented that it can be “really cool” and “really confusing” when they switch around in band, because the people next to you will be playing different parts than you and you really have to focus on what you are doing, which is confusing and challenging. Elena compared the challenge of learning an instrument in orchestra to the challenge of learning in Language Arts, saying: “it’s probably more obvious if [a student is] worse than in like, language arts, I would say, like... when you’re in orchestra it’s easier to tell who doesn’t try as much also. With language arts you write; and unless you are peeking over people’s shoulders you can’t really tell, like, if they’re bad at writing. It’s also harder to distinguish what bad is – in writing [compared with being in orchestra].” According to Mrs. Carlson, it must be:

“obvious to the people around them if they don’t understand it, because if they are doing their math work, their neighbor might not know if they aren’t understanding the math problem. But if they hear you not playing the right note, they are gonna know that you don’t know what you’re doing.”

When students were asked what they liked least about participating in band and orchestra, they commented that band and orchestra were challenging, but the near universal response was that no one liked to practice. “I think I like it because mostly because of the challenge, because when it’s challenging, you have to work hard for it, it takes a lot more air,” explained Parker. Amy also thought it was challenging, recalling, that “practicing” was her least favorite thing, she “finds it kind of hard to... practice long enough to get something out of it.” Elena also recalled not being very good at practicing, and that she “likes getting everything done before [she] gets to school. [She] always forget or decide not to” practice. Jamie recalled about band:

“it’s hard...” and “sometimes it’s hard for me, like, at home practicing, ‘cuz I always have a lot of homework and stuff too, but, I don’t really dislike doing it it’s just hard to fit in, somewhere... when I have so much homework I don’t practice a lot, and I work hard to get like in the same spot as everybody else. And, because I don’t get time to practice at home like some people do, that means that in class I really have to work hard to get up to where everybody else is.”

When asked what aspect of band or orchestra students liked the least, Ms. Tanner commented about practicing. “It’s work. It really is work... “But what they do, the kids who stay with the work, they realize that it is a discipline, and they are learning discipline.” Campbell and Connell (2007) also reported that the most commonly reported life skill mentioned in their essays from adolescent was the “life preparation skill of self-discipline” (229). The respondents acknowledged that hard work and dedication were an integral part of participating in school music groups, and “sticking with something” and “practicing hard” were seen as habits that would get you far in life. The students in this study felt that band and orchestra were enjoyable and rewarding because they felt challenged in many ways, including challenging them as a student participants and musicians and practicing in order to be prepared for class.

### *Recognizing a Need for Teamwork*

When the students in this study were asked if teamwork was important to participate in band or orchestra all students in the study said yes. Furthermore, every student followed their answer by sharing their own story or stories to illustrate why they felt collaboration with peers was important. According to Amy, the students have to play together so it sounds good, and they have to help each other to make it sound good, recalling “your orchestra is your team” and she told about when she had noticed students noticing other students playing on a wrong beat or playing a wrong note and then they would help their classmates. “Because if someone is having trouble with playing a note or tuning, you can actually help them out and get them back on track,” noted Reanna.

Amy also noted that she “hates seeing others have trouble doing stuff” so she has chosen to help other students “a lot.” Olivia said “I want to help others to understand” and reported having helped others who were having difficulty more than five times so far this year in Band. Playing in the group and playing the same instrument was especially connecting for some students. “Band’s fun because you get to understand people in a way,” recalled Parker, “if they play the same instrument as you, you can understand them.” “I’d say that teamwork is a very important part [of band],” recalled Parker, “because if you don’t have teamwork, you can’t have a good concert or a song, because teamwork means work together, because you have to work together and make the music flow good.” Mrs. Carlson considered a band or orchestra as “a group of students playing one thing all together, towards like a common goal, a common sound” so “there’s a lot of team work.” According to Jamie, the students definitely needed teamwork in the band. “You have to watch everyone to make sure you are in with the beat, and you can’t get too frustrated, when you get off you have to be patient, because some people go faster than others.” Being alert and responsive to how others play in the group was a common response. She added, “you really have to stick together so that if one person starts getting off beat, like, if the percussion section does then everybody does. So like you really have to all work hard to not get off the beat and stuff, ‘cuz if one person does then the whole thing’s, like, dead. [Laughs] So it’s really important that you all stay together and work together.” Campbell and Connell (2007) also found through the essay responses in their study that “adolescents are often genuinely committed to their instruments and their ensembles” (pg. 227). According to Mrs. Carlson, “everyone always compares things to

sports” but with a whole basketball team, only “a couple people are out playing at a time” so “some people sit on the bench the whole time. But in music class everyone participates, no matter what. No matter what their skill level is. They just need to do it, they just need to try.” Similar to sports, musicians in the band or orchestra will often wear uniforms to help unite their efforts together. Mr. Ward has always liked groups’ uniforms or robes, and noted that students were “part of a larger unit” and that “there’s some teamwork involved there that all of the kids... couldn’t do by themselves.” In this study, students unanimously noted that they felt “teamwork” was necessary in band and orchestra classes, and many noted that their orchestra or band “was their team”, and that the music wouldn’t sound good unless they worked together. If they noticed others were having difficulty playing correct notes or playing on the correct beats, they would “help others get back on track.”

#### *Learning as a Group Felt Safe, Comfortable, and Fun*

When students were asked in their individual interviews whether or not they felt that playing in the band or orchestra required teamwork, all students in the study responded that yes, teamwork or collaboration was an important factor in their band or orchestra classes, and many talked at length about both the fun and value of working with others in the group as necessary for achieving in their class. “I like being able to play with others,” noted Elena and Parker. “It’s really fun to like, work with everybody, not just, like, by yourself,” said Jamie. Amy also liked playing with others, and noted: “I think if you have the experience of playing in a group, you can push yourself to become

better, you don't get lost in a group." Jamie noted that she would "rather be playing with other people" than playing music at home by herself, and that "there's just something about being with other people that's more... comfortable". She elaborated: "like, if you make a mistake, you don't feel that bad [laughs], 'cuz everybody else, like, can overpower you [laughs again]." According to Elena, playing by yourself was boring, "but when you're with others you have the notes coming, and it's really cool, and when you're with others you can make a mistake and you can get back on track. If you think you're so bad, like, but then you hear other people mess up and you're like, oh, they're still playing. I guess I should keep playing and trying." Parker also liked learning in a group in band, saying, "it's cool to be a supporting role in the band." According to Reanna, there is safety in playing in a group, in being able to make a mistake, recalling, "if you mess up then everybody keeps going, then everybody else doesn't notice and you can start playing again." Olivia said that "if I need help, I like to talk to others about it" and that she likes working with classmates in class because "you can help each other out." According to Elena, learning in a group was important, and it helped to be around others who are also learning the be able to know that "I'm not the only one that is bad [at the violin]." Group learning in band and orchestra was shown to be preferred by the students because it supported students' need to be reassured that others were also there making mistakes and developing their skills, and that while learning, students sometimes even felt a relief that others were making mistakes and regularly helped their peers out.

### *A Place for Student Engagement in School*

Students in this study felt connected in school through their participation in band and orchestra, as they cited it being fun and easy to make, keep friends, and felt that band and orchestra made school a place they felt they belong. Band and orchestra were classes which created an environment in which students participated in learning differently than in other classes in school, which allowed them new ways to connect with their peers.

According to Ms. Fontaine, students who are engaged in school are apparent as soon as you walk into a classroom. “It’s kids looking, its kids talking, participating in the whole group. Kids want to be there.” According to Mr. Ward, student engagement in school is students “participating in class and showing up every day. Not because [they] have to but because [they] want to. And being prepared, not needing to be entertained. It’s important for you to teach those three R’s, beyond the three traditional classes, the core curriculum, you just need to keep that engagement going, we need to develop kids. It’s more important now than it probably was many, many years ago, because kids need to find that niche.” Noted Mrs. Carlson: “I don’t have kids just sitting there, staring at the wall... they’re playing, they are doing something active for the rehearsal time... there’s more active engagement for a greater amount of time in music rehearsals compared to other classes... [the students] aren’t thinking about what they are going to be doing after school, or what happened this past weekend to them, that they’re thinking about the subject matter, processing it, doing the activities that they’re supposed to be doing.”

According to Elena, in orchestra you “can’t daydream for long, because then you have to start playing. But with other classes, it’s more, like, not that it’s not important to pay

attention, but like, your teacher says stuff that you really need to hear” and she doesn’t hear it in those classes because she is daydreaming. She added “if I start daydreaming in other classes... I pretty much blank out everything and then don’t come back until the end of the class. With orchestra, it’s time to play.” Mrs. Carlson recalled that band and orchestra are “definitely different from the rest of the day. It’s all about conversations the rest of the day. They just get to do something, an activity, play, and listen to music instead of words. It’s a break from their day.” Jamie liked using a musical instrument in school, in that you’re “playing it and using it” and recalled: “it’s fun to go to band and be able not to have to write on paper.” According to Mr. Ward, band and orchestra participation increases students’ “appreciation for diversity” and described that:

“when you’ve got a band, you’ve got 15 or 20 different types of instruments making all sorts of different sounds. When it all comes together, I think there is a connection with society itself, in what you do in a band or a choir... people can get good at it, they can develop and improve.”

He described that he believes music education “allows people to see their peers in another way.” He gave an example of a shy, quiet person that never says anything in the classroom, but in the music area they have a skill which makes people look at them differently. Parker described his ability to understand others outside of spoken language through the instruments they play:

“You sort of still can understand them, because, in a way, if it’s like a flute or something... ‘cuz it’s like high and low, it’s sort of different, but I think

I'm gonna be able to understand [the flute players], because my sister just tried out for flute and she made it... she tried playing on the clarinet, just put the whole thing together and just got a really squeaky sound and it didn't really work out for her, but that the flute was a great note, so she's going to be playing the flute. So maybe after I hear her... play... and once she gets really good, I'll probably be able to understand her and them more... and things like the clarinet, my mom used to play it so she can tell me about it, the saxophone, my dad used to play it, and so, yeah... I can, like, feel and understand them."

Music skills translate into life itself, Mr. Ward described, "in appreciating people for their talents we may not have otherwise known." He described that they give letters [for letter jackets] in music, and, "we never used to do that." In that way, he said, you help "kids have an identity that connects with the school, beyond the athletic floor." According to Mrs. Carlson, that through that connection, "good life skills are learned here." She explained that "the interpersonal skills you might need, like, dealing with a stand partner, helping them out, learning how to take criticism. If a teacher says you're sharp, just, not taking it personally but just being able to fix it and go on. I've noticed this, that some non-music people seem to have trouble with criticism, of any sort. I feel like musicians are better at taking criticism and just going ok, I'll fix that, and life goes on. They don't get bogged down- [emphasizes dramatically] oh, I was criticized... so; good life skills are learned here."

Students' participation in the band and orchestra also connected them with their peers in school. According to Amy, the students who were in orchestra seemed like they were taking the time to learn how to play the instrument and practice the instrument, in that they "were getting better at it, which means they must be practicing the instrument" which showed that they "wanted to be there, and play." Mrs. Carlson observed about bands and orchestras that there is a "deep sense of belonging to the other students in the group" because a band or orchestra is a "connection group" and choosing to play a band or orchestra instrument provided a "sense of belonging to those students." In the study by Campbell and Connell (2007), within the student essay responses there was acknowledgment that music involvement diminishes boundaries between people of different ethnic backgrounds, of different age-groups, and of different social interests" and, "quite often imagery of the family" was chosen by the essay respondents when writing about the "feelings of belonging and security they had experienced as a result of participating in musical groups at their school such as band, choir, or orchestra" (pg. 230). In this study, band and orchestra were also a place that students found it easy to make friends and belong. According to Parker, band is pretty fun in middle school, because, as he recalled: "I had a friend that was in elementary school that played tuba too, we're tuba buddies, we practice a lot together." Reanna likes to practice with a friend "so we can help correct each other." Students usually participated in the band or orchestra over consecutive years as they continue to play their instruments in school groups. According to Amy, the students "just kind of know each other." According to Ms. Tanner, "being in an ensemble of some type builds relationships, not just with the music

but with each other, and gives students a sense of belonging, of connectedness, of value, and a ready set of friends.” Ms. Tanner also recalled that parents and students have shared stories about joining the marching band the summer before their ninth grade year, and when they start school in the fall, they “know a whole group of people that are in ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades”, and “they know people, they can say hi, can sit down at lunch, with someone they already know” and they feel comfortable starting high school because they’ve already built relationships with peers. Elena noted that in orchestra she can be herself and feels comfortable in class because she has “a lot more friends because she has done orchestra with them before”, whereas in Language arts “it’s a bunch of new people, and, I don’t really know them that well. So I don’t want to do something and have them start assuming I’m like a certain way... When I’m like, with my friends, it’s like *hakuna matata*, no worries.” Band and orchestra were shown to be a place where students felt that they felt they belonged to in school, where it was easy to make friends, kept friends, and were able to be themselves.

### *Opportunities for Student Choice and Taking Chances*

In this particular school district in 2009 and all years prior, it was elective, or optional, to begin to learn an instrument in the Band or Orchestra starting in either the 4th or 5th grades at their elementary schools. When the study’s teachers and administrators were asked why they thought the students chose to play band or orchestra instruments, a main reason they cited for students choosing to participate was pressure from the students’ parents. Ms. Tanner felt that students’ parents were the ones who encourage the

students to “try anything new” and Ms. Fontaine believed that the students chose to play instruments on account of “what their parents believe.” Of later mention by teachers and administrators was also the students’ curiosity to try something new. Ms. Tanner noted that they felt the students were “looking for a new opportunity” to “try something new.” Ms. Tanner added that she felt students “don’t really think about it when they are doing it” but that the students “will definitely have that reward, later on when they get old enough to look back at that and say yes, I did that.” Mrs. Carlson also believed in this sense of curiosity, noting that she believed it was driven by the students’ attraction to the sound of the instrument. Mr. Ward noted that “over time people have learned to treasure and value the instruments and what they can do for you, and eventually it becomes a part of you.”

When the focal students were asked why they chose to play band or orchestra instruments, nearly all of the student reasons were different from their peers’ reasons, and no students’ cited their parents’ influence in their choice to learn an instrument in the band or orchestra, but rather, they expressed that it was their own choice, in that they were choosing to take a chance and learn something new. Elena recalled that she had thought that “it would be really cool to play the violin. I really liked the bow. I’ve seen movies and stuff and I thought it would be really awesome to learn how to use the bow.” Another student, Jamie, wanted to play in the band because all of her friends wanted to do it, and noted “I am in it with a lot of my friends.” Reanna automatically associated the violin with classical music, and because the student “liked classical music”, chose it because it was an instrument which was a “school requirement.” Amy likened an

instrument to expressing who you are. For example, if you are “quieter then you play a quieter instrument” and if you are louder “then you play a louder instrument.” Jamie chose to play the clarinet because she wanted to “take on after” her mother; to continue a family tradition. Also interested in continuing a family tradition, Parker said that he had decided to play the tuba because his grandpa had played it. He recalled” “Dad was a marching band director... my sister plays the recorder in elementary. Found my mom’s clarinet jacket, it had our last name on the back. It was pretty cool.” Within Marcia’s identity formation statuses, students in an identity status of “Identity Achievement,” are “individuals who have experienced a decision-making period and are pursuing self-chosen occupations and ideological goals” (161). Furthermore, what Erickson and Marcia hypothesized as a relationship between attaining a sense of industry and developing one’s identity was explored through several studies with students (Gillmore, 1971; Bauer and Snyder, 1972; Rothman, 1978) (169). In all three studies, both competence and the attainment of identity “were related to exploratory behavior.”

### *Identifying Identity*

In this study teachers and administrators were asked how they would define a students’ identity. All teachers and administrators in this study defined the term identity differently compared to each other and differently compared to the literature. Suggestions for what a student’s identity was included identity as “culture, like their family heritage, culture... that would probably be a pretty big role for most people”, “what types of activities they are into”, “the interests that they have, what their aspirations are”, “who

were their parents, where did they grow up,” and that “their center of friends make a big impact in what they consider their identity is.” A few participants defined identity development with certain behaviors, such as the clothes students wore, or exploring and coming to terms with issues around their developing sexuality. One participant viewed identity as the student’s “authentic self” and the student’s “perception of how they are perceived.” Identity was seen by one participant as an opportunity for students to have, as it was seen as a goal of the school building to have an environment where students would be able “to really know that they can have their own identity and be accepted by all.” One study participant stated that they “love kids that have their own identity.” A main theme emerged from the teachers’ and administrators’ definitions of identity, in that what identity is was definitely unclear. It was generally believed to be external, rather than internal, and often thought of as how to define a person characteristically or externally.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of students to discover the meanings behind participating in band and orchestra in school amidst a culture of assessment, national music education cuts, and “extra-musical benefits” advocacy efforts (Catteral & Rauscher, 2008). The findings of this research indicate that students participating in band and orchestra in school: 1.) like band and orchestra the most because of the intrinsic gratification of learning that they feel through their own personal accomplishments; 2.) find the classes to be challenging yet enjoyable school subjects;

3.) can independently identify a need for teamwork and actively chose to team while learning; 4.) easy to make friends, keep friends, and find band and orchestra classes are a place where they feel they belong in school; 5.) feel participating in band and orchestra group learning is safe, comfortable, and fun; and 6.) enjoy taking chances and making their own choices while learning in a challenging yet enjoyable school subject. Little research has studied instrumental music education participation affectively from the student perspective. Some findings in this study can be found to support some editorial claims made by adults about music education. This study gathered the perspectives from the students themselves which may show a type of data-based music education advocacy that actually represents authentic reasons for why music education may be important for students in school.

### **Discussion of Findings**

In this study, through student interviews and observations, themes emerged about participating in band or orchestra in school. The following are several key themes which emerged from the data collection.

#### **Learning Band and Orchestra is Intrinsically Gratifying for Students**

Music education's advocacy often cites the value of school music education in terms of how it can provide students with "extra-musical" benefits (Catterall and Rausch, 2008), such as elevating students' letter grades in other subjects, increasing SAT and standardized test scores, and increasing students' achievement in mathematics and literacy. In recent years many of these claims have been proven false, as several studies

now suggest that music education does not have an impact on students' standardized test scores or performance in other classes (Catterall and Rauscher, 2008; Kinney, 2008; Fitzpatrick, 2006). Rather than drawing conclusions outside of band and orchestra to justify school music education, the student results spoke for themselves. Clearly a direct benefit of students who were participating in learning in Band and Orchestra was the intrinsic gratification of learning that they felt through their own personal accomplishments in participating.

### **Students are learning how to learn in school band and orchestra**

All of the students in this study noted that they liked band or orchestra because they felt they were accomplishing in a myriad of ways. Students told their own stories of accomplishment, from being able to tell they were improving on their instrument or techniques, to their ability to internalize and compare benchmarks of progress, and how exciting it was to improve as an individual or group from the first day of learning a piece until the concert day performance. In the students' accounts of their own accomplishments, adult or system-sourced letter grades and test scores as measures were not mentioned.

John Holt (1965, 1998) said that the mission then of education was simple: "since we cannot know what knowledge will be most needed in the future, it is senseless to try to teach it in advance. Instead, we should try to turn out people who love learning so much and learn so well that they will be able to learn whatever needs to be learned" (291). Researcher Guy Sheppard (2008) would agree. He said that "in a world where

knowledge gained at school may be redundant by the time pupils enter the workforce” and so developing students’ capacity to learn new things is essential. The students in this study demonstrated that they were able to learn new things, recognized that they were learning new things, and enjoyed the process of learning new things. In their article, “Learning to Learn: What is it and can it be measured?” Bryony Hoskins and Ulf Fredriksson (2008) they describe that learning how to learn “has been argued to be a transversal competence that is necessary for wellbeing” and “is highly relevant for developing and updating job related skills.” Key competences are required for an individual’s wellbeing in a society, they describe in their study, so the competences that “enable you to get a job (knowledge economy)”, the ability “to continue to update your skills in a rapidly changing job market (lifelong learning)”, and developing the “social skills necessary for society to function in a democratic manner and in a culturally diverse environment (social cohesion)” are competences that can be developed when learning how to learn is made central in the educational process (13). Thirty two years ago Bruce R. Joyce (1980) wrote candidly about the “humane concern for differences” between the variety of student learners in any classroom, in that “we can be certain that whatever teaching strategies we use at any given time, our students will not react identically” (15). Despite the variety of learners participating in a band and orchestra classroom, this study showed that school band and orchestra are a place where students are learning how to learn: believed to be an invaluable skill important for educational and occupational success throughout life.

## **Band and orchestra classrooms are hosts of “authentic achievement” in school**

In 1993 Fred M. Newmann and Gary G. Wehlage used the word *authentic* “to distinguish between achievement that is significant and meaningful” in school and “that which is trivial and useless.” They explained in their article, “Five Standards of Authentic Instruction”, that the criteria for authentic instruction includes: “(1) students that construct meaning and produce knowledge, (2) students that use disciplined inquiry to construct meaning, and (3) students that aim their work toward the production of discourse, products, and performances that have value or meaning beyond success in school.” The difference between traditional schooling and authentic achievement was again explained by Newmann (1996) as the Director of the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, as explained by the PREP Center. Newmann believed that the kinds of skills required to do well in school, such as earning credits toward graduation, earning higher grades, and succeeding on tests are often considered trivial and meaningless by both adults and students. Authentic instruction, he explained, intends to evaluate performance activities that are worthwhile, significant, and meaningful, and which are considered authentic. These themes have played a major role in the instructional reform movement known as standards-based reform in education over the last several years. The term “authentic achievement” has been linked up with the discussion of authentic instruction. One form of authentic achievement has been the use of the portfolio process as an appropriate assessment in school. The portfolio process is seen to adhere to the three criteria for authentic

achievement: “Construction of Knowledge, Disciplined Inquiry, and Value Beyond School,” as explained by Wehlage, Newmann, and Secada (1996).

This study found that while learning in Band and Orchestra, students self-discovered, identified and defined forms of knowledge, used disciplined inquiry, and found value beyond school. They were constructing choices and behaviors which produced success for themselves and their peers; they were self-determining when collaboration was necessary for success; and, within the prescribed environment of the Band and Orchestra classrooms, were developing their identity and character which they will take with them away from school. If authentic instruction hinges on students’ construction of meaning, producing knowledge, and aiming their work toward the production of discourse, products, and performances that have value or meaning beyond success in school, and authentic achievement requires there to be “construction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry, and value beyond school.” Authentic achievement can be seen in Band and Orchestra, as these findings seem to make it a place for the kind of “live portfolio building” (Wehlage, Newmann, and Secada) which happens while students construct meaning, produce knowledge, and self-identify moments of their own achievement in order to aim their work towards their own personal development needs. In Band and Orchestra, we can see students building successful skills they will take with them beyond the years and walls of school.

### **Students Collaborate in School Band and Orchestra**

The fact that all students in this study unanimously believed that teamwork “was necessary” in band or orchestra and showed a high value for group learning is an

important finding of this study. Not only did all students recognize a necessity and initiative towards teaming, but every student also immediately volunteered one or more accounts of their own involvement with teamwork which showed them noticing a necessity for collaboration and self-selecting to use it to learn or to help other students to learn. This may be one of the first studies to document students' observations of teamwork in middle school instrumental music, though teamwork has been recognized by music teachers. In her opinion, music teacher Ellen Criss (2010) stated that: "no other curricular discipline in the school is as focused on group effort as in the music classroom or in the gymnasium [in athletics]", and that "musical ensembles, such as concert bands, depend on the development of cohesion to achieve synergy in the form of excellent sound" (pg. 30). The findings in this study are unique in showing that teamwork and collaboration is both important and apparent to Band and Orchestra students in their classrooms.

It is important to note that different than an athletics comparison, the teamwork reported by the students happening on a given day in the band and orchestra classroom was not because there was an opposing team competing against the band or orchestra students to win a competition such as is common in athletics. Making choices to work together, or team, with others in band and orchestra was shown to be arising because of reasons the students themselves had identified as needs for collaboration within their learning environment. The students' desires to work together, help others, and work for perfection for total group success came from within the students themselves.

## **A Place in School for Students to Feel they Belong**

Students in this study felt connected in school through their participation in band and orchestra, as they cited an ease in making friends, keeping friends, and felt that band and orchestra make school a place they feel they belong to. Shernoff et al. (2003) note that “the likelihood of completing school is maximized” by a student’s involvement and participation in the schooling experiences that foster “a sense of commitment and belongingness” (Christenson et al, 2001)(159). Leets and Sunwolf (2005) say that school music ensembles, such as choirs, bands, or orchestras, form tight social circles, providing positive experiences of belonging for members. Indeed, members of musical ensembles often join them more for the social aspects of the organization than for the musical benefits. Students like the camaraderie of working, fund-raising, rehearsing, performing, and (especially) traveling together, they note. “School ensembles are not just classes or performance groups, but guardians of their own specific culture; a culture that informs and enriches the lives of their members” (pg. 343), explains Steven Jo. Morrison. In his article, “The School Ensemble: A Culture of Our Own” (2001) Morrison tells us that students take math, and students enroll in science class, but students join the band, taking ownership of the ensemble in a “unique and personal way” (pg. 25). “The unity that develops within our classroom is created by experiences shared. Nowhere in the school is the opportunity for celebrating both diversity and unity greater than in the school performing ensemble—a real, living musical culture all our own” (pg. 28). Again, rather than drawing conclusions outside of band and orchestra to justify school music education, the student results speak for themselves. Clearly a direct benefit of students participating

in learning in band and orchestra is that the learning environment gives students a place in school that they feel they belong to.

### **Band and Orchestra as Hosts Identity Development**

Erickson (1968) laid the foundation of identity development as a gradual and continuous one through a series of dynamic interactions between the adolescent and social context, which results in a commitment to multiple, temporal selves integrated into a unified whole. Through this research study, broader themes recognizing Erickson's model of adolescent identity formation emerged and are recognized. Congruent with the writings of Erickson, the data shows that through the "dynamic interactions" between the adolescent and the social context made possible in the band and orchestra classroom, this study recognizes that the processes of adolescent identity formation were present in students' participation in band and orchestra in school. Specifically based on the findings in this study, students' learning experiences in band and orchestra contribute to what Marcia described as a "self-structure." Marcia (1980) said:

"Identity has been called a "sense," an "attitude," a "resolution" and so on.

I would like to propose another way of construing identity: as a self-structure - an internal, self-constructed, dynamic organization of drives, abilities, beliefs, and individual history. The better developed this structure is, the more aware individuals appear to be of their own uniqueness and

similarity to others and of their own strengths and weaknesses in making their way in the world” (159).

Several key themes of adolescent student identity exploration through taking chances presented themselves through the student interviews in this research study. Based on the students’ responses in the study, involvement in learning band and orchestra in school provided opportunities for them to explore opportunities and take chances in order to accomplish new things; allowing many opportunities for exploration and confidence building, compassion towards their peers, and team-building in cooperating and working with other students while learning in band and orchestra. Similarly Campbell and Connell (2007) also reported several of these findings through their study, which utilized the answers gleaned from secondary students’ essay responses about their views on listening to and participating in music in and out of school.

**Figure 4: Marcia’s (1980) Identity Achievement Status and Criteria**

| <b>Status</b>        | <b>Occupational or Ideological Location</b> | <b>Decision-making period</b>             | <b>“Styles available” in dealing with the identity issue</b> | <b>Crisis</b> | <b>Commitment</b> |
|----------------------|---|---|--|---------------|-------------------|
| Identity Achievement | pursuing self-chosen occupation or ideology | have experienced a decision-making period | strong or self-directed or highly adaptive                   | present       | present           |

Through their experiences in band and orchestra, students are establishing and building their own “internal, self-constructed, dynamic organization of drives, abilities, beliefs, and individual history” as Marcia describes. This study shows that they are doing

this through their own discovering of achievement, defining of achievement, discovering of teamwork, initiating collaboration, finding challenges and enjoyment through their learning. Band and orchestra students' learning experiences are contributing to the formation of their identity according to Marcia's definition of identity formation.

## **Recommendations**

### **Weighing The Cost to Learning**

Schools currently find themselves in a culture of assessment in which almost all learning activities in school validate themselves as legitimate parts of the school day when viewed through a lens aimed at achieving high standardized test scores on state and federally mandated achievement tests. The assumption is collectively being made more and more frequently that standardized testing is the preferred method of knowing if a student has learned in school. Within the cultural momentum of educational credentialism and competition within schools today (Larabee, 1997, 1999; Demerath, 2010) and the fever for achievement, what is happening to learning? There may be a danger in standardizing the ways students recognize themselves. This study showed that students as young as eleven or twelve years old are capable of knowing about their own abilities and accomplishments, and they didn't need a test to tell them so. Thomas Guskey (2010), Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Kentucky, says that "although schools have moved toward standards-based curriculum and instruction, grading practices and reporting systems have remained largely unchanged." Through his work in standards-

based report cards, he helps schools to see how the “elements of learning” can be captured through looking qualitatively at learning in the classroom.

### **The Mysterious Identity**

In this study the findings show that what students are doing in band and orchestra, or developing their “sense of industry” as Erickson discusses, shows them as often located in Marcia’s “strong, self-directed, and highly adaptive” category while Crisis and Commitment are present and on their way to “Identity Achievement.” In addition to this study, the literature of anthropology, educational research, and educational psychology tells the story of how meaningful students’ experiences in school are to the development of students’ identities.

Nonetheless, the gap between theory and practice in terms of student identity is wide. The definition of what identity and identity development are defined as is not agreed upon by school teachers and administrators. As was shown in this study, the practitioners of education in schools, such as teachers and administrators, trend towards defining student identity differently compared to each other and differently compared to the literature. Future educational initiatives in support of student identity development goals may be hindered by this confusion. A challenge exists to adopt a common definition and understanding of what student identity and identity development truly are so that our educational institutions can fulfill their crucial role in student identity development as a local place where students may be developing their identities every day.

## **Despite an individualized society, students are choosing school band and orchestra**

John Dewey (1938) held that, for the purposes of education, the location of “value” is found in the experience. As technology in all forms from iPads to “smart phones” individualize our society and the ways we experience music (Kratus, 2007), large group Band and Orchestra learning seems to be unique. The music students in this study as active Band and Orchestra participants spoke highly of their accomplishments and experiences in the traditional large group Band and Orchestra classes. The majority of self-discovery and stories of personal accomplishment they told hinged on the unique nature of the traditional Band and Orchestra classroom: a large group of students, learning and making music, together.

## **Consider Students’ Perspectives on Band and Orchestra in School**

Unless music educators, administrators, educational policy makers, parents, and students want to continue the tedious, reciprocal cycle of music education advocacy into the next decades, it may be time to initiate other avenues of understanding the band and orchestra experience for students in school. Continuing to overall ignore the student perspective, in favor of the favored adult “objectivist research paradigm” (Gentilucci, 2004), like referring to music as helping to raise test scores and buoying achievement levels in other classes has not produced the intended results hoped for by so many advocates. As music education continues to play into the need to defend itself from cuts, and a culture of assessment continues to grow, it may actually turn out to be the will of

the students to participate, for their own learning needs, that will emerge as the one, true philosophical reason for the inclusion of music education in school in an answer to Bowman. Until more research on the student perspective is completed and centralized into the advocacy discussion, no one will know what kinds of effects honoring the student perspective may have on the continued future of music education in school. Future research inquiries, possibly on a wider scale and with a greater number of participants, as well as controls, is recommended if all interested parties wish to continue to discover more about the underlying meanings, motivations, and actual experiences that students are taking away from participating in instrumental music education in school.

However, it may be risky for band and orchestra teachers, administrators, and policy makers to more fully embrace the student perspective of Band and Orchestra, as noted in the study by Campbell and Connell (2007). They note that when asked about their opinions about school music, one 16 year old worried that school band was suitable to those “willing to conform to the instruments of that ensemble, but that it offered a generic form of music education that left out those students who play other instruments that the school won’t let in” (pg. 231). In their study, other students also expressed concerns that rock and popular music were referred to as “missing pieces” in the school music program. John Kratus (2007) also noted that in 2006 the electric keyboard and guitar are the best-selling instruments in the United States (NAMM). It is important to note that embracing student perspectives may not only shed light on student motivations to make music with peers and participate in Band and Orchestra, but it may also help reshape school music offerings of the future. There may be implications of abandoning

the “objectivist research paradigm” (Gentilucci, 2004) in favor of embracing the student perspective on Band and Orchestra in school, as gathering student perspectives may end up to both support, and possibly challenge present models of Band and Orchestra in school as we know them today.

### **Conclusion**

This research specifically looked at instrumental music education directly through the eyes of students who learn to play musical instruments and make music in school. This study sought to discover themes illuminating why students participate in band and orchestra in school and what they take from their experiences. The study yielded some important themes, such as what students like most and least about band and orchestra, their value for group learning, finding the classes challenging yet enjoyable, pursuing opportunities for teamwork, and in feeling that band and orchestra were places they felt comfortable and could belong at school.

However, the most illuminating theme unearthed by this research study was that of the intrinsic, inherent gratification of learning that students experience through their own self-accomplishments while learning in band and orchestra. Students talked about their own achievement, their own accomplishment, in ways that made sense to them and which they could show as evidence of their own learning. In a culture of assessment in which a society continues to turn to standardized tests to validate learning in school, the findings in this study prove that students as young as eleven or twelve years old find an

intrinsic value in learning and accomplishing in school through certain classes such as band and orchestra.

Music education as a school subject may continue to be on the defense as a permanent subject in school, despite the enormous amount of advocacy in support of it. The continuing debate among administrators, parents, music teachers, and educational policy makers about the benefits of music education versus the costs of time and resources it requires continues to yield copious amounts of music education advocacy, action, and response efforts, ranging from Letters to the Editor (Daily Bulldog, April 8, 2010) to VH1's "Save the Music" (2011) foundation and annual campaigns to marches at local school board meetings (AJC, March 8, 2011). However, as noted, a majority of the advocacy for music education is developed from an outside perspective, which, implicit in this view is the notion that students are objects who can be drawn inferences about to reinforce why music education belongs in school. This "objectivist research paradigm" (Gentilucci, 2004) has not yet produced a "single, philosophical position to support music education" (Bowman, 1994), though it has produced a substantive and varied body of literature citing the potential benefits of music education in school.

In Western musical notation, a fermata is "a prolongation at the discretion of the performer of a musical note, chord, or rest beyond its given time value; *also*: the sign denoting such a prolongation —called also *hold*" (Merriam-Webster). At the moment, the culture of music education in America may be a frozen conductor who cannot cut off the fermata note, and so the note just keeps playing. This prolonged note is a chord of many, many notes representing music education advocacy in its present form. Each note of the

chord represents a different reason of the defense which keeps trying to explain why music education should exist in schools. It seems that the students, who are choosing to make the music, are mostly being ignored in the music advocacy discussion. Why... because they are children? After centuries of music education advocacy that has largely imposed adult values on students, it may be time to stop doing so much talking and start doing more listening to more than just what the students are playing.

Music education may someday assume a quiet, foundational position in the curriculum just like math, reading, and science have. However, its relevance has yet to acquire a single universal philosophical position to explain why music education should be part of the school day, as Roberts described. Roberts (2004) reminds us of that Christopher Morley once said: "If you have to keep reminding yourself of a thing, perhaps it isn't so", and asks if "all of the rhetoric" about the importance of music in schools really is just a "reminder of an untruth"? (pg. 5) He asks: why is music in schools so important, if advocates have to keep reminding the broader society that it is?

Band and orchestra students will tell you the value of what it is they are doing in Band and Orchestra if you ask them. "But you've got to realize... they won't listen to us teachers... they think that we just want to keep our jobs," explained Dr. Stamp (2000), as he finished his speech about the authentic achievement demanded of students through their participation in band. "This morning," he said, "[the students and I] had a wonderful sharing session about what music is about, why they do music. It was nice to hear them open up about why they do it." He paused. "If the future of America is in the hands of people like this, I'm real comfortable with that."

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Appendix 1:  
Focal Student Questions

Focal Group Student Questions: Interview One  
PI: Stephanie (Anderson) McCorkell  
Advisor: Peter Demerath  
OLPD, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities  
March 2010

- 1.) What is your name?
- 2.) How old are you?
- 3.) Where did you grow up?
- 4.) What is your grade level in school?
- 5.) What instrument or instruments do you play?
- 6.) How long have you played the (m)?
- 7.) What made you or caused you to choose to play the (m)?
- 8.) What do you like most about playing the (m)?
- 9.) What do you dislike most about playing the (m)?
- 10.) Do you like playing in a musical group in school? Why or why not?
- 11.) Do you like to make music more with others or by yourself? Why?
- 12.) What is your primary or first language?
- 13.) Do you speak any other languages? If yes, what are they?
- 14.) What do you feel distinguishes you or makes you unique from others?
- 15.) What do you like the most about band/orchestra?
- 16.) What do you like the least about band/orchestra?
- 17.) Is creativity an important part of being in band/orchestra class? Why or why not?
- 18.) Is teamwork an important part of being in band/orchestra class? Why or why not?
- 19.) Is there anything else you would like to share with me today?
- 20.) Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix 2:  
Focal Teacher and Administrator Questions

Focal Group Teacher and Administrator Questions: Interview One  
PI: Stephanie (Anderson) McCorkell  
Advisor: Peter Demerath  
OLPD, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities  
March 2010

- 1.) What is your name?
- 2.) What is your position?
- 3.) How long have you had this position? Where had you worked before this?
- 4.) In your opinion, what generally characterizes this district from other districts that you have worked in?
- 5.) In your opinion, please describe the population of citizens this district educates.
- 6.) In your opinion, describe the music education offerings available in your district or at your school.
- 7.) When you were in school, did you play any musical instruments? If so, what?
- 8.) What do you like or dislike most about playing the(m)?
- 10.) If yes, do you remember why you chose to play those instruments? If yes, why?
- 11.) In your own words, can you describe your administrative philosophy?
- 12.) In your own words, can you describe what a person's identity is?
- 13.) Identity is defined by Merriam-Webster's dictionary as "the distinguishing character or personality of an individual." Do you believe identities remain the same, or do they change over time? If they can change, what makes them change?
- 14.) Do you believe that students have identities? How do you know this?
- 15.) Do you believe that student identities may be influenced by experiences that they have in school? How?
- 16.) What do you believe are the benefits and drawbacks for students in participating in band or orchestra in school?
- 17.) Why do you think that students choose to play an instrument in school?
- 18.) What do you think students like the most about band or orchestra? The least?
- 19.) Do you believe that students are affected in any way by their experiences learning in band or orchestra? If yes, how?
- 20.) In your own words, what is student engagement?
- 21.) How important is it to you to focus on student engagement in school?
- 22.) What conditions in schools do you believe encourage or discourage student engagement?
- 23.) Is there anything else you would like to share with me?

Appendix 3:  
Focal Student Assent Form

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM  
FOR RESEARCH STUDY**

**Working Title of Study:**

“When the dynamics change: composing student identity  
and the *pianissimo* of linguistic capital in the instrumental music classroom”

You are invited to be part of a research study of learning, music, language, school engagement, and identity construction. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a student who plays a musical instrument in Band or Orchestra and attends Language Arts classes at Woodbury Middle School. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate in the study.

This study is being conducted by Stephanie Anderson, a Graduate Student in the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development at the University of Minnesota- Twin Cities.

**Background Information**

The purpose of this study is to observe students who speak primarily English as well as other primary languages to discover what makes communicating in music classes different or similar to communicating in Language Arts classes. The researcher seeks to discover how communication habits in different language use settings influence students’ learning, identity development, and overall school engagement.

**Procedures:**

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

- Participate in an initial simple, informal interview (before or after school);
- Complete a short, written survey through writing in your own responses;
- Consent to my observing you (without interruption) as you participate in your Band or Orchestra class;
- Participate in a follow-up, tape-recorded in-depth interview (before or after school);
- Participate in a possible group interview summarizing your experience in the study;
- Consider that your parent or guardian also be willing to complete an interview with me;
- Know that participation may last through June 10<sup>th</sup> 2010 or before that date per notification from me.

**Risks and Benefits of being in the Study**

The study has minimal to no risks involved. Your identity and participation in the study will not be known to your teachers or other classmates and knowledge that you are a research subject will only be between you, me, and anyone that you specifically choose to share. Furthermore, the only involvement I will have with you is in person and through written and phone conversations to receive your responses to my questions.

**Compensation:**

There is no compensation for participation in this study.

Version Date: 12-10-09

**Confidentiality:**

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I may publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you as a research subject and all personal data such as real names, etc. will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely and only myself, the researcher, will have access to the records. All tape recorded data will be erased within 3 years of the taping date.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with any staff member or student of Woodbury Middle School, South Washington County Schools, or the University of Minnesota. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting the relationships with these institutions.

**Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher conducting this study is: Stephanie Anderson. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact me at [redacted] or [ande9359@umn.edu](mailto:ande9359@umn.edu) or contact my advisor, Peter Demerath, at [redacted] or [pwd@umn.edu](mailto:pwd@umn.edu)

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; (612) 625-1650.

*You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.*

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers.

I consent to participate in the study.

Signature of Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of parent or guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
*(If minors are involved)*

Signature of Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your consideration of and potential participation in my research study.

Version Date: 12-10-09

Appendix 4:  
Parent Consent Form

## PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH STUDY

### Title of Study: "The role of music education in the development of student identity"

Your child is invited to be part of a study of music students, language, school, and identity development. Your child was selected as a possible participant because your child is a student who plays a musical instrument in Band or Orchestra and attends Language Arts classes at Woodbury Middle School. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions they may have before agreeing to let your child participate in the study. This study is being conducted by Stephanie Anderson, a Graduate Student in the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development at the University of Minnesota and a District 833 Music Instructor.

#### Background Information

The researcher is conducting field research into the everyday experience of middle school students who are instrumental musicians. The students she is interested in are all instrumental musicians but may have different language backgrounds. She wants to better understand what their school experience is like, what it is like to "be in their shoes" in order to better understand how they are developing their identities and participating in school.

#### Procedures:

If your child agrees to be in this study, I will ask them to do the following things:

- Participate in an initial simple, informal interview (before or after school);
- Consent to my review of your child's school record of possible English Language Learner status
- Complete a written survey through writing in your child's own responses;
- Consent to my observing your child (without interruption) as they participate in their Band, Orchestra, and Language Arts classes;
- Participate in a follow-up, tape-recorded, in-depth interview (before or after school);
- Have the option of performing a short piece of their choice on their instrument for the researcher

#### Risks and Benefits of being in the Study

The study has minimal to no risks involved. Your child's identity and participation in the study will not be revealed to their teachers or classmates unless you or they choose to do so. The only involvement I will have with them is in person and through written and phone conversations to receive their responses to my questions. Any social or privacy concerns should be discussed with me as soon as they become evident and we will adjust our process as needed for their comfort. Your child may choose to not answer any question or discontinue participation at anytime without repercussion.

#### Compensation:

There is no compensation for participation in this study.

(over)

Version Date: 2-8-10

**Confidentiality:**

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I may publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify them as a research subject and all personal data such as real names, etc. will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records. All tape recorded data will be erased within 3 years of the taping date.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Your child does not have to participate in this study. Participation is voluntary and they may withdraw at any time. Their decision whether or not to participate will not affect their current or future relations with any staff member or student of Woodbury Middle School, South Washington County Schools, or the University of Minnesota. If they decide to participate, they are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting the relationships with these institutions.

**Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher conducting this study is: Stephanie Anderson. They may ask any questions they have now. If they have questions later, they are encouraged to contact me at 651-768-5979 or [andst9359@umn.edu](mailto:andst9359@umn.edu) or contact my advisor, Peter Demerath, at 612-626-0768 or [pwt@umn.edu](mailto:pwt@umn.edu)

If they have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), they are encouraged to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 429 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; (612) 625-1650.

*You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.*

---

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information, I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to allow my child to participate in the study.

Signature of parent or guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number of Parent or Guardian: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ (circle: Home Work)

Signature of Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your consideration and permission of participation for your child in this study.

Appendix 5:  
Focal Teacher and Administrator Consent Form

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH STUDY**

**Working Title of Study:** The role of music education in the development of students' identity and engagement in school

You are invited to be part of a research study of learning, music, language, school engagement, and identity construction. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a teacher or administrator with experience in education. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate in the study.

This study is being conducted by Stephanie Anderson, a Graduate Student in the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development at the University of Minnesota- Twin Cities.

**Background Information**

The purpose of this study is to work with students, staff, and administrators to help explore what may make music classes different or similar to other classes in terms of student engagement and identity development. The researcher seeks to discover how the varied activities and interactions in different classroom settings may influence students' learning, identity development, and overall school engagement, to determine what opportunities, advantages, or disadvantages exist for student engagement and identity development in school.

**Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to participate in an interview with me the researcher.

**Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:**

The study has minimal to no risks involved.

**Compensation:**

There is no compensation for participation in this study.

**Confidentiality:**

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I may publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you as a research subject and all personal data such as real names, etc. will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely and only myself, the researcher, will have access to the records. All tape recorded data will be erased within 3 years of the taping date.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with any staff member or student of South Washington County Schools or the University of Minnesota. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting the relationships with these institutions.

Version Date: 4-21-10

**Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher conducting this study is: Stephanie Anderson. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact me at [redacted] or [ande9359@umn.edu](mailto:ande9359@umn.edu) or contact my advisor, Peter Demerath, at [redacted] or [pwd@umn.edu](mailto:pwd@umn.edu)

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are **encouraged** to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; (612) 625-1650.

*You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.*

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers.

I consent to participate in the study.

Signature of Teacher/Administrator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your consideration of and participation in my research study.

Version Date: 4-21-10

Appendix 6:  
IRB Approval Letter

## UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Wide Open Spaces

Human Research Programs  
Office of the Vice President for Research

1110 Mayo Memorial Building  
407 Jackson Street, S.E.  
MANKATO,  
MINNESOTA 56101  
Phone: 612-552-1654  
Fax: 612-552-6600  
E-mail: [ohrp@tc.umn.edu](mailto:ohrp@tc.umn.edu)  
Website: <http://ohrp.umn.edu>

March 3, 2010

Stephanie M Anderson  
575 Lawson Avenue East  
St. Paul, MN 55106

**RE: "When the dynamics change: the composing of student identity and the pianissimo of linguistic capital in the instrumental music education classroom"**  
**IRB Code Number: 1001P75862**

Dear Dr. Anderson:

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) received your response to its stipulations. Since this information satisfies the federal criteria for approval (45CFR46.111) and the requirements set by the IRB, final approval for the project is noted in our files. Upon receipt of this letter, you may begin your research.

IRB approval of this study includes the consent form dated February 9, 2010 and recruitment materials received January 5, 2010.

The IRB determined that children could be included in this research under 45CFR46.104: research not involving greater than minimal risk.

The IRB would like to stress that subjects who go through the consent process are considered enrolled participants and are counted toward the total number of subjects, even if they have no further participation in the study. Please keep this in mind when calculating the number of subjects you request. This study is currently approved for 12 subjects. If you desire an increase in the number of approved subjects, you will need to make a formal request to the IRB.

For your records and for grant certification purposes, the approval date for the referenced project is January 29, 2010 and the Assurance of Compliance number is FWA00000312 (Fairview Health Systems Research FWA00000325, Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare FWA00004003). Research projects are subject to continuing review and renewal; approval will expire one year from that date. You will receive a report form two months before the expiration date. If you would like us to send certification of approval to a funding agency, please tell us the name and address of your contact person at the agency.

As Principal Investigator of this project, you are required by federal regulations to

\*Inform the IRB of any proposed changes in your research that will affect human subjects; changes should not be initiated until written IRB approval is received.

\*Report to the IRB subject complaints and unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others as they occur.

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\*Respond to notices for continuing review prior to the study's expiration date.  
\*Cooperate with post-approval monitoring activities.

Information on the IRB process is available in the form of a guide for researchers entitled, *What Every Researcher Needs to Know*, found at <http://www.research.umn.edu/lab/WERNK/index.cfm>

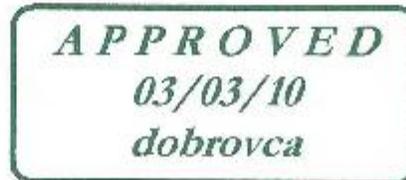
The IRB wishes you success with this research. If you have questions, please call the IRB office at 612-626-5654.

We have created a short survey that will only take a couple of minutes to complete. The questions are basic, but will give us guidance on what areas are showing improvement and what areas we need to focus on:

<https://umsurvey.umn.edu/index.php?sid=36122&lang=um>

Sincerely,

Christina Dobrovolsky, CLP  
Research Compliance Supervisor  
CD/pca  
CC: Peter Demerath



Appendix 7:  
District Approval Letter



## South Washington County Schools

Richard J. Spicuzza, Ph.D.  
Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Assessment  
District Service Center  
7362 E. Point Douglas Road S.  
Cottage Grove, MN 55016  
Phone: 651-458-6290 Fax: 651-458-6318

2/11/2010

Stephanie Anderson  
Master of Arts Candidate  
D833 Orchestra Teacher

Dear Stephanie:

I am writing to affirm that you have submitted your research request titled, "When the dynamics change: The composing of student identity and the pianissimo of linguistic capital in the instrumental music education classroom." It is with great pleasure to inform you that your proposal meets our requirements for approval. You may provide this notice to the University of MN IRB office as documentation of our approval. Upon receipt of the University's approval you please forward to our office and then you may initiate your study.

Please note that it is our understanding that you have official approval and support from Kari Lopez, the Woodbury Middle School principal. In addition, as a teacher within the district you will be observing classroom performance without any additional demand on staff or modification in the instructional day. Finally, all student interviews will be scheduled prior to or after school. Each student that participates within the study may do so only after obtaining signed parental consent.

We wish you well in this endeavor. We are glad that you have chosen to further your career and selected D833 to conduct your study. At the end of your project we ask that our office be supplied with an executive summary of your findings.

Sincerely,

Richard J. Spicuzza, Ph.D.  
*Assistant Superintendent  
of Curriculum and Assessment*  
South Washington County Schools  
7362 East Point Douglas Road S.  
Cottage Grove, MN, 55016  
Wk. 651-458-6290

Cc: Kari Lopez, Principal WMS  
Cc: Nancy Wiessner, Fine Arts Specialist