



PRINCIPAL'S BELIEFS AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE VALUE OF INCLUDING MUSIC PROGRAMS IN K-12 SCHOOLS

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Abstract

School's curriculum decisions are based on mandates derived from federal, state, and local policies and other government funding resources but the decision-making in large part is left to the principal at the school level. Unfortunately, music programs are often the first programs to be eliminated, though, principals and other administrators understand the value of these programs on the balance of the overall curriculum (Simon, 2013). The purpose of this qualitative descriptive phenomenological study was to describe principals' lived experiences and perceptions of how the process of funding, legislation, and decision-making has impacted K-12 music programs. Seven principals were interviewed on their perceptions of the value of music education, and the impact of legislative changes and funding allocation on the existence of music programs within the K-12 curriculum. Additionally, the participants shared other factors that influenced their decision-making process. Findings indicated that these principals highly valued the role of music education in a well-rounded curriculum.

Keywords

Principal's Perception, Music Programs, K-12 Schools

Historically, music advocates have faced resistance in their pursuit of widespread support for the inclusion of music education (Majors, 2013). Further, Major (2013) discussed how school administrators did not see enough value to include music in the school day. In the 1960s, music education made some significant changes to curriculum and standards, including the introduction of varied styles and genres, that over time led to more student participation (Hebert et al., 2000). By the 1990s, music education met the standards that complimented the growing age of academic inclusion (NAfMe, 1991).

However, in the 2000s, music education programs were struggling to survive, often attributed to the budgetary constraints of the school system. Additionally, the priorities of these schools, accompanied by societal and economic challenges, may have impacted the decision-making. In the 21st century, music programs remain one entity to suffer from spending cuts (Brasche & Thorn, 2018; Colwell et al., 2017; Kelley & Demorest, 2016). Music advocates have continued to face challenges in school systems that do not support the inclusion of music education (Major, 2013).

The fine arts curricula in the United States include the areas of visual arts, music, dance, and drama (Cahnmann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2017). Despite the long historical importance of incorporating music in America's educational curriculum, advocates of music programs continue to justify how music contributes to student achievement. However, even with evidence of the impact of music, there has been a drastic reduction in the arts education programs throughout the nation, leading to subpar educational experiences (Kinney, 2019; Kelley & Demorest, 2016).

In the K-12 public school systems, decisions are made by the local Board of Education. As a head administrator of the school, principals have a direct impact on decisions surrounding public funding and the inclusion of curriculum and programs offered in the school. The principal of each school can make decisions on funding allocation, teacher allotment needs, and curriculum needs for that particular school. Mandates enforced by federal, state, and local policies that rely on government funding support the school's curriculum (Beveridge, 2010).

While much of the literature addresses principals' behaviors, and some address certain leadership theories about principals, only two research studies addressed the decision-making process and how the process of funding has impacted K-12 music programs (Major, 2013; Mayes, 2014). The purpose of this qualitative descriptive phenomenological study was to gather information about principals' lived experiences and perceptions of how the process of funding, legislation and decision-making has impacted K-12 music programs. The research question that

guided this study is:

RQ1. What are the principal's beliefs and perceptions of the value of including music programs in K-12 schools?

Research Methodology and Design

Qualitative methodology and phenomenological design were used in this study because qualitative research allows for in-dept narrative of experiences and readers to focus on the views of participants. Creswell (2005) acknowledged that unlike quantitative research designs, qualitative research, specifically the phenomenological methodology, encourages dialogue and discussion between the researcher and participant involved. According to Creswell (2005, 2017), phenomenological researchers explore an educational research problem by examining and understanding the experience of an individual or group of individuals. I was interested in obtaining K-12 school principals' perspectives and lived experiences on how the process of funding and decision-making have impacted music programs. This research hopes to aid music educators in developing a better understanding of factors influencing choices to include or exclude music programs from their curriculum.

Data Collection

Twelve participants were invited by email to participate in the study. Only 4 out of the 12 responded, stating their willingness to participate. Therefore, I posted information via my personal Facebook pages, professional groups and reached out to other colleagues to help identify and invite more participants. From this process, I recruited 3 more participants that met the inclusion criteria. To be included in the study, the participant had to meet the following criteria:

1. Each participant held a job title as head principal.
2. Each participant was employed at a K-12 public school.
3. Each participant was in the role of head principal for a minimum of (4) years.
4. Each participant was employed in his or her current position for a minimum period of three years.

After determining whether the participant had met the criteria for the study, I contacted the participants via electronic (email). After agreeing to be a participant in the study, I sent via email the principal a recruitment letter, a consent form, confidentiality agreement, and link to the demographic survey on Qualtrics. Table 1 below provides the questions administered from Qualtrics.

Table 1 *Qualtrics Demographic Survey*

Numbers	Qualtrics Demographic Questionnaire
	Please fill in the details
	i) First name
	ii) Last name
	iii) Age
	iv) City
	v) State
	vi) Email addresses
	vii) Phone numbers
2.	What is your gender?
3.	What level as the principal represent your school?
4.	What type of population closely relates to your students?
5.	What is your highest level of degree or schooling that you have completed?
6.	What is your race or ethnicity?
7.	How many years have you been in administration?
8.	What content area did you teach before moving into administration?
	a) Art Teachers
	b) Band Director
	c) Choir Director
	d) Drama Teacher
	e) Economics Teacher

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- f) English/Language Arts Teacher
 - g) History Teacher
 - h) Math Teacher
 - i) P.E. Teacher
 - j) Orchestra Teacher
 - k) Science Teacher
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Once the consent form was signed and returned, and the demographic questionnaire completed on Qualtrics, a time of 45 minutes were set to complete the semi-structured interview based on the availability of the participant. Each interview was conducted using phone conversation. All interviews were audio-recorded using an app called *Trint* which recorded the audio conversation while both parties were on the line. The Trint application was used to record these interview conversations and later downloaded into an audio file. During each semi-structured interview, I asked the same questions to each participant, prompting responses and asking follow-up questions to ensure the strength and understanding of answers.

Data Analysis

After all, interviews were completed, I obtained assistance to transcribe the interview data by using *rev.com*. Rev.com is a transcription company that transcribes participant recordings and translates to a narrative form. All participants received a copy of his or her interview transcription in written form and were encouraged to systematically review and confirm the verbal accounts. Participants were asked to review their transcript and provide feedback on his or her responses to the best of the participant's recollection of the interview. All members completed the member check, and some adjustments were made.

These transcriptions were manually coded to reflect upon the participants' experience and divided into different themes that were used as part of the research findings. After manually coding, I used Atlas.ti 7.0, a qualitative software program, to find other themes that emerged from the qualitative software program (Fries, 2019). Atlas.ti 7.0 is qualitative computer software that assists researchers in their management of textual, graphical, audio, and video data (Fries, 2019). First, I entered the transcriptions in Atlas.ti 7.0. Next, I uploaded sections of questions to see if results would be different from manual coding that was done. Codes were used to analyze data. During the process, as new themes emerged from the data, new codes were created either "Atlas.ti 7.0", or from key concepts or experiences. This software was beneficial to help find any emerging themes I did not find in the manual coding.

The goal of the researcher was to capture the true meaning of each transcription, therefore, a thorough review of these transcripts allowed for the identification of codes, patterns, and themes. The patterns were identified based on similar and different perspectives of the participants.

Results

The results that answered the following research question are outlined below, "What are the principal's beliefs and perceptions of the value of including music programs in K-12 schools?"

Beliefs on the Value of Music Education

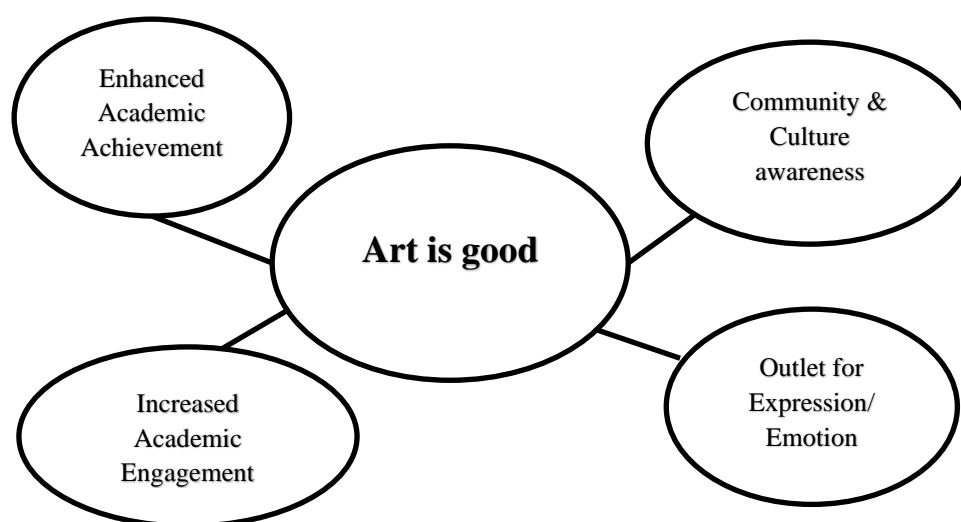
In the interview process, all seven of the principal's placed high value on music and art-related courses and made statements that showed their belief that art is good. These principals believed from their perception and beliefs that all schools should include some form of music or that music should be a part of academic makeup of their curriculum. The principals also understood music to be lively, creative, and lovely art.

Collectively the participants valued music and expressed how its existence provided joy and excitement in their schools. I asked the question "What are your beliefs and perceptions of the values of including music programs in your school such as band and choir?" The following are the principals' answers:

- As a former choral director, music is inclusive of everything else. Music brings everything together. So, I truly believe that music holds a high value at my school and is part of the curriculum" (Principal A).
- "I think music it's important to give the kids the opportunity to express themselves outside of the physical academics" (Principal B).
- "I believe that choral music definitely has a place in my school" (Principal C).
- "Music is very important to me. In order to have a music program within the building, it becomes challenging at times, based upon some of the requirements or mandates from the states. But we do work around that to figure out ways to include a quality program within the building" (Principal D).

- I think it's very important because our kids, um we know traditionally in the African American community music has played a major part in that. I think two, we have seen a lot of school districts that have lost their arts programs. I mean, school has already changed enough, so I definitely don't want to see it lost (Principal E).
- I truly believe in the arts. I think it's great. You know some of our students... I have always questioned or thought about the word "smart." To me it is a very biased and selective word. Just because I am not an expert over here to the left doesn't mean I won't be one over here to the right (Principal F).
- "We highly value our music programs. We promoted them a lot. I mean our band is an 18 times Virginia honor band. Our music programs have won certain awards for different things they have done. Show choir is amazing. This is show choir season right now, so they're always winning awards at these events. Just from the county perspective, we had three or four delegates make All-State Honor band which is the highest in the county this year. So, yeah, we highly value that and place a lot of value on it. (Principal G).

Figure 1 Theme and associated patterns of Art is good



The purpose for valuing music varies for each school. In other words, each principal had different reasons why he or she valued music in their school. Many of the participants expressed that music programs positively impacted academic achievement, student engagement, and the overall culture and community, as well as offered an emotional and expressive outlet.

The following themes emerged from the data analysis: 1) enhanced academic achievement, 2) increased academic engagement, 3) an outlet for expression/emotion, and 4) community involvement and awareness. Principals shared that participating in music was a benefit to enhance a students' academic achievement. The following are the principals' responses:

- "Music programs are very important. Studies have shown that music plays an important role in academic achievement and test scores" (Principal F).
- We know the value that music adds to a student's life, just in the way they learn. We also know [music] enhances their academic learning in other areas because of learning music. We are also looking at our numbers there to encourage kids to go in those classes (Principal G).

Two principals in the interview discussed how music increased academic engagement. By having strong engagement in schools, the educator can enhance student learning and assist students in their overall success. The following are the principals' answers:

- I think music engagement helps students with presenting publicly, interacting with a crowd/audience, the logistics (arriving to a place on time, knowing when to perform and when to support other performers, etc.) (Principal A).

- I believe that music has a place in my school. It's another way to engage students, it's also a way to, um, you know, to really tap into various parts of the mind and brain" (Principal C).

This section discussed principal's role of music as an outlet for expression/emotion. Four principals shared how music can be an expressive outlet for students in their school. Principal B and Principal C shared how students who engage in music will be able to find their creative side. The following are the principals' answers:

- "I think it's important to give the kids the opportunity to express themselves outside of the physical academics. I think it's important that they have these experiences outside of the core academics" (Principal B).
- "Music is also an outlet for many students, and an avenue or pathway or avenue after high school" (Principal C).
- "I think it's a good outlet for our kids, for music and visual performing arts. It is necessary for the student population that I serve at my school" (Principal E).

The principals believed that music would promote a sense of community. Community and culture awareness were mentioned throughout the interview by some principals. The following are the principals' responses:

- "I am working to build that sense of community and pride for music at my school" (Principal A).
- "Music plays a vital role because our kids. Um, we know traditionally in the African American community that music has played a major part in that" (Principal E).
- Music programs have brought African Americans, White, and Hispanics students together due to the sense of belonging and it builds community within our school. And one factor that we have is that our surrounding communities are big advocates, and they support the music programs at my school (Principal G)

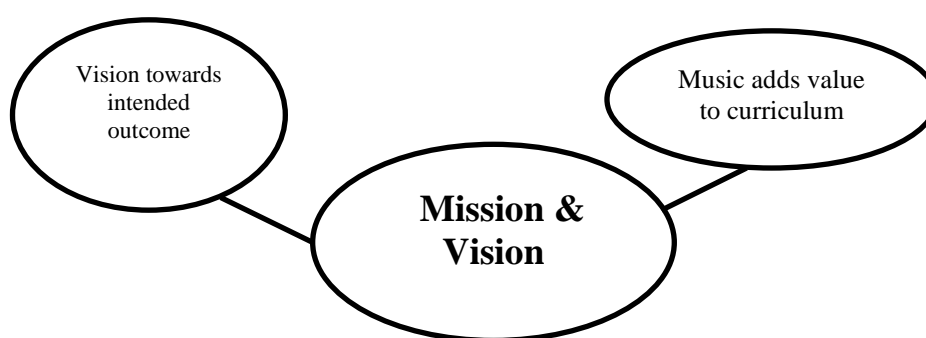
Principals' Role in Supporting the Arts

Principals had a variety of ways they supported and promoted the arts. The following are their answers:

- I wholeheartedly believe in the whole child's education, which is simply the idea of addressing all needs of the child through the education settings. So many people just talk about the main academic courses, but they leave out fine arts. I believe in that. I believe academics is all-inclusive. I really had to be sure that people understood that (Principal A).
- When I first arrived at my school back four years ago, there was not a music program at all. The only classes that were offered were regular academic classes such as math, science, and social studies. This is the first year of the fall of 2019 that my school was able to offer a choral program at our school. I want to be part of the academic language at my school (Principal A).
- "I'm a music person, so I try to promote it. My vision has always been to see more of the arts in the school setting and extracurricular events" (Principal B).
- Our Christmas program (2019) that we just had I choreographed all the dance for that. So, I support it and they know I like to have good programs, the best that we can do. We're not experts at it but we do the best we can offer. And when they have practice after school, or on Saturday I am right there (Principal F).

Mission and Vision Statements

The participants explained how the mission and vision of their school played an important role in how administrators value music programs. The mission and vision of each public school are used to drive their educational goals for the schools. From the mission and vision statements, the principals shared the following vision: (1) vision towards the intended outcome, and 2) music adds value. See Figure 2 below for themes that emerged from these questions.

Figure 2 Theme and associated patterns of mission and vision

The following questions were asked in the interview “Do you feel your involvement in music programs has shaped your vision and mission for your own school, and if so in what ways?” The following are their answers:

- So, participating in choral music or in school choir has developed my mindset on a greater scale about how teams work and the inner working of teams and those subgroups within the teams work together to achieve a common goal (Principal A).
- “I do believe it has. Uh, it has allowed me to continue with providing opportunities and space for such program when I have the opportunity to have them” (Principal C).
- “It has definitely shaped it to a certain degree. Um, in reference to you know my experiences. I definitely value the experiences, um that students have or will have the opportunity with a quality music education program” (Principal D).
- I think for me, I love music. Um one of our magnet themes is visual and performing arts and so we try weaving it into a lot of what we do. Our kids are very music oriented, so I think if we try to add in more musical things, um and we know that music and movement is good for our kids (Principal E).
- Umm...Yes! I definitely do because I have to support what’s going on in the music program, be there to support that. Anytime that we have Christmas programs, I have had a direct involvement meeting with the music teacher and even students, helping out in any way I can. I dance, so after I played in the band, I ended up being a dancer, so I made up dance routines for my school, even as the principal. (Principal F).
- It’s a big part of our vision, and our mission. I mean our mission is “to empower all learners to be successful. And so, we know the value that music adds to a student’s life, just the way that they learn (Principal G).

In addition, each school’s mission and vision statements were referenced to gather more insight into where each school placed value. In assessing the mission statements of each school, it was discovered that there was no mention of the arts or music in any of these mission and vision statements. However, one school’s mission expressed whole children learning. Please see table 2 below which includes the vision and mission statement of each school that was compiled from each school website.

Table 2 Mission and Vision Statements of Schools

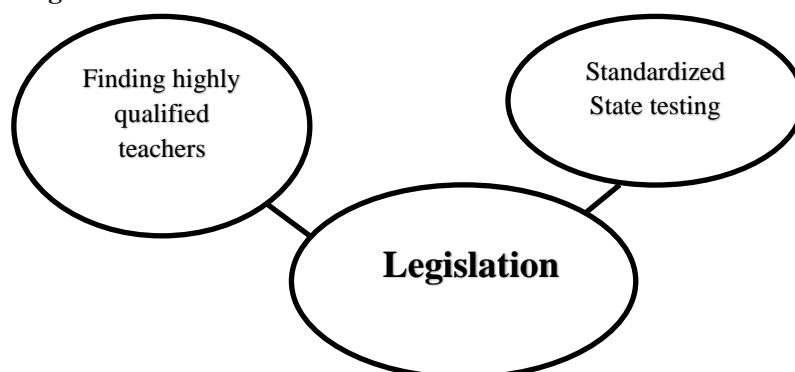
Participant	Type of K-12 School	School Setting	School Mission	School Vision
Principal A	Middle School (Title 1)	Rural	Our school will achieve a proficiency rate of 65 % or above on Reading, Mathematics, and Science; and remain a school of enrichment, focusing on whole-child educational strategies to increase the development of the student in which we serve.	Our School will become a leading middle-level institution, fully preparing students for high school and beyond.
Principal B	Middle School (Non-Title 1)	Rural	Our school is committed to partnering with parents and the community to achieve excellence, promote character, and to meet the intellectual and social needs of all its students.	Our School is for ALL students to graduate college, career, and life prepared.
Principal C	High School (Title 1)	Urban	Our mission is to prepare students to be life-long learners who are knowledgeable, productive, well-rounded citizens in an interdependent global society.	Our school vision is to provide each student with a safe and loving environment so they can learn and mature appropriately.
Principal D	Middle School (Title 1)	Urban	Our school is committed to ensuring excellence for every student, in every classroom, every day.	Our school vision is Every student is inspired & prepared for success in college or a career and life.
Principal E	K-5 Magnet (Title 1)	Urban	Our school prepares all students to excel in college, career, and life	Every student, Every day. Prepared for Success
Principal F	K-8 (Title 1)	Urban	Our school mission is to promote high levels of success for all in a family focus atmosphere.	Our school vision is to create and extremely effective school that promotes high levels of student achievement and contribute to the overall improvement of the community in which we serve.
Principal G	High School (Non-Title 1)	Suburban	Our school mission is to empower all learners to be successful.	Inspire, Empower, and Lead. We are a student-centered driven organization committed to providing all students with exceptional learning experiences in order to prepare them to be confident, ethical, productive citizens.

Legislation

Music programs have a significant role in education, which is to enhance general academic achievement and improve student's social and emotional development. However, other factors related to legislation, such as finding highly qualified teachers, and mandated standardized testing have made an impact on the curricular decisions in schools. See Figure 3 for the themes that emerged from these questions.

Figure 3 Theme and associated patterns of Legislation

Interpretation of Findings



The principal's personal values influenced the decision-making process. Principals believed that music is lively, creative, and lovely and has universal value and will benefit their school. All participants demonstrated through their responses the importance of music as part of the school's curriculum. The results from this study mirror Abril and Gault (2007) that finding the inclusion of music in a school's curriculum is dependent on the values of those in charge of making these decisions (Abril & Gault, 2007). Although the participants in the current study were committed to preserving curricular programming, these principals explained the challenges they face with prioritizing other programs unrelated to the arts. Some principals work diligently within their school to make arts and academics equal, and some physically participate in rehearsals and productions within their school.

Similar, to Major's (2013) findings, although facing some financial constraints, administrators continue to maintain a well-rounded curriculum that includes music courses because they recognize the value of music programs. All the participants in this study discussed the importance of well-rounded education, which included the arts, sports, technology, and different pathway offerings besides academics. The participants in the study collectively agree that music programs could contribute to the student's ability to do the following: express themselves, promote engagement, and create opportunities for outward expression through the arts. These skills can easily transfer to the student's ability to communicate and present effectively in their future endeavors as they embark upon the world. These findings also align with the National Association of Music Education's stance on benefits of music education. Self-awareness, self-efficacy, self-management, perseverance, social awareness, and relationship skills are central to any arts education activity, no matter the age and ability of the student or the environment in which the learning occurs (NAfME, 2020).

It is clear these principals value music and make decisions to keep the programs, though concerned about how these programs could be sustained in times where funding resources are competing with other programs. As found in previous studies, principals play a large role in influencing curricula in their schools (Oliver, 2016), and the values and lifelong appreciation for the arts is a determining factor regarding whether music programs are included or excluded from the school curriculum (Major, 2013).

Limitations and Assumptions

One major limitation of the study is that every principal who volunteered for this study was involved in a music class during their own K-12 experience. All the principals were musicians. Therefore, this musical background has most likely impacted on their positive statements of the importance of music education. Future research is needed to address the perspectives of principals with no music background to assess if they value music inclusion in the same way as the principals from a music background. Furthermore, there were only seven principals which meant only one person's perspective was included per school type and grade level. Another limitation of the study was that private school principals were not part of the study. Private school principals may share different perspectives because of possible access to more funds than a public school. Those perspectives may influence their decision making on political factors, stakeholders and community involvement. More research would be required to understand the different perspectives of principals who lead charter schools, private, and other public institutions in how they perceive the value of music education.

Because this study followed a qualitative methodology, researcher bias could have been evident (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). One assumption was that as educational leaders, the participants in the study would answer questions truthfully and honestly and straightforwardly (Mason, 2017). However, the principals were aware that I am currently employed within the choral education music field and may have answered differently than if I had not been a musician. I attempted to limit bias through the methodology. By following a semi-structured interview protocol, I was able to focus primarily on these questions and eliminate some potential for personal bias. However, I had preconceived notions about the importance of music education programs in public, rural, suburban, and urban K-12 schools, and this bias may have reflected in the way I worded the questions. I conducted a follow-up interview to complete any gaps in the data collection. This activity provided another opportunity to focus specifically on the participants' responses.

Implications

The results of the study may be useful to K-12 schools, specifically administrators and music teachers, to understand how these decisions impact the existence of music programs. Each principal discussed how data-driven evidence drives the decision-making process. Music educators can initiate conversations discussing various data around the program including retention and student interest in different types of music classes. For example, music teachers can create student interest surveys and present the findings to the principal about the need to add a music technology class. Teachers can collect retention data for a period of 4 years showing growth of the program and the need for more support or another teacher.

Furthermore, music educators can use resources from the National Association of Music Education (NAfME). One checklist is the NAfME Opportunity-to-Learn Standards. The checklist for music teachers is "considered guidance on Curriculum and Scheduling, Staffing, Material and Equipment, and Facilities" (NAfME, p.1. 2014). The standards identify the resources that need to be in place, so teachers, schools, and school districts

are able to give students opportunities and experiences at both the basic and quality levels to reach the Core Music Standards.

Principals in the current study discuss outside funding as a source for continuing music programs. Teachers can promote the interests of community members and stakeholders to volunteer their time or assist in fundraising efforts to offset expenses related to maintaining music programs. Music teachers should keep track of these efforts as a way to show principals the active involvement of the community and how their program is a part of the climate of the community and positive culture of the school. Furthermore, spending time promoting the program helps build pride and may aid in recruiting and retention.

Principals clearly articulated the need for music programs to include assessments and observable measurable outcomes for individual students. Like all other subjects, music teachers need to provide assessments through measurable objectives to show individual student growth. A rubric on rehearsal technique would help young musician self-assess rehearsal performance expectations and provide teachers with data to make curriculum decisions with the classroom setting. Individual singing tests would foster student growth in singing and improve the overall program over time. The data from these assessments would help the teacher shape the curriculum and programming. Music assessment alone cannot create educational excellence in music. Research involving assessment in music has historically centered on grading practices (attendance, behavior, performance skill, practice logs and participation) employed by both elementary and secondary music educators. However, there has been some work regarding the collection of assessment data including performance-based, or criterion-referenced assessment, and portfolio assessment. Accountability has become the “catch phrase” for educators and politicians recently. “If assessment is to play a part of an educational accountability solution, then assessment practices need to be clear, consistent, (over time, and transparent)” (Sawnsen, 2017, p.5). Wesolowski (2012) stated, “Now more than ever teachers... find themselves in situations where thorough documentation of student performance is necessary” (p.36). Therefore, data assessments in music programs are an essential factor when decisions on the curriculum are being addressed.

Conclusion

These findings are fundamental in understanding ways in which music teachers can communicate with administrators, thus, becoming advocates for their music programs. Therefore, shaping legislative policies at the school, state, national, and local level may have an impact on the existence of arts within these schools. Teachers and administrators could collaborate effectively, and it seems collaboration with student’s community, and other music faculty may have an impact on the final decisions in terms of music programs offerings.

The results reveal the principals’ beliefs of the importance of the inclusion of music programs in K-12 Schools. Legislative mandates had minimal influences on how these administrators would decide on what programs would be included in their overall curriculum. These principals had full autonomy on how they would incorporate music programs and relied on grants and other financial resources to offset these expenses. Several principals in different categories from the interview talked about how important community and culture is to the school climate.

The inclusion of music in a school’s curriculum depends on the values of those in charge of making the decisions (Abril & Gault, 2007), and clearly in this study, the principals all valued music education. The values by local, state and national decision makers have a major impact on music teaching learning (Abril & Gault, 2007). For instances, studies have shown that school principals have stated that standardized tests, the NCLB, and poor funding are all factors that hurt the arts in schools (Abril & Gault, 2007). The principals in this study appeared challenged with finding a balance between demands of the community, teachers, students, outside legislation, and other related factors that influenced their decision-making process. Many participants in this study reported that they understood the importance of the arts; however, academics and the success of students achieving positive scores on standardized test were a priority of parents and the community.

Principals may be able to use the findings to reevaluate the importance of music education opportunities for public school students, while increasing support from local, state, and federal governments. This can be done by having meetings with local stakeholders and government officials to speak on the importance of music in a well-rounded balanced education system. Incorporating music education opportunities into educational programs will engage learners by producing a meaningful experience that becomes part of the fabric of the learner (Gunter et al., 2003).

The findings from this study provide an insightful understanding of how administrators base their decisions to continue music programs in their schools. Principals base their decisions on measurable outcomes because they must adhere to legislative mandates. Music educators will need to properly plan the curricula outlined by the National Association for Music Education to meet the standards. Music educators can promote their programs to administrators by conducting the following practices: collecting student survey data; student growth measurement within the classroom structure; conduct a needs assessment using the opportunity- to- learn standards as outlined by the National Association for Music Education. By music educators conducting the above strategies,

the data gathered can be communicated to principals and administrators and can help in the decision-making process.

Many educators and administrators are beginning to realize that music programs do not take away from basic subjects, but instead enhance the academic achievement of most students (Longley, 1999). The schools that are finding the highest rate of overall success realize that an integrated arts education can meld all aspects of education together, which in turn can produce highly intelligent, creative, critical thinkers, which will be the leaders of tomorrow (Longley, 1999). As for those schools that have not realized the importance of music education, advocates must continue to press on to ensure that someday every child has a chance to experience the benefits of an arts integrated curriculum (Hobby, 2002).

As the evolution of K-12 education, changes, the therapeutic and unifying power of the arts has been evident as the COVID-19 pandemic swept the country (NAfME, 2020). Arts education cultivates the creation of a welcoming school environment where students can express themselves in a safe and encouraging way (NAfME, 2020). Administrators, music teachers, and the support of the community are essential in finding innovative methods to fund music programs and provide access to all K-12 school systems. The importance of music educators to collect data through assessment and other means will help provide administrators with a solid foundation for continuing to include and promote music programs as part of a well-rounded education.

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