



# CULTURALLY-INCLUSIVE ORCHESTRA RECRUITMENT

Culturally-Inclusive Recruitment Strategies for Elementary School Orchestra

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## Abstract

In a time when culturally-responsive teaching is especially critical to the classroom, it is important that all teachers reflect on how they can incorporate this technique into their teaching. In an elementary music classroom, creating a welcoming place for students of all backgrounds and building connections between teacher and student is an important aspect of culturally-responsive teaching. However, for enrollment-based programs such as elementary school orchestra, this starts before students even walk in the door. Many orchestra teachers host some form of a “recruitment show” to inform students about the orchestra program, to encourage students to try a string instrument, and to excite students about joining the orchestra. Teachers employ a number of creative ideas into their recruitment shows, but do they keep all students in mind when designing these presentations? The purpose of this empirical study is to investigate how elementary school orchestra teachers in public schools recruit students of all cultural backgrounds into their programs. This study aims to find recruitment strategies that are able to reach all of our young students and to discover how culturally-responsive recruitment can welcome all students into the orchestra.

# CULTURALLY-INCLUSIVE ORCHESTRA RECRUITMENT

## **Dedication**

To my students – always remember that music is for **everyone**.

## **Acknowledgements**

A special thanks to Leslie & Tony Ramis, Lauren Ward, and my wonderful husband, Callum McLagan, for their feedback, recommendations, and support.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this empirical study is to investigate how elementary school orchestra teachers in public schools recruit students of all cultural backgrounds into their programs. This study will be conducted by surveying public school orchestra teachers in the United States using Google Forms. The survey will ask the teacher about the ethnic/racial profile of their school, the ethnic/racial profile of their orchestra program, and the recruitment strategies they utilize to facilitate enrollment for their program. The survey will be issued in November to allow time for initial orchestra enrollment to be completed. Results will then be analyzed to discover which orchestra programs have an ethnic/racial profile that is similar to that of their school, and to see which methods those teachers utilize to invite students of all backgrounds into their classroom.

### Rationale

In a time when culturally-responsive teaching is especially critical to the classroom, it is important that all teachers reflect on how they can incorporate this technique into their teaching. In an elementary music classroom, creating a welcoming place for students of all backgrounds and building connections between teacher and student is an important aspect of culturally-responsive teaching. However, for enrollment-based programs such as elementary school orchestra, this starts before students even walk in the door. Many orchestra teachers host some form of a “recruitment show” to inform students about the orchestra program, to encourage students to try a string instrument, and to excite students about joining the orchestra. Teachers employ a number of creative ideas into their recruitment shows, but they may not be keeping all students in mind when designing these presentations. This study aims to find recruitment



strategies that are able to reach all of our young students and to discover how culturally-responsive recruitment can welcome all students into the orchestra.

### Expected Findings

The goal of this investigative survey is to discover patterns among recruitment strategies for elementary orchestra that encourage proportionate representation of the student population in the orchestra program. In order to accomplish this, orchestra programs from the survey responses will be examined for how closely they reflect the racial/ethnic make-up of their school. The recruitment strategies utilized by teachers of programs that proportionately represent their school's population will be compiled and assessed for their cultural inclusivity. After these strategies are collected, I plan to employ them during the next recruitment season at my school to see if I can optimize the diversity and inclusivity of my orchestra program, as well as recommend specific strategies to my student teaching interns and colleagues in my district.

I anticipate that by issuing this survey during Thanksgiving week in November, I will be able to maximize the number of responses I collect. Most recruitment is completed in September, and enrollment should be mostly finalized by October. The beginning of the school year can be extremely busy and hectic for teachers, and the first significant break that occurs in the school year is during the Thanksgiving break. I will publish the survey primarily using social media and emailing it directly to teachers in order to collect a sufficient number of responses. Conversations regarding race and ethnicity can be uncomfortable at times, therefore sensitivity and consideration will be taken into account as teachers may find it difficult to respond to survey questions on this topic. Opportunities for anonymity as well as open-ended questions will be employed to encourage full participation from all responders and to maximize the amount of information gained about these programs.

I predict that orchestra programs that are able to closely represent their school's racial/ethnic make-up readily utilize culturally-inclusive strategies. I believe that actions taken by teachers to reach all populations are frequently noticed by students and allow them to feel welcomed and invited into the orchestra classroom, thereby increasing overall enrollment as well as creating orchestra programs that are proportionately representative of the school population.

## **Chapter 2: Cultural Inclusivity & Instrumental Music Programs**

### Cultural Inclusivity: Looking at America's Past

Cultural inclusivity in the American classroom is important for all students to experience more meaningful learning as they find themselves making connections between the content they learn in school and their own lives. Even though more and more teachers may be adding culturally-responsive teaching to their pedagogy, there are times in our nation's history when groups of students were deliberately excluded from equitable public education as a result of targeted public policies. Efforts made over the years to provide all children with equitable opportunities within public schools have allowed us to improve how we serve our students, yet teachers may find themselves at times wondering if we can be doing better.

Understanding past attitudes towards cultural inclusion can help inform plans for a brighter future. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (also known as UNESCO) is an international organization that “develops educational tools to help people live as global citizens free of hate and intolerance” (UNESCO, 2020, Our Vision, para. 2). It identifies four steps that show “the stages of understanding in the move towards inclusion” (UNESCO, 2005, p. 23). They can be described as:

- Exclusionary – no services offered.
- Segregated – services are provided outside of mainstream settings.
- Integrative – understanding of the needs of individuals within settings.
- Inclusive – all are involved in mainstream services. (Lavery, Chambers, & Cain, 2018, p. 11)

Looking closely at America in the earlier stages of this process can shed light on current practices as well as inform our decisions as we work towards becoming a more inclusive educational system.

America has held exclusionary practices with regards to public education and cultural diversity. In 1882, President Chester A. Arthur signed the Chinese Exclusion Act as a response to large numbers of Chinese immigrants coming to America (Lindsay, 2011). In California, Chinese immigrants were denied citizenship, the right to vote, the ability to testify in court, and were barred from attending public schools (Lindsay, 2011). The first sentence of the law stated that “the coming of Chinese laborers to this country endangers the good order of certain localities within the territory” (“Transcript of Chinese Exclusion Act (1882),” n.d., para. 2). In the San Francisco Bulletin, a newspaper at the time known to reflect the city’s overwhelming rejection of integrating schools, published an earlier editorial in 1858 stating:

Let us keep our public schools free from the intrusion of the inferior races ... if we are compelled to have Negroes and Chinamen among us, it is better, of course, that they should be educated. But teach them separately from our Caucasian blood pure. We want no mongrel race of moral and mental hybrids to people the mountains and valleys of California. (Kamiya, 2017)

It was racist public opinion like this that paved the way for such targeted public educational policy excluding children from receiving educational services in any capacity. Although this era may seem too far in the past to remain relevant, the Chinese Exclusion Act was not formally repealed until decades later by the Magnuson Act in 1943 (Lindsay, 2011).

Segregation is the next step toward inclusion outlined by UNESCO, and it has also had its foothold in American public schools. Around the same time in history as the Chinese

Exclusion Act, public schooling became available to African-American students at the conclusion of the Civil War. However, schools were largely segregated and resources were not distributed across schools equally (Lawson, n.d., para. 7). According to the Supreme Court decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), a law in Louisiana providing for “separate but equal” accommodations did not violate the Fourteenth Amendment, paving the way for school segregation across America (Lawson, n.d., para. 6). The court decision stated that “if one race be inferior to the other socially, the constitution of the United States cannot put them upon the same plane” (“Transcript of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896),” n.d., para. 34). The law claimed that African-Americans were biologically inferior, and this became the legal justification for treating them as such. Schools for African-American children were often smaller, had teachers with less training, and had severe funding disparities (Irons, 2014). In Jim Crow states from Delaware to Texas, local school boards spent about three times as much on White students than Black students (Irons, 2014). In 1930, the spending difference was even greater, where \$53 was spent on every White student while \$5 was spent on every Black student, a disparity of more than 10:1 (Irons, 2014). In Black high schools, buildings rarely had science laboratories or even offered science classes, and very few had courses in foreign languages, art, or music (Irons, 2014). Students from this chapter in history are the great-grandparents of today’s students, making this information extremely relevant to today’s conversations about cultural inclusivity.

Since the Supreme Court decision in *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954), America slowly began desegregating its schools and working towards integration, the next step in UNESCO’s framework. This case ruled that state-sponsored segregation in public schools was unconstitutional, but the Supreme Court did not immediately provide direction for how the ruling should be implemented (“History - Brown v. Board of Education Re-enactment,” n.d). Today,

after more than 60 years, nationwide school integration has still not been accomplished, and newer Supreme Court decisions have made that goal even more difficult to accomplish. The 2007 Supreme Court case *Parents Involved in Community Schools (PICS) v. Seattle School District No. 1* found that school integration plans on the sole basis of race were not permissible, limiting school districts' options for promoting racial integration in schools (Potter, 2017).

However, the battle for school integration is still being fought, as one school district in Mississippi was ordered to desegregate after a bitter 62-year legal struggle as recently as May, 2016 (Domonoske, 2016). In January 2020, state officials in Connecticut were working with civil rights attorneys in the Hartford School District to put forth new efforts to desegregate, as only 41% of students currently attend desegregated schools (Thomas, 2020). Yet research shows that students who have exposure to other students unlike themselves experience improved cognitive skills, including critical thinking and problem solving (Wells, Fox, & Cordova-Cobo, 2016). Even though we may like to think of America as a nation of innovation and progress, it is difficult to claim that our students reap the benefits of inclusive schools while segregated school districts still remain.

### The Urgency for Inclusion in Instrumental Music

For school districts that have been able to reach the integration step in UNESCO's framework, inclusion should be the immediate focus. While there are many strategies and techniques for inclusion that can be put in place by school boards and school administrators, this study will focus on how orchestra teachers can be doing their part to work towards inclusion in instrumental programs. Although we may know our own communities well, if we look at statistics on a national scale, we may find that our programs are not as accessible to all students as we think.

One study found that in 2004, 65.7% of students in high school band, orchestra, and/or chorus were White, 15.2% were Black, 10.2% were Hispanic, 4.3% were Multiracial, 3.8% were Asian, 0.7% were American Indian/Alaska Native, and 0.2% were Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (Elpus & Abril, 2011, p. 134). Although high school programs were not found to be very diverse, when looking at the percentage of individuals who pursue a career in orchestral music beyond high school, musicians in racial minorities were even more underrepresented. Edwards completed a study in 1990 of employment patterns among regional orchestras with regards to Black and non-Black musicians (Hamann, 2000). He found that less than 2% of musicians were Black, and noted that this was no different than employment patterns in 1977 (Hamann, 2000, Professional Orchestra Musicians, para. 3). In 2012, DeLorenzo contacted managers from the New York Philharmonic, the Atlantic Symphony Orchestra, the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, and the Philadelphia Orchestra who confirmed that less than 2% of their orchestral musicians were Black or Latino (DeLorenzo, 2012, p. 39).

Although there are several factors contributing to retaining orchestra students throughout middle/high school as well as launching students into orchestral careers, this severe underrepresentation of classically trained musicians of racial/ethnic minorities in professional orchestras is staggering. Several performance ensembles featuring Black and Latino composers and musicians have emerged, such as the Scott Joplin Chamber Orchestra, Harlem Symphony Orchestra, and Opera North (DeLorenzo, 2012). The mission statement of the Harlem Symphony Orchestra states that it “seeks to provide role models to bring symphonic music to diverse communities and to encourage youths of all ethnic origins to pursue careers in the field of classical music” (“Harlem Symphony Orchestra Home,” n.d, Our Mission). Evidently there is a need to determine why so many of our nation’s orchestras are dramatically undiverse, making

these special interest groups a necessity. As elementary orchestra teachers, we can also mitigate this problem by examining how we recruit students to our programs, provide them with their first fundamental musical experiences, and potentially prepare them for professional music careers.

### Making Recruitment Inclusive

With a nation so diverse, cultural inclusivity may look different in various communities as teachers place their efforts into engaging students of all backgrounds. Etta Hollins writes that “teachers who are effective in culturally diverse settings have learned to... examine the context in which they teach, and to connect the content they teach and the learning experiences they provide with their students’ daily lives and their cultural values, practices, and perceptions” (Hollins, 2015, p. 67). Culture is not restricted to race or ethnicity; students also share affiliation based on age, geography, economic class, and religion (Mixon, 2009). Orchestra teachers who take time to get to know their students and create a welcoming classroom environment are likely to appeal to minority students who may be otherwise reluctant to participate in performing ensembles (DeLorenzo, 2012). Not only do students benefit from this style of teaching, they also benefit from learning about the experiences of their fellow classmates. Geneva Gay (as cited in Mixon, 2009, Include Multiple Ethnicities para. 2) points out that when music from other cultures is presented during class, it can “provide those who have never had close personal contact with members of ethnic groups other than their own [an] opportunity to...engage with diverse people as well as confront themselves.” While teachers may shy away from conversations about students’ individual lives and backgrounds, it can actually be beneficial to the entire class to incorporate these perspectives.

The fundamental goal of any recruitment strategy is to communicate information about the elementary orchestra program to students and parents. The essential pieces of information



should include frequency of instruction and scheduling, instrument procurement (whether the school provides instruments or if students need to obtain their own), any enrollment fees and available financial support, necessary accessories (rosin, bow, case, books, music stand, etc.), and performance opportunities along with available transportation to those events (Ammerman, 2016, p. 28). The recruitment concert should also take on a slightly different look within schools of varying socioeconomic statuses in order to best address student needs (Ammerman, 2016). Newsletters, websites, email, paper mail, social media, or special sessions during parents' night can inform caregivers about the program and maintain open lines of communication (DeLorenzo, 2012). Offering multiple modes of communication can also address equity issues if families do not have internet in the home. It is also important to consider offering information to parents of prospective students in their own language to avoid losing potential students due to miscommunication (Tesar, 2018). Alekna reported that one teacher sends parents letters home in both English and Spanish and holds multiple orchestra sign-up nights to accommodate parents' work schedules (2016). Just like differentiating instruction, teachers can differentiate how they communicate with families about their programs in a way that will enable more students to register successfully.

Strings programs are generally considered extra-curricular and are not required of all students. This can mean an added workload for the students, and orchestra teachers may want to address this during recruitment. Research suggests that students of low-socioeconomic backgrounds score significantly lower on standardized tests and may be discouraged by parents or other teachers from missing core classes to avoid letting their grades or test scores suffer (Ammerman, 2016, p. 29). However, one branch of research has actually shown that students who studied music during the school day were not at an academic disadvantage when compared

to their non-music studying peers, even if those non-music peers received more instructional time in other subjects (Elpus & Abril, 2011). From the students' perspective, one study showed that simply wanting to take another class was their primary reason for not joining orchestra (Aleksa, 2016). Academic achievement has been identified as a "determinant of inequality" with regards to music participation and course-taking patterns in general (Elpus & Abril, 2011, p. 129). Scheduling and working with guidance counselors is key to allowing the opportunity for all students to join orchestra.

A popular strategy for recruitment is organizing a show or concert to present the instruments and orchestra program to prospective students. The type of music chosen to be presented at these concerts should also receive special consideration. Familiarity of songs played during the recruitment show can signal acceptance of a student's culture within the string program, and if all of the pieces performed are alien and confusing to students, they may not feel welcome to join (Ammerman, 2016). Even demonstrating music familiar to only a minority of your students can have benefits for all, particularly if you consistently teach that all music has equal merit (Mixon, 2009). Students have identified that being exposed to new music helped them expand their own music preferences (Aleksa, 2016). Teachers may ask their current students about their music preferences and use their responses to aid in selecting music for recruitment shows.

Another factor that deserves careful consideration are the musicians and model students that perform in these recruitment shows. Part of knowing the student is understanding that nonmusical factors affect student choices and motivation. For example, some students may perceive the orchestra as a Eurocentric ensemble in terms of literature performed and the orchestral musicians that may or may not look like them (DeLorenzo, 2012). Many teachers are

often surprised to learn that students of color might associate a musical career with a certain race/ethnicity (DeLorenzo, 2012). Showing students that anyone can learn an instrument is an important message to include with recruitment. Recognizing as many student races, ethnicities, genders, languages, and other cultural influences among model musicians will extend recruitment messages to as broad an audience as possible (Mixon, 2009). If the teacher shows musicians performing during recruitment, regardless if performances are pre-recorded or live, or if players are beginners or professional, these performances may be the first exposure that students have to orchestral musicians (Alekna, 2016). By showing musicians of varying backgrounds, teachers can send a powerful message of who is welcome in their program.

Many teachers choose to host a trial day or a “petting zoo” for prospective students in which students can touch or physically handle an instrument. These petting zoos allow students to experience the delight of playing even if they manage just a single note on the instrument (Ammerman, 2016). Hosting a petting zoo can also help address issues of instrumentation and balance within the ensemble by ensuring that the number of students who choose to play violin doesn’t severely outnumber the students playing cello, for example (Tesar, 2018). In one study, 83% of students identified the tryout day as a contributing factor to their decision to play an instrument and showed them the capabilities of each instrument (Alekna, 2016). That experience may have been those students’ first exposure to orchestral instruments, making trial days a helpful tool during recruitment.

One element to recruitment presentations that may be overlooked is the general tone and energy of the interactions teachers have with students. Talented musicians tend to remember their first teacher as friendly, relaxed, and encouraging, and researchers have found this “warmth dimension” of the first teacher tends to be missing from people who ultimately withdrew from

music lessons (Ammerman, 2016, p. 29). Teachers responding with care and empathy to any problems that may arise during the recruitment and registration process can be critical to students' motivation to join the orchestra program (DeLorenzo, 2012). Presenting our programs with a message of empowerment can be a great motivator among students who may hesitate to try a new instrument.

Introducing students to the orchestra program is often an invitation to a new social group. Teachers should be aware of the “social identity theory” that “assumes one part of the self-concept is defined by our belonging to social groups...[P]eople categorize themselves and others as belonging to different social groups and evaluate these categorizations” (Ammerman, 2016, p. 29). For students who may feel isolated and excluded among their peers, music teachers can work toward offering a social identity that involves music participation to those students (Ammerman, 2016). Psychosocial issues, such as friendships and emotional ups and downs, can play into whether students join orchestra. Teachers can build a supportive family-like environment that appeals to everyone by showing students that the teacher is reliable, the classroom is a place of stability, and that the teachers cares about them as individuals and human beings (Alekn, 2016). Students can also be motivated to join strings by interacting with more experienced orchestra students already involved in the program. One study showed that students' motivation to join orchestra was focused on their conversations with their teacher as well as with older orchestra students at recruitment events (Alekn, 2016). Teachers may want to include a meet-and-greet element at their recruitment shows between older orchestra students and prospective orchestra students (Alekn, 2016). Students can find a sense of self as they develop as both a musician and as a young person.

It is also important to keep in mind how the social identity theory can impact students of racial/ethnic minorities. Identity construction for students of color can go a step beyond simply “Who am I?” to “Who am I as a black [sic] or Latino person?” or even “How is my identity connected to my success in school?” (DeLorenzo, 2012). Students from racial/ethnic minorities particularly struggle with issues of cultural identity, and music educators should be aware that their classroom is no exception (DeLorenzo, 2012). Instead of attempting to connect with students by trying to be a person of a different culture, teachers that are able to “own their own identity” are able to make genuine connections with students and earn their trust (Alekn, 2016, p. 24). During recruitment shows, if kinesthetic activities such as “mini dramas” are provided in which audience members can physically participate in a musical story or have the opportunity to play an imaginary instrument, it can spark excitement and open up worlds of possibilities for those prospective students (Ammerman, 2016). By sending a powerful message that the orchestra program is for everyone, students will be encouraged to come explore their abilities in orchestra.

One key factor with regards to recruitment that has yet to be discussed in detail is the effect of socioeconomic status (SES) on whether students can register. One study regarding American music programs found that only 4% of American school districts catering to low SES communities even offer a strings program (Ammerman, 2016, p. 28). Low-SES students often experience additional barriers to registering for orchestra programs, including transportation, time, money, and an increase in familial responsibilities such as providing care for younger siblings while parents work (Ammerman, 2016). The priority among many low-SES households becomes core essentials, necessity, and survival, often leaving little to no financial resources left for anything else (Ammerman, 2016). For these students, teachers may need to provide a practice

space at school, an instrument and accessories, transportation to and from the concert, and other elements with which their peers may not need assistance (Ammerman, 2016). Although opportunities exist to provide aid to these students, they are not available to all students and are often not enough for a student to keep up with their peers (Ammerman, 2016). Teachers should prioritize reducing or eliminating as many of these financial barriers as possible to provide opportunities to their prospective students of low-SES backgrounds.

In addition to the financial aspect of recruiting low-SES students, there are emotional aspects that teachers can address in their recruitment to welcome these students. The results of Albert's study showed that teacher personality and creating a safe, family-like environment supported the retention of students in a low-SES setting (2005). Many low-SES students come from less than ideal living situations, and the support and stability of a musical family at school can provide comfort and peace for these students (Alekna, 2016). Alekna's research showed that low-SES students found verbal recruitment, the enjoyment of learning new skills, and seeing orchestra as a "carefree commitment" to be the recruitment strategies that persuaded them the most to join an elementary string program (Alekna, 2016, p. 87). Albert emphasized that "teachers in low-SES districts need to understand the needs of their particular community, be aware of cultural issues, and be free of negative stereotypes that may affect their teaching" (Albert, 2005, p. 77). Low-SES students experience more obstacles joining orchestra than their peers, and teachers who keep their emotional perspective in mind can be the difference between whether students choose to power through those challenges or stay on the sidelines.

Especially at the elementary level, parents are especially key to recruiting new students to orchestra programs, and being aware of the impact family has on student registration can aid our recruitment. Elpus and Abril found that 79.4% of music students came from a two-

parent/guardian home and 20.6% of music students came from a single-parent/guardian home (2011). They also found that parental educational achievement and music participation of the student were closely associated, as music students were 1.66 times more likely to be children of a parent who had earned at least a bachelor's degree (Elpus & Abril, 2011). Cook (as cited in Alekna, 2016, p. 101) found that 45% of students had parents that encouraged them to be in orchestra, and 80% of parents in the program were proud of what their students were doing in orchestra. In addition, Vasil (as cited in Alekna, 2016) reported that many instrumental students had siblings or parents who had previously been involved in music. Reaching out to families directly and exploring their involvement and values with regard to music education can be a great resource to incorporate when recruiting new students.

These recruitment strategies and techniques are quite common among elementary teachers, and many support key facets of culturally-inclusive teaching. Throughout the process of looking through existing research on this topic, it became evident to me that I could not find many elementary orchestra teachers writing about what they found was most effective through their many recruitment seasons. I designed my study to communicate directly to them and sought to hear back from those who have put these theoretical ideas to the test, and those that may have unheard expertise to share.

### **Chapter 3: Study Details & Results**

#### Survey Information

The purpose of this study was to discover which recruitment strategies are used by elementary orchestra teachers and to see if they are culturally-inclusive. These strategies are deemed successful if the teacher is able to create a string program that maintains a similar demographic to that of their total school population. If the profile of the string program matches the school population, then all subgroups within the population are represented and students were motivated, empowered, and logistically able to successfully register for the elementary orchestra program.

A survey was designed to ask teachers questions about their background, the demographic makeup of their school, the demographic makeup of their strings program, and their recruitment strategies. The survey was designed with Google Forms in order to quickly organize and manage response entries (please see Appendix A for a complete list of all survey questions and how they were presented). It was issued to elementary school orchestra teachers in public schools whose programs are based on student interest and not compulsory of every student. The survey required teachers to have access to data regarding the racial and ethnic makeup of both their total school population and just the students in their strings program, possibly not allowing all teachers who opened it to participate.

This survey was issued the week of Thanksgiving break in November to allow for recruitment season to end but so as to not be too close to any winter concerts. My goal was to collect at least 25 viable responses in order to begin seeing patterns in the data. This survey was posted on social media within two Facebook groups, “School Orchestra and String Teachers” and “Social Justice Music Educators”. The former has around 9,300 members and the latter has



around 1,900 members that were able to access my survey posting. I also posted the survey on my personal Facebook page, as well as sent it directly to the elementary orchestra teachers in my district. I included instructions for how to obtain the data requested in the survey when I contacted the elementary orchestra teachers in my district.

### Participation

The survey was successfully posted in each Facebook group on November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019. After the initial posting, I received 33 responses, 10 of which were complete and viable for the scope of this survey. I decided to post the survey again in each group at the start of winter break to allow for teachers to be more available to participate if they chose. I was able to successfully re-post in the “Social Justice Music Educators” group and my personal Facebook page on December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019. However, my re-post in the “School Orchestra and String Teachers” group was initially rejected with the following note (even though I was already permitted to post the survey in November):

#### **Additional notes from the admins**

Catina, all studies must be approved by the admin team. If approved, one of us ... will post it to the group. Please contact us if you have any questions

I received a direct message from a group administrator, and we discussed how I could get my survey approved and why there was a delay in allowing the post to be displayed (please refer to Appendix B for the full conversation). The survey was eventually posted successfully on December 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019. I received an additional 28 responses, 10 of which were complete and viable. I emailed my colleagues in my district with a link to the survey and directions on how to find the data requested in the survey on February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020. I received the final 12 responses, 11 of which were complete and viable.

### Results and Findings: Qualifying Questions

The first 4 questions of the survey were intended to narrow the pool of responders to just public school elementary orchestra teachers in the United States, whose programs were based on student interest and not compulsory, and could access the racial/ethnic data of both their school and their strings program. If they answered “no” (or “compulsory”) to any of these questions, they were automatically redirected to exit the survey.

**Question 1: Do you teach orchestra in a public elementary school in the United States of America?** I received 73 responses; 75.3% responded “Yes” and 24.7% responded “No”.

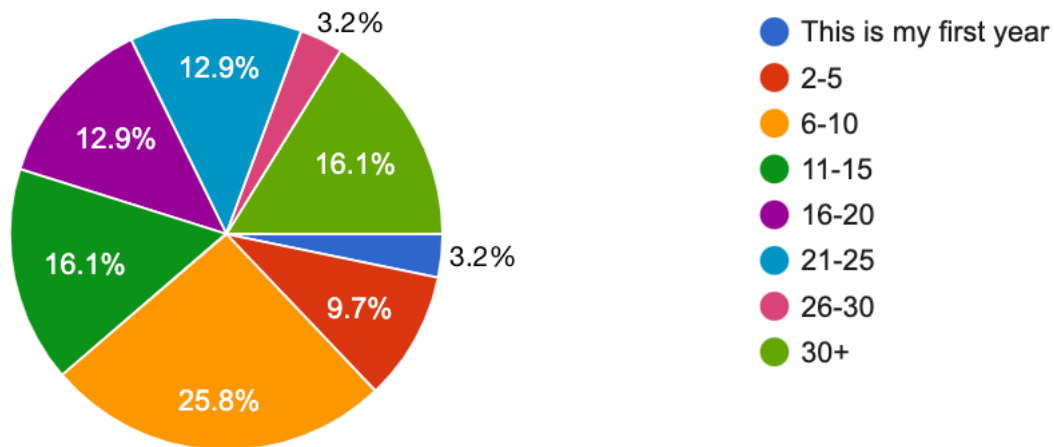
**Questions 2: Is enrollment for your school's orchestra program compulsory or based on student interest?** I received 55 responses; 94.5% responded “Based on student interest” and 5.5% responded “Compulsory”.

**Question 3: Do you have access to the racial/ethnic data for the students in your school?** I received 52 responses; 75% responded “Yes” and 25% responded “No”.

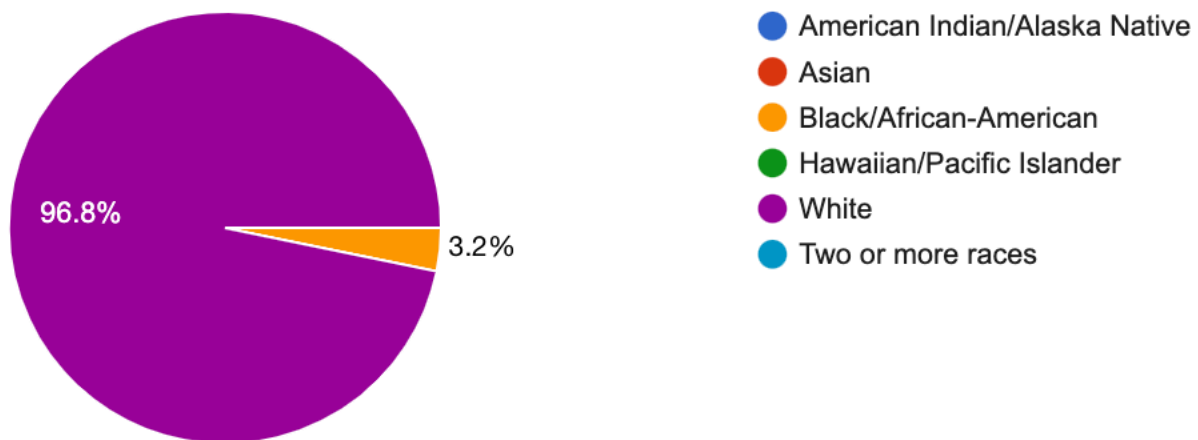
**Question 4: Do you also have access to the racial/ethnic data for the students in your orchestra program from that same school year?** I received 39 responses; 79.5% responded “Yes” and 20.5% responded “No”. I required this data to be from the same school year as the previous question to allow for fair comparisons between the strings population and the school population.

### Results and Findings: Teacher Demographic

The next set of questions I asked the teachers were about themselves in order to find out more about their background and experience level. I received 31 responses for each of the following questions.

**Question 5: How many years have you been teaching?**

The plurality of the responses were from teachers with 6-10 years of experience. Teachers with 26-30 years of experience or who were in their first year of teaching were underrepresented, as I only received one response from each of those groups.

**Question 6: How would you describe yourself?**

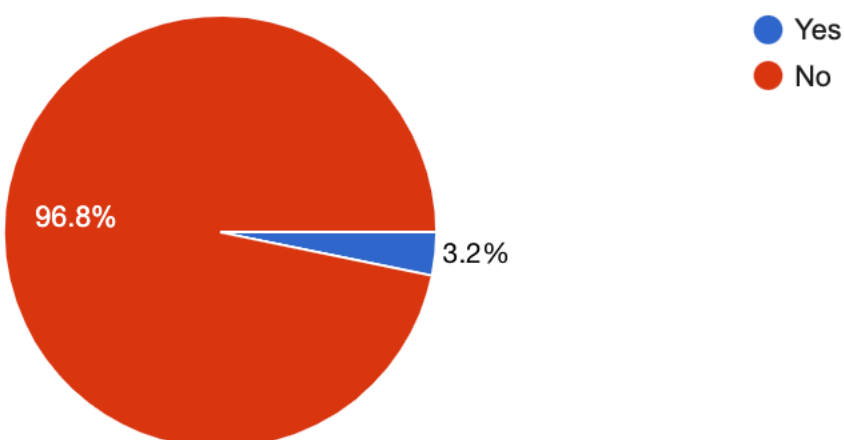
Responses to this question were extremely undiverse. I received one response from a teacher who identifies as Black/African-American, but did not receive responses from any other teachers from racial/ethnic minorities. The “Hispanic/Latino” subgroup was separated into a different question, as it is an ethnicity and not a race. According to the American Psychological Association:

Race refers to physical differences that groups and cultures consider socially significant. For example, people might identify their race as Aboriginal, African American or Black, Asian, European American or White, Native American, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Māori, or some other race. Ethnicity refers to shared cultural characteristics such as language, ancestry, practices, and beliefs. For example, people might identify as Latino or another ethnicity. (“Racial and Ethnic Identity,” n.d).

Unfortunately not all racial/ethnic data follows these guidelines, so I asked teachers later on in the survey to clarify if their district considers the term “Hispanic/Latino” as a race or an ethnicity. This naturally skews the data if that subgroup is included among races instead of separating it as its own descriptor, as I have done here.

I also considered using the term “Latinx” instead of “Latino”, as “Latino” implies a masculine gender whereas “Latinx” is a newly coined genderless version of the word. Although the use of “Latinx” aligns more with my personal belief on the subject, I decided to use “Latino” in the end. The majority of school districts still use it as well as the 2010 U.S. Census, and I was hoping to avoid confusion among participants in the survey who may not be familiar with “Latinx”.

**Question 7: Would you describe yourself as Hispanic or of Latino origin?**

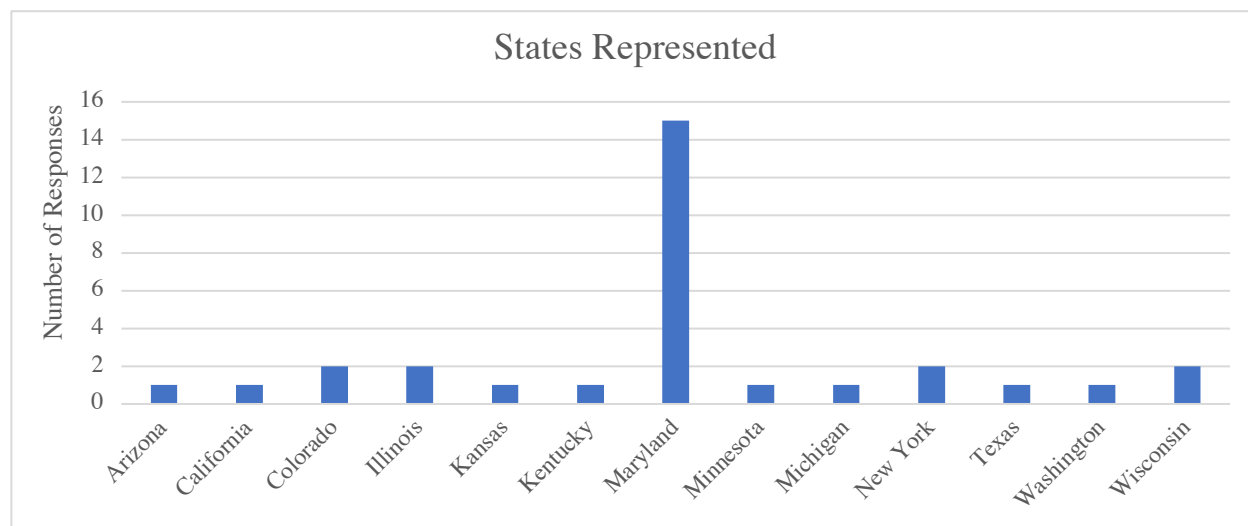


Again, responses were extremely undiverse, and only one participant identified as Hispanic or of Latino origin.

### Results and Findings: School Information

The next set of questions asks for information about the school population. In order to encourage participation, I deliberately did not require participants to submit their name or the name of their school. Discussing race/ethnicity in general is a sensitive topic, and I did not want participants to feel singled out or judged for their responses. I asked questions that would give a general idea about their school without requiring information that could be traced back to the participant. Unfortunately this also caused some issues when data was incomplete or had mathematical errors, but I believed it was a fair price to pay in order to hear back from as many teachers as possible.

#### **Question 8: In which U.S. state is your school located?**



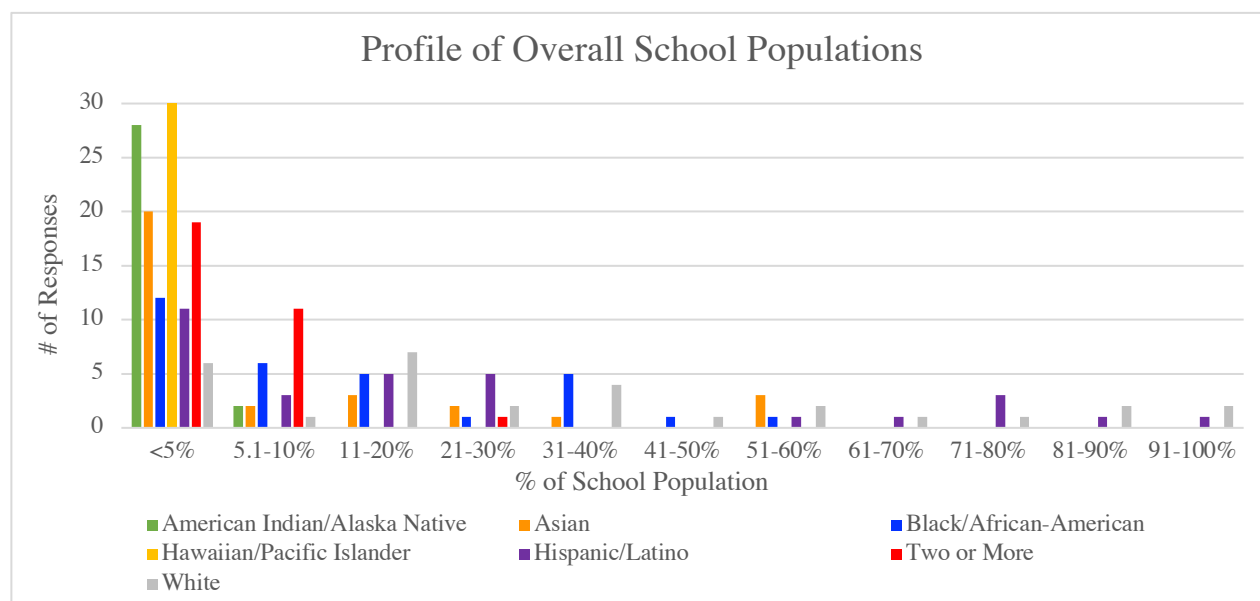
Almost half of the responses were from teachers in Maryland, with 1-2 responses from 12 other states listed in the chart above. I live and teach in Maryland, so this number represents the responses I received from teachers immediately in my district as well as from other local colleagues.

### Question 9: In which district is your school located?

13 responses were from Howard County, the district in which I teach. Every other one of these districts received one response: 279, Denver Public, Durango 9r, Elmbrook, Flint Carman Ainsworth, Gilbert Public Schools, Lake Washington, Montgomery County, Pasadena ISD, Peekskill, Prince George's County, Russell Independent, San Bernardino County, Shorewood, St Charles CUSD 303, Vernon-Verona-Sherrill, Waukegan CUSD 60, USD 443 Dodge City Public Schools.

### Questions 10-16

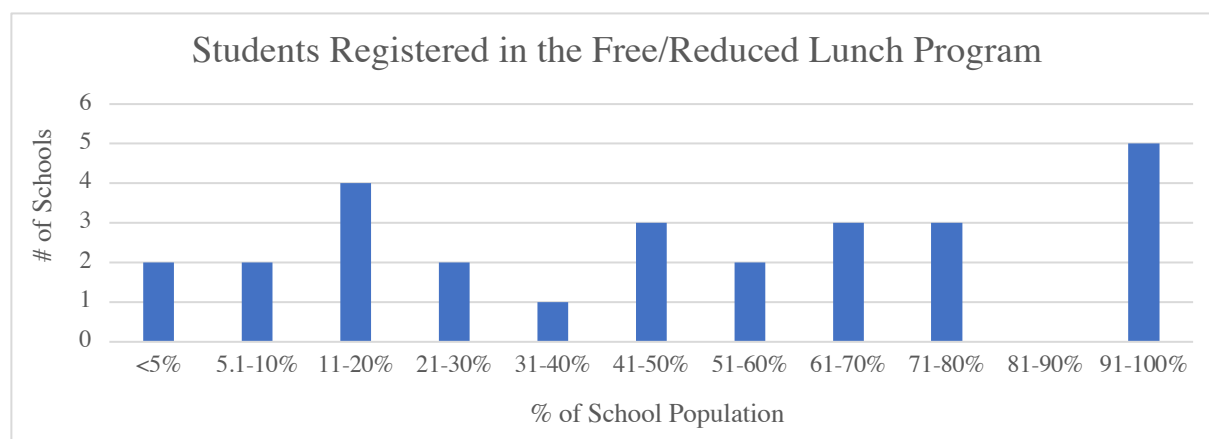
The next several questions asked about the racial/ethnic data from each individual school's overall population. Each question was phrased as such: "What percentage of students in your school identify as (name of racial/ethnic group)?" Numeric results are listed below; not all responses listed a number when it asked for a percentage.



The following are three additional questions that were included to help obtain a clearer picture of the school as well as the district itself and how it collects racial/ethnic data about its schools.

**Question 17: Does your district identify Hispanic/Latino as a race or an ethnicity?**

This question was included according to the information gathered from the American Psychological Association. 70% of responses reported that their district listed Hispanic/Latino as a race, and 30% reported that Hispanic/Latino was listed as an ethnicity.

**Question 18: What percentage of students in your school are registered in the free/reduced lunch program?**

Four respondents left this question blank or stated they did not have access to that data. It was not a required question, as many districts will withhold this information from staff due to confidentiality concerns. Of the five schools who listed that 91-100% of their students were registered for the free/reduced lunch program, the Hispanic/Latino group was identified as being the race/ethnicity of the majority (67-90%) of students at four of those schools.

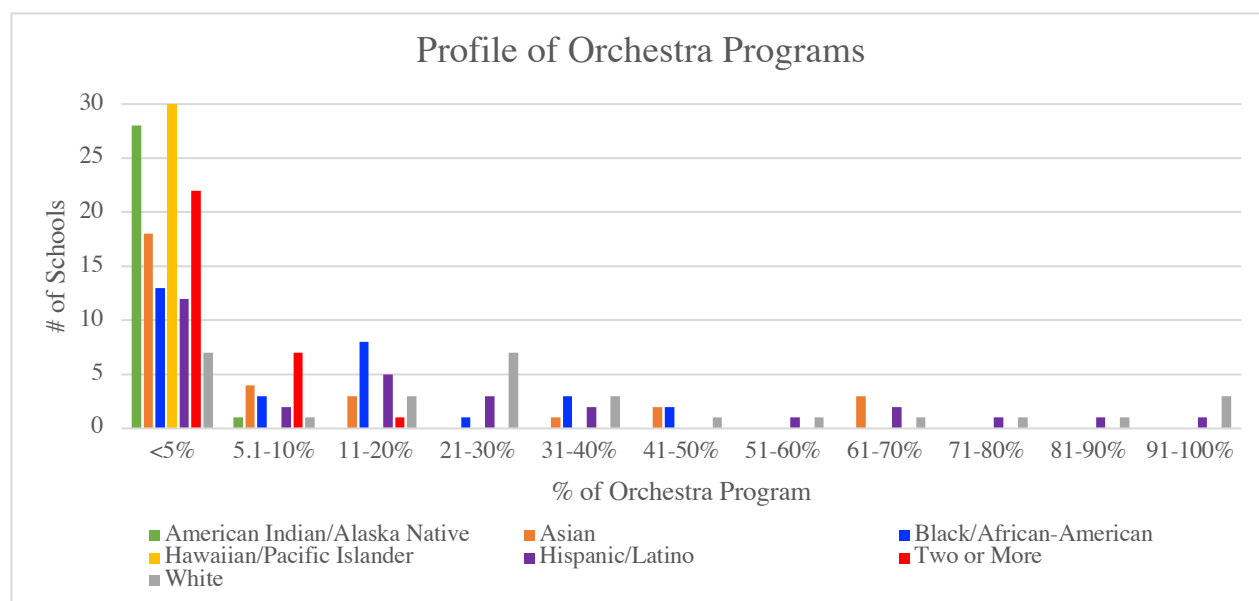
**Question 19: From what school year is this data taken?**

The data for these questions were taken from school years 2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2019-2020, but there was a wide variation of how teachers reported the school year so it was difficult to track trends.

### Results and Findings: Orchestra Program Information

The questions in this section asked about the racial/ethnic data from each individual school's orchestra program. Each question was phrased as such: "What percentage of orchestra students in your school identify as (name of racial/ethnic group)?" Numeric results are listed below; not all responses listed a number when asked for a percentage.

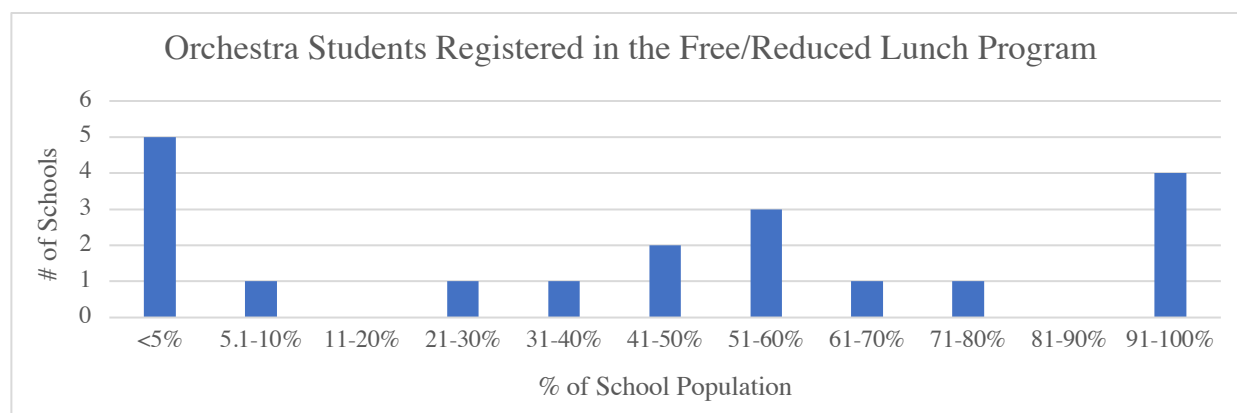
#### **Questions 20-26:**



The following are two additional questions to help obtain a clearer picture of the school as well as the district itself and how it collects racial/ethnic data about its schools.

**Question 27: What percentage of students in your orchestra program are registered in the free/reduced lunch program?**





Additionally, 12 respondents left this question blank or stated they did not have access to this data. It was not a required question, as many districts withhold this information from staff due to confidentiality concerns for students.

**Question 28: From what school year is this data taken?**

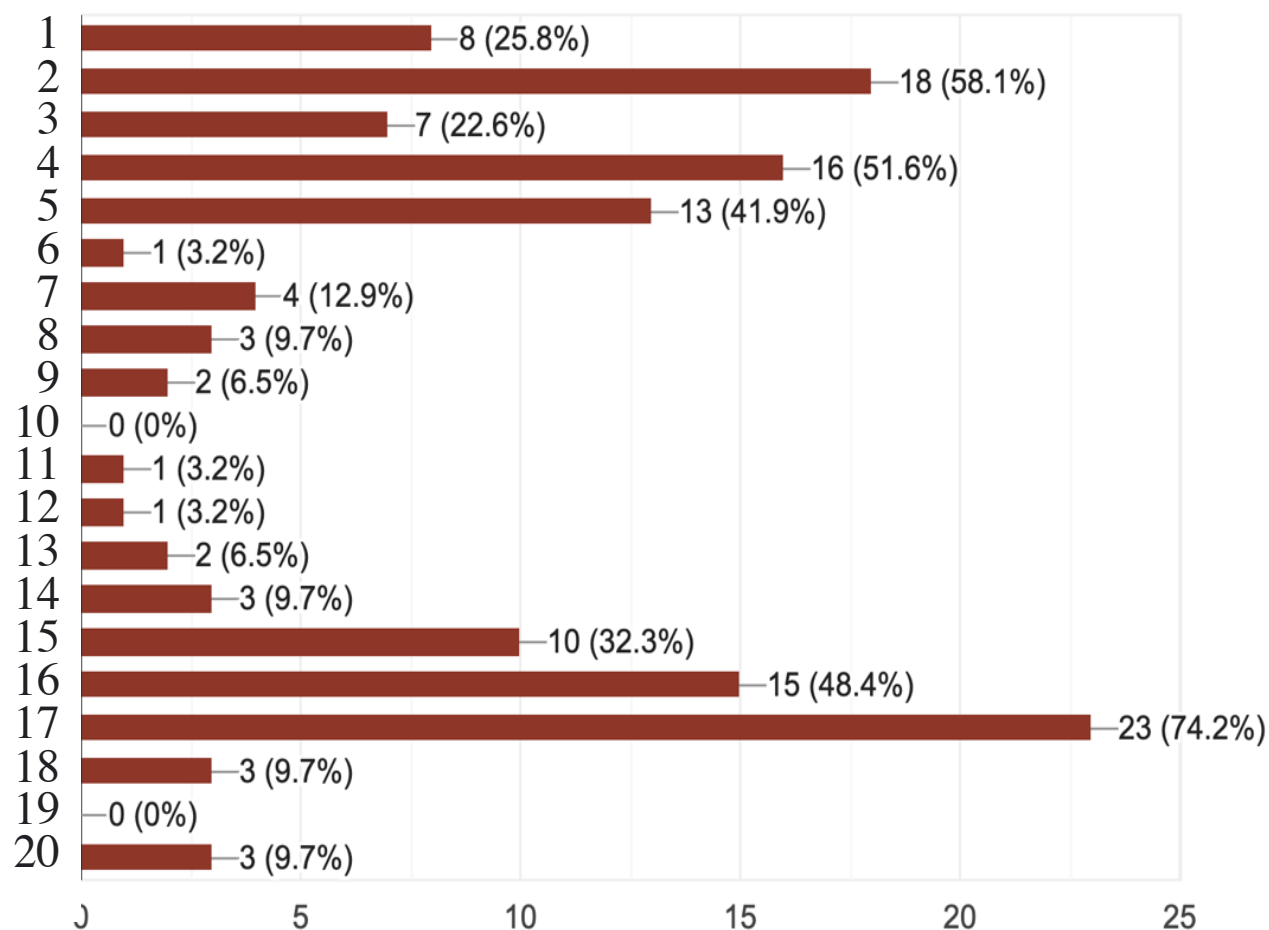
The data for these questions were taken from school years 2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2019-2020, but there was a wide variation of how teachers reported the school year so it was difficult to track trends. Many listed a single year instead of the two years in which a school year usually occurs.

Results and Findings: Orchestra Recruitment

**Question 29: If you host an orchestra recruitment show/presentation for prospective students, select the following characteristics. Check all that apply.**

1. Consists of live performances by professional musicians
2. Consists of live performances by the teacher (not on their primary instrument)
3. Consists of live performances by middle/high school orchestra student role models
4. Consists of live performances by current orchestra students within your school
5. Consists of videos of performances by professional musicians
6. Consists of videos of performances by the teacher (not on their primary instrument)
7. Consists of videos of performances by middle/high school orchestra student role models
8. Consists of videos of performances by current orchestra students within your school
9. Consists of audio recordings of performances by professional musicians
10. Consists of audio recordings of the teacher (not on their primary instrument)

11. Consists of audio recordings of performances by middle/high school orchestra student role models
12. Consists of audio recordings of performances by current orchestra students within your school
13. The show has components of a “mini drama” in which audience members physically participate in a story
14. Audience members have the opportunity to play an imaginary instrument in the show
15. Audience members may hold/play actual instruments in the show
16. Performers in the recruitment show represent multiple races, ethnicities, and cultures found among students in your school
17. The music performed is familiar and recognizable to audience members
18. Students are able to choose the music performed in the recruitment show
19. None of the above
20. I do not host an orchestra recruitment show/presentation for prospective students

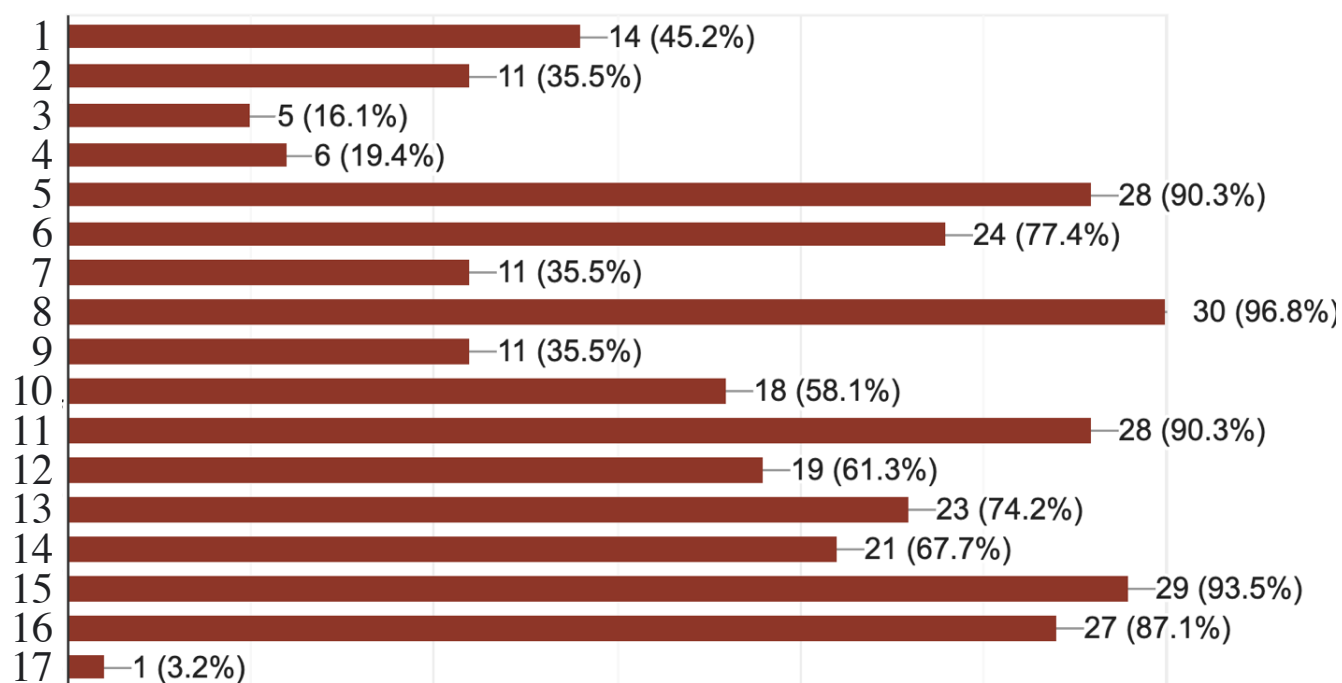


**Question 30: Describe your orchestra recruitment show/presentation in more detail****below.**

“band and orchestra recruitment happens at the same assembly”
“...I demonstrate each string instrument by playing ‘Twinkle’...then the band teacher demonstrates each band instrument also by playing ‘Twinkle’”
“...we encourage students...to NOT audition for orchestra if they plan to play in band in Gr 4.”
“Meeting by homeroom [instead of by grade] allows for more time to answer questions”
“We begin by showing a slide show...presenting questions for them to ask themselves, such as ‘do you like high or low sounds?’, ‘Do you want to touch wood or metal?’, ‘do you want to play a big instrument or small’? , ‘What type of ensemble do you see yourself in?, etc.”
“...I now only have to turn away half the students who audition. The audition is necessary because we can only provide instruments for approximately 40 students per grade level”
“I make it a point to have...students that either appear latinx or are fully bilingual and able to answer students questions in Spanish.”
“...there is an instrument drive where students...have the opportunity to try instruments a second time...”
“...any student who wants to play any string instrument is not limited by ability to rent”
“I see students as half of a grade level during their general music time...”
“...it is a Christmas performance.”
“We...let the high school students introduce themselves and share why they loved staying in Orchestra/Band/Chorus.”
“They also perform Christmas sing-a-longs so that the whole school can enjoy in the fun.”
“I show a PowerPoint presentation that highlights the importance of instrumental music education.”
“I also discuss information about the program, including scheduling and concerts.”
“Then families come after school to see presentation again”

**Question 31: Please select the following other methods/strategies that you use to recruit students to your orchestra program. Check all that apply.**

1. Hosting a separate event from the recruitment show where students may hold/try instruments before registering (i.e. an instrument "petting zoo")
2. Recruiting students to play certain instruments that are currently needed to have a well-balanced ensemble
3. Recruiting groups of students who are friends to sign up for orchestra together
4. Purposefully seeking out and encouraging students to join orchestra who are considered a racial/ethnic minority within your school
5. Providing all students an opportunity to join orchestra regardless of their enrollment in other classes or participation in academic interventions
6. Speaking directly to parents about the orchestra program at back-to-school night, open house events, etc.
7. Providing and communicating solutions to students/families regarding transportation to concerts
8. Providing and communicating solutions to students/families regarding borrowing a school-owned instrument if renting/purchasing an instrument is not an option for them
9. Providing and communicating solutions to students/families regarding space/time for students to practice individually while at school
10. Providing recruitment information in multiple languages spoken by students and/or their families
11. Providing hard copies of registration materials to all students
12. Informing students of special opportunities/ensembles/trips available to current elementary orchestra students
13. Providing orchestra students opportunities to play in concerts for their peers
14. Informing students of special opportunities/ensembles/trips available to middle and/or high school orchestra students
15. Showing a warm, positive demeanor when talking about the program with all students/families
16. Maintaining a reputation among students as a "good teacher"
17. None of the above
18. Other



Four responders (12.9%) selected “Other” and provided additional answers for option 18:

We provide free instruments for all students. Anyone who wants to play we find instruments, no fee.
All students who are interested audition for the program, but i can only take 40, which is about half the number that audition. Our district provides the instruments for all students in the program
Seek out younger siblings of students I teach to get them excited about joining.
We have all the students come to a Q&A with the band and orchestra teacher.

**Question 32: Please describe your other orchestra recruitment methods/strategies in more detail below.**

“I stop teaching a week or two after my spring concert (late May) to allow third graders to try instruments 6 students at a time.”
“I have students rate how they feel about the instrument on a five point scale and I score them on a five point scale on their first experience. I use those notes when trying to steer students towards a certain instrument as fourth graders in the fall.”

"I advocate for newcomer ESOL students and students with IEPs to be able to participate in my program."
"I am available at back to school nights and set up a table..."
"As the prospective students walk into the petting zoo, they are greeted by a current instrumental 6th grade student..."
"The prospective students...are quickly taught how to hold and play a simple melody by other 6th grade students... The 6th header then types down a score from 1-4 (1 - no sound made, 4 - Got a strong sound out)."
"... I have stayed at my school for multiple years and built relationships with families."
"I spend most recruitment time talking to kids during lunch and recess"
"I ask the kids to listen for the sound they like the best."
"an every other year middle school children's concert with petting zoo"
"Getting kids excited about it. Anyone can join. Free if you have free/reduced lunch which is vast majority of students. Sending videos of examples (Black Violin, Lindsey Stirling, Miri Ben Ari, etc) to general music teacher and classroom teacher to share with students."
"I try to actively seek out students from previous years, as well as their siblings."
"Students must also have a note from their parent if they are interested in using a school instrument."
"Attend lunch shifts with "measuring tool" to find kids who match up with available school instruments."
"Every student is given a registration form, which must be signed by the Homeroom teacher proving good academic standing, as orchestra is a pull-out."
"We hold a parent info night and also invite a rental company so they can go home with an instrument if they want."
"I talk to each kid in 3rd grade and measure them."

**Question 33: Please enter your email address below if you are comfortable being contacted regarding your responses.**

This was not a required question to allow for teachers to remain anonymous if they wished, but I did receive 21 responses to this question.

### Diverse Schools Data Subset

The more diverse a school is, the more challenging it may be to conduct one single recruitment show but appeal to students of various backgrounds. FacingHistory.org refers to certain districts as “racially concentrated” when “a district...either has more than 75% white [sic] students or non-white students” (“The Persistence of Racial Segregation in American Schools,” n.d., para. 2). I decided to compare the original results to a subset of schools that I could confirm were not racially concentrated in order to hone-in on strategies used within diverse schools specifically. Of the 31 original responses, 16 were analyzed in this subset.

One key difference between the two sets of data is that the schools represented in the non-racially concentrated subset were 70.6% from Maryland, and 1-2 from New York, Minnesota, Arizona, and Colorado. The other key differences were from question 29 and 31 specifically regarding recruitment. They are as follows:

<b>Question 29: If you host an orchestra recruitment show/presentation for prospective students, select the following characteristics. Check all that apply.</b>	Original Data	Diverse Subset	Difference
Consists of live performances by the teacher (not on their primary instrument)	58.1%	70.6%	<b>+12.5%</b>
Consists of live performances by middle/high school orchestra student role models	22.6%	11.8%	<b>-10.8%</b>
Consists of videos of performances by professional musicians	41.9%	58.8%	<b>+16.9%</b>
Audience members may hold/play actual instruments in the show	32.3%	11.8%	<b>-20.5%</b>
Performers in the recruitment show represent multiple races, ethnicities, and cultures found among students in your school	48.4%	58.8%	<b>+10.4%</b>
I do not host an orchestra recruitment show/presentation for prospective students	9.7%	0%	<b>-9.7%</b>
<b>Question 31: Please select the following other methods/strategies that you use to recruit students to your orchestra program. Check all that apply.</b>	Original Data	Diverse Subset	Difference
Hosting a separate event from the recruitment show where students may hold/try instruments before registering (i.e. an instrument "petting zoo")	45.2%	23.5%	<b>-21.7%</b>

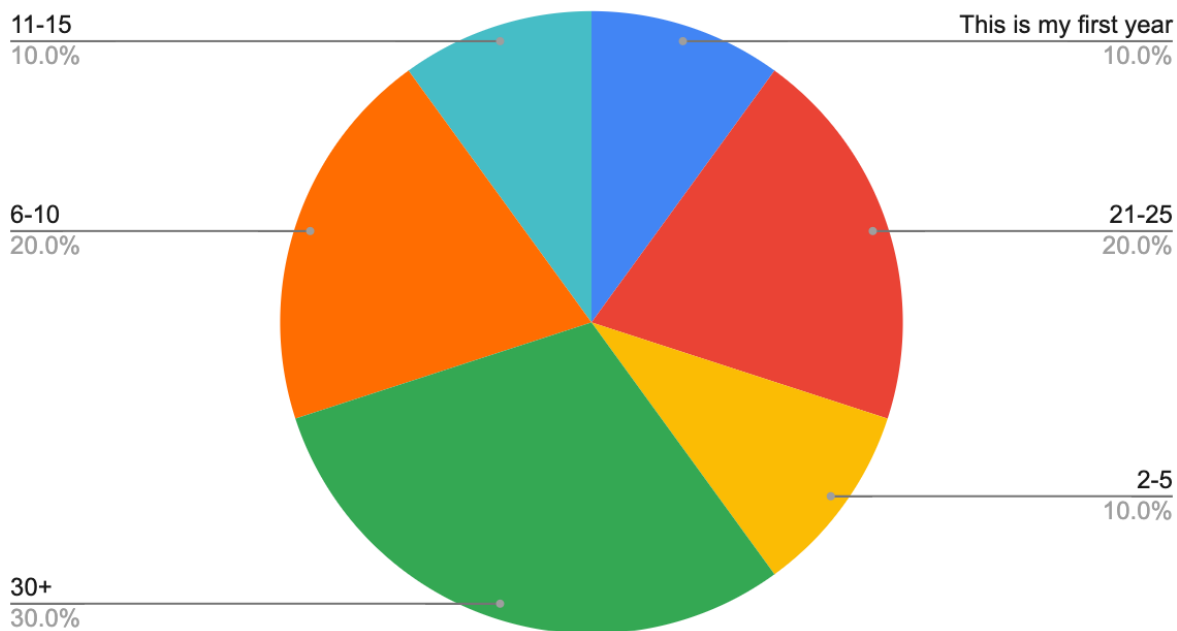
Purposefully seeking out and encouraging students to join orchestra who are considered a racial/ethnic minority within your school	19.4%	29.4%	<b>+10.0%</b>
Speaking directly to parents about the orchestra program at back-to-school night, open house events, etc.	77.4%	88.2%	<b>+10.8%</b>
Providing and communicating solutions to students/families regarding transportation to concerts	35.5%	47.1%	<b>+11.6%</b>
Providing orchestra students opportunities to play in concerts for their peers	74.2%	94.1%	<b>+19.9%</b>
Maintaining a reputation among students as a “good teacher”	87.1%	100%	<b>+12.9%</b>
Other	12.9%	0%	<b>-12.9%</b>

### Representative Programs Subset

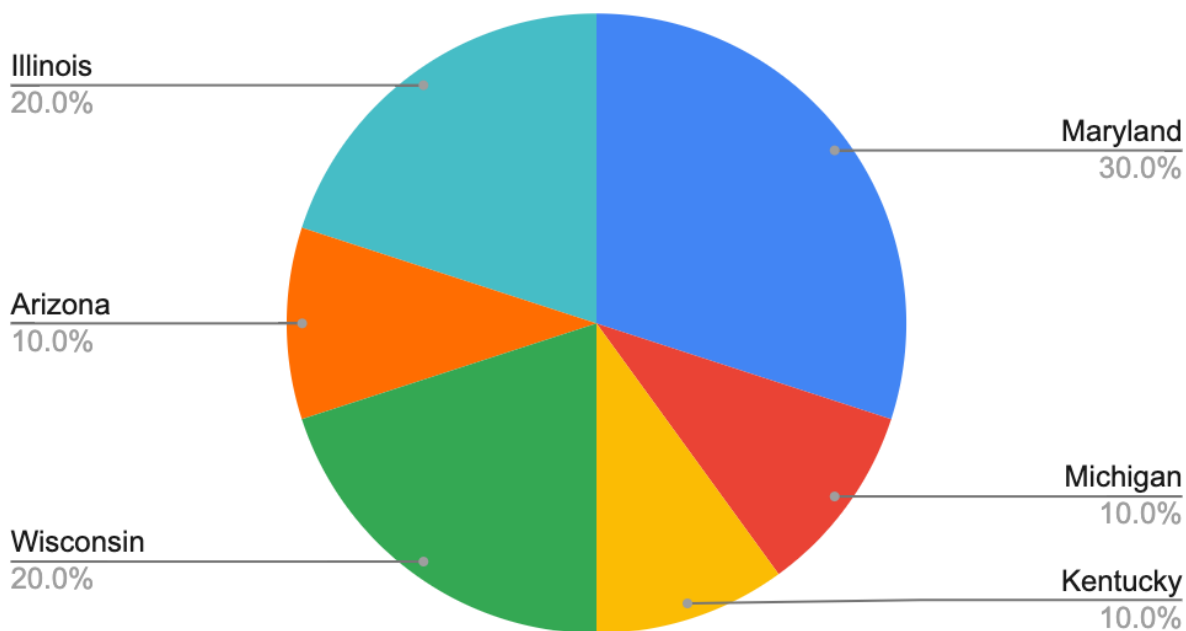
The purpose of this study was to discover what recruitment strategies teachers are using if they are able to match the demographic of their strings program to that of their school. If racial/ethnic groups in the strings program were within 5% of the overall school data, then they qualified for this subset. I chose “5%” as the differential because school systems readily utilize “≤5%” to describe small racial/ethnic categories and yet their data is still considered accurate. Of the 31 original schools, 10 were analyzed in this subset. 2 of these were also not from racially-concentrated schools. The following are the significant differences between this subset and the original data.



### How many years have you been teaching?



### In which U.S. state is your school located?



<b>Question 29: If you host an orchestra recruitment show/presentation for prospective students, select the following characteristics. Check all that apply.</b>	<b>Original Data</b>	<b>Similar Demographic Subset</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Consists of live performances by the teacher (not on their primary instrument)	58.1%	40%	<b>-18.1%</b>
Consists of videos of performances by professional musicians	41.9%	30%	<b>-11.9%</b>
The music performed is familiar and recognizable to audience members	74.2%	60%	<b>-14.2%</b>
<b>Question 31: Please select the following other methods/strategies that you use to recruit students to your orchestra program. Check all that apply.</b>	<b>Original Data</b>	<b>Similar Demographic Subset</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Hosting a separate event from the recruitment show where students may hold/try instruments before registering (i.e. an instrument "petting zoo")	45.2%	60%	<b>+14.8%</b>
Providing and communicating solutions to students/families regarding transportation to concerts	35.5%	10%	<b>-25.5%</b>
Providing and communicating solutions to students/families regarding space/time for students to practice individually while at school	35.5%	20%	<b>-15.5%</b>
Informing students of special opportunities/ensembles/trips available to current elementary orchestra students	61.3%	50%	<b>-11.3%</b>
Informing students of special opportunities/ensembles/trips available to middle and/or high school orchestra students	67.7%	50%	<b>-17.7%</b>

## **Chapter 4: Conclusions**

Before I begin discussing results, I find it important for all of us to address our own implicit biases especially when examining a topic such as this. Reflecting on our own backgrounds, acknowledging the experiences of others that we may not now (or ever) truly understand, leaving room for empathy, and staying open-minded can help lead to productive conversations instead of shutting down an urgent discussion.

### Expected and Unexpected Findings

While constructing the survey, I expected that teachers who could create a program with a similar demographic profile to that of their overall school were regularly utilizing culturally-inclusive recruitment strategies to do so. While I believe my prediction was incorrect according to the results, I was also surprised by many aspects of the results.

I did not expect so many teachers to not have access to the racial/ethnic data for their school or program. This type of information is fairly commonplace among school systems in order to track trends and to find out about the communities they serve, so I find it interesting that teachers may not be given that same information. I was surprised that 96.8% of respondents were White and did not identify as Hispanic/Latino. The literature I reviewed emphasized the importance of having role model musicians of various backgrounds to represent all children, but I myself was unable to find a group of diverse role model teacher musicians in this study. However, I was delighted to have representation from so many different states other than Maryland, as string programs may look entirely different depending on where they are based. I was excited to learn about these differences.

I was surprised to find that only 30% of schools report “Hispanic/Latino” as an ethnicity and not a race, when “ethnicity” is a more apt descriptor according to the American

Psychological Association's definition (refer to page 21 for the full definition). I also find it disappointing that teachers do not have access to the data regarding orchestra students registered in the free and reduced lunch program. I also personally do not have access to this data about my own program. This can really help teachers distribute school-owned instruments on an equitable basis, but I understand districts' concerns regarding confidentiality and privacy for students. When looking at the data for questions 10-16 and 20-26, it initially appeared that many of the orchestra programs were fairly representative of their schools. However, when looking at each school individually, I was only able to find 10 programs that were considered representative of their school according to the parameters I outlined in chapter three.

When looking over the data, I was not surprised by the six most popular characteristics of recruitment shows and presentations: the music performed is familiar and recognizable to audience members (74.2%), live performances by the teacher (not on their primary instrument) (58.1%), live performances by current orchestra students within your school (51.6%), performers in the recruitment show represent multiple races, ethnicities, and cultures found among students in your school (48.4%), videos of performances by professional musicians (41.9%), audience members may hold/play actual instruments in the show (32.3%). I was pleased to find that teachers are prioritizing representation among model musicians in their recruitment shows, but I was hoping the number would have been higher than 48.4%. A few of the additional details that teachers provided about their recruitment shows surprised me, but I will address those later on.

When looking at question 31, the top six most popular recruitment strategies were not very surprising: providing and communicating solutions to students/families regarding borrowing a school-owned instrument if renting/purchasing an instrument is not an option for them (96.8%), showing a warm, positive demeanor when talking about the program with all

students/families (93.5%), providing all students an opportunity to join orchestra regardless of their enrollment in other classes or participation in academic interventions (90.3%), providing hard copies of registration materials to all students (90.3%), and maintaining a reputation among students as a “good teacher” (87.1%). I found it very interesting that most teachers said their reputation in their building is that of a “good teacher,” but some did not select that strategy. I am extremely curious as to why that is, and would encourage those teachers to work towards changing that perception. If students do not think the strings teacher is a “good teacher” for whatever reason, I would assume that those students are not going to be as motivated to join the program. Adults generally do not join extra classes with instructors/professors that they do not consider to be “good teachers”, and our expectations should not be different for our students. This might be a silent threat to the life of your program if your position depends on the number of students who register, and it may be beneficial to further explore that student perception.

I found the two least popular recruitment strategies a bit surprising: purposefully seeking out and encouraging students to join orchestra who are considered a racial/ethnic minority within your school (19.4%), and recruiting groups of students who are friends to sign up for orchestra together (16.1%). I have not recruited groups of friends to orchestra in the past, mainly because I have not spent enough time getting to know the established groups of friends among prospective students. I have always thought this would be a great strategy if I could find time to get to know them, but it seems I am not alone in this struggle. I am surprised that not many respondents stated they encourage students who are considered from a minority group to join their program. I find that by talking with students of all backgrounds about my program, I can find out why they may or may not want to register, and what kinds of concerns they may have about joining, if any. It can help me monitor whether my program is truly equitable for all students and what I can be

doing better to show all students that orchestra class has a place for everyone. It is a great way to check on how your program is perceived in your building among students, and I highly recommend it to anyone. I was surprised by the write-in responses for Questions 31 and 32, but I will also address these later on.

When analyzing the subset of data from schools that were not considered racially concentrated compared to the original set of data, I was surprised to see how drastically they differed. I was not surprised to find that teachers in diverse schools prioritize including performers representing multiple race/ethnicities more, but was surprised to find that 100% of them hosted a recruitment show/presentation (mainly because 100% is a staggering number and this was not a universal commonality I was anticipating). I was actually expecting diverse schools to host petting zoos more than the original data set simply to account for the possibility that not all students may have prior experience with orchestral instruments, and a petting zoo is a great way to guarantee all students have this opportunity before registering. I was expecting orchestra teachers to contact students and families directly in diverse schools more to monitor that they are accommodating all populations, and the data from my survey upheld that belief.

I went into this project thinking that if I was able to tap into strategies used by teachers who have representative programs of their buildings, I would find a definitive set of strategies that all teachers should be using. Although the data subset showed that teachers with representative programs tended to be a bit more experienced, I found that how they were recruiting was actually very different from teachers in diverse schools. I was very confused, as these two ideas seem to clash; if strategies used in representative programs were culturally-inclusive, then why weren't they also being readily used in diverse schools? I can't say that I have discovered a magical set of recruitment strategies, but I think the overall trend I can

confirm is that teachers are doing what they feel is best to serve their particular community. For example, if their community only speaks English, then they won't need to provide program information in several languages, and therefore won't employ that strategy. Additionally, if a teacher has a community with 100% of the student population enrolled in the free/reduced lunch program, they will provide and communicate solutions regarding borrowing a school-owned instrument if renting/purchasing an instrument is not possible for those students, or that teacher risks not having a program entirely.

I think a key pattern I can find in the data is that customizing recruitment to your school population and your community is essential. If you are new to a community, using as many of these strategies during your first year of recruitment will help you learn how to respond best to your students' interest in your program and you can refine your recruitment afterwards through trial and error. This experience has given me a great tool kit from which to pull recruitment ideas, and I'm excited to provide my students with an engaging and exciting invitation to my strings program. I owe it to the teachers who graciously responded to my survey.

### "Red-Flag Strategies"

Earlier I mentioned that there were responses to questions 30-32 that surprised me, and I feel I have a responsibility to point out strategies that I find fairly unwelcoming to students. I will discuss these "red-flag strategies" and point out why teachers should consider removing them from their recruitment repertoire. There were two separate responses to question 30 that described recruitment shows having various Christmas-related themes, and even Christmas sing-a-longs. I know winter concerts can be a tricky subject especially during the holiday season, and even if your community predominantly celebrates Christmas, more than likely there are prospective students in the audience that do not. Without including other holiday tunes in your

recruitment show, students may be perceiving a message that they are not welcome in your program. There are also groups of students who do not celebrate any wintertime holiday, and may not feel included in your show regardless of how many holidays are represented. I would caution teachers to not use concerts with religious content for recruitment purposes so they can avoid excluding prospective students.

While discussing the selection of high school student role models to interact with prospective elementary students, one teacher “makes it a point” to have students who “either appear latinx or are fully bilingual and able to answer students questions in Spanish.” While having student helpers who are able to speak the same language of your prospective students is a great tool and very inclusive to that group, selecting student helpers based on if they appear to be a certain race/ethnicity rather than if they self-identify as a race/ethnicity can be discriminatory. This may have just been an odd choice of words on the behalf of that respondent, but if it is an apt description of their process for identifying student helpers I strongly caution teachers from repeating this. It can be extremely uncomfortable for a student assistant who may not identify as a certain race/ethnicity to be chosen to interact with younger students solely based on the assumption they belong to that group. This could lead to confusion for both the student assistant and the prospective student, and students are often more perceptive than we may realize about being grouped together.

One response to question 31 mentioned requiring students to audition in order to register for the strings program. Although the teacher mentioned that their program provides all of the instruments for students who enroll (which in turn creates limitations for how many students can register), requiring auditions may be alienating students who do not have access to additional resources outside of school. For example, if a student is able to take private lessons outside of



school or is able to participate in local youth orchestras, that student will be more likely to pass the audition over a student who does not have access to these experiences. This practice may be excluding students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds and making registration for the strings program not as equitable an experience as it could be.

Finally, I received a response to question 32 describing that “every student is given a registration form, which must be signed by the Homeroom teacher proving good academic standing, as orchestra is a pull-out.” If the homeroom teacher is responsible for deciding who may join the program, we leave the fate of our programs entirely in their hands. Also, students who may not be in “good academic standing” may not have access to resources outside of school that can improve their academic performance (tutors, after-school study groups, extracurricular activities, homework clubs, etc.), which is highlighting inequities that may exist within the community. Preventing these students from registering for strings also does not provide them with other avenues in which they can experience academic success. If those are the only students permitted to join the program, we are unfortunately leaving many of our students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds behind and not promoting equity with our recruitment process.

#### Improvements to the Study

My survey was very detailed and had a large number of questions, possibly deterring teachers from submitting a response. It would have been easier to track trends and patterns if I obtained more responses, and although I pursued and accepted responses for several months, I still had hoped for more participation. I also could have changed the settings within Google Forms to require a number when I asked for percentages, as some teachers responded with words like “majority” or “less” to these questions. This would have made some of the responses I did receive more viable.

I also had several teachers who submitted percentages that did not overall add up to 100, which possibly led to skewed final data and different analyses. I wish that Google Forms had a function that would require responses to add up to 100, but that does not currently exist. I would have been happy to have teachers simply submit their school name and I could have researched at least the school level data for them, but this data may not be accessible by the public. Also, with the nature of the orchestra teacher generally being only one person in a school, it would also ruin the possibility of anonymity for respondents.

### Possible Future Research

The results from this survey could lead to a number of other research studies. We could explore how orchestra recruitment impacts or coordinates with band recruitment. We could also ask students what their perceptions of band and strings are at the elementary level. Many orchestra teachers mentioned band recruitment when describing their strategies, so it could be interesting to see how recruitment for both programs looks in many different schools (especially if there is a separate teacher for band and another for strings). One study I would be particularly interested in would be a longevity version of this survey. I could interview the same set of teachers after two recruitment seasons and ask them to test different recruitment strategies during each year. Then we could examine the impact on the number of students who register, helping us to focus on what strategies can work in different scenarios.

### Impact and Final Thoughts

I hope that studies like these can aid teachers discussing how to best recruit for their community. I would suggest getting to know your school before deciding your recruitment methods, and if you are new to those students, I would try as many of the most popular strategies from this survey as possible to see what works. You could even ask the students what they would

like to get out of a strings program at their school, and ask parents what their thoughts are about instrumental music. The more information you obtain, the more you have to gain from your time spent recruiting. Making assumptions about what your students would like to see can be precarious, and could even send the opposite message than you intend. If you have a teaching position in which you are in multiple buildings, I suggest designing recruitment that is unique and specific to each school, if possible. Be mindful of how you present your program to your school, and welcome as many students as possible!

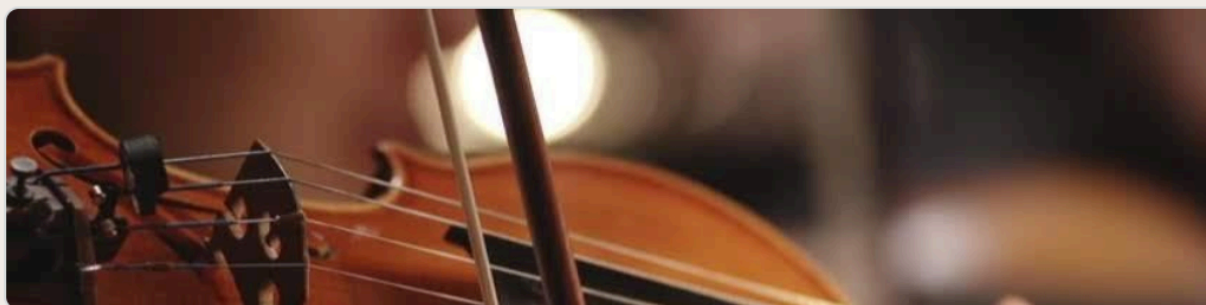
I will leave you with one final note; there was one response to question 32 that I want to highlight below:

“I have gotten in trouble for using many of the recruitment strategies listed above (some I checked, some I didn't). Other orchestra teachers have discouraged me from recruiting by friend group, holding petting zoos, or reaching out to specific minority groups. It's nice to see these strategies validated.”

If choosing culturally-inclusive recruitment strategies or even trying a new unfamiliar method is discouraged by your colleagues or administrators, I would encourage productive conversations with these stakeholders to help improve our programs on behalf of our students. If we communicate with each other, acknowledge our unique backgrounds and experiences, and make focused and positive changes, we can progress together to ensure we invite all students into our classrooms and be able to show them the power and magic of music-making.

## Appendices

### Appendix A – Survey



## Culturally-Inclusive Recruitment Strategies for Elementary School Orchestra

Hello! The following is a study I am completing in order to fulfill the requirements for a master's degree at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. All answers will remain anonymous. Feel free to contact me at [cramis@uarts.edu](mailto:cramis@uarts.edu). The survey takes approximately 7-12 minutes to complete. Thank you in advance for your participation!

\* Required

Do you teach orchestra in a public elementary school in the United States of America? \*

☐ Yes

☐ No

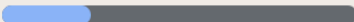
Next



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Is enrollment for your school's orchestra program compulsory or based on student interest? \*

- ☐ Based on student interest
- ☐ Compulsory

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Do you have access to the racial/ethnic data for the students in your school? \*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

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Do you also have access to the racial/ethnic data for the students in your orchestra program from that same schoolyear? \*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

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### About You

How many years have you been teaching? \*

☐ This is my first year

☐ 2-5

☐ 6-10

☐ 11-15

☐ 16-20

☐ 21-25

☐ 26-30

☐ 30+

How would you describe yourself? \*

☐ American Indian/Alaska Native

☐ Asian

☐ Black/African-American

☐ Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

☐ White

☐ Two or more races

Would you describe yourself as Hispanic or of Latino origin? \*

☐ Yes

☐ No

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### School Demographic

In which U.S. state is your school located? \*

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

In which district is your school located? \*

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

What percentage of students in your school identify as American Indian/Alaska Native? \*

☐ ≤ 5%

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

What percentage of students in your school identify as Asian? \*

☐ ≤ 5%

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

What percentage of students in your school identify as Black/African American? \*

☐ ≤ 5%

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

What percentage of students in your school identify as Hawaiian/Pacific Islander? \*

☐ ≤ 5%

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

What percentage of students in your school identify as Hispanic/Latino? \*

☐ ≤ 5%

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Does your district identify Hispanic/Latino as a race or an ethnicity? \*

☐ Race (it is listed alongside American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black/African-American, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, White, and two or more races)

☐ Ethnicity (it is listed in a separate category)

What percentage of students in your school identify as White? \*

☐ ≤ 5%

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_



What percentage of students in your school identify as two or more races? \*

☐ ≤ 5%

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

What percentage of students in your school are registered in the free/reduced lunch program?

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

From what schoolyear is this data taken? \*

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

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### Orchestra Program Demographic

Please use data from the same schoolyear as the previous questions.

What percentage of orchestra students in your school identify as American Indian/Alaska Native? \*

☐ ≤ 5%

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

What percentage of orchestra students in your school identify as Asian? \*

☐ ≤ 5%

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

What percentage of orchestra students in your school identify as Black/African American? \*

☐ ≤ 5%

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

What percentage of orchestra students in your school identify as Hawaiian/Pacific Islander? \*

☐ ≤ 5%

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

What percentage of orchestra students in your school identify as Hispanic/Latino? \*

☐ ≤ 5%

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

What percentage of orchestra students in your school identify as White? \*

☐ ≤ 5%

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

What percentage of orchestra students in your school identify as two or more races? \*

☐ ≤ 5%

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

What percentage of orchestra students in your school are registered in the free/reduced lunch program?

Your answer

---

From what school-year is this data taken? \*

Your answer

---

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### Orchestra Recruitment in Your School

If you host an orchestra recruitment show/presentation for prospective students, select the following characteristics. Check all that apply. \*

- ☐ Consists of live performances by professional musicians
- ☐ Consists of live performances by the teacher (not on their primary instrument)
- ☐ Consists of live performances by middle/high school orchestra student role models
- ☐ Consists of live performances by current orchestra students within your school
- ☐ Consists of videos of performances by professional musicians
- ☐ Consists of videos of performances by the teacher (not on their primary instrument)
- ☐ Consists of videos of performances by middle/high school orchestra student role models
- ☐ Consists of videos of performances by current orchestra students within your school
- ☐ Consists of audio recordings of performances by professional musicians
- ☐ Consists of audio recordings of the teacher (not on their primary instrument)
- ☐ Consists of audio recordings of performances by middle/high school orchestra student role models
- ☐ Consists of audio recordings of performances by current orchestra students within your school
- ☐ The show has components of a "mini drama" in which audience members physically participate in a story
- ☐ Audience members have the opportunity to play an imaginary instrument in the show
- ☐ Audience members may hold/play actual instruments in the show
- ☐ Performers in the recruitment show represent multiple races, ethnicities, and cultures found among students in your school
- ☐ The music performed is familiar and recognizable to audience members

- ☐ Students are able to choose the music performed in the recruitment show
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ I do not host an orchestra recruitment show/presentation for prospective students

Describe your orchestra recruitment show/presentation in more detail below.

Your answer

---

Please select the following other methods/strategies that you use to recruit students to your orchestra program. Check all that apply. \*

- ☐ Hosting a separate event from the recruitment show where students may hold/try instruments before registering (i.e. an instrument "petting zoo")
- ☐ Recruiting students to play certain instruments that are currently needed to have a well-balanced ensemble
- ☐ Recruiting groups of students who are friends to sign up for orchestra together
- ☐ Purposefully seeking out and encouraging students to join orchestra who are considered a racial/ethnic minority within your school
- ☐ Providing all students an opportunity to join orchestra regardless of their enrollment in other classes or participation in academic interventions
- ☐ Speaking directly to parents about the orchestra program at back-to-school night, open house events, etc.
- ☐ Providing and communicating solutions to students/families regarding transportation to concerts
- ☐ Providing and communicating solutions to students/families regarding borrowing a school-owned instrument if renting/purchasing an instrument is not an option for them
- ☐ Providing and communicating solutions to students/families regarding space/time for students to practice individually while at school

- ☐ Providing recruitment information in multiple languages spoken by students and/or their families
- ☐ Providing hard copies of registration materials to all students
- ☐ Informing students of special opportunities/ensembles/trips available to current elementary orchestra students
- ☐ Providing orchestra students opportunities to play in concerts for their peers
- ☐ Informing students of special opportunities/ensembles/trips available to middle and/or high school orchestra students
- ☐ Showing a warm, positive demeanor when talking about the program with all students/families
- ☐ Maintaining a reputation among students as a "good teacher"
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Please describe your other orchestra recruitment methods/strategies in more detail below.


Your answer

---

Please enter your email address below if you are comfortable being contacted regarding your responses.

Your answer

---

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Appendix B – Conversation with Facebook Group Admin

The following is the conversation I had with an administrator for the “School Orchestra and String Teachers” Facebook group when I attempted to repost the survey in December. I have deliberately omitted names.

12/28/19, 1:51 PM

Catina--I'm going to approve your survey but will let you know that it is VERY difficult to get representative data on this page.

Thanks so much! If you have any recommendations for other avenues for how I can put out my survey to more teachers I would love feedback. Take care!

You can now call each other and see information like Active Status and when you've read messages.

I'm hoping that posting it to the group is a good starting point.

12/28/19, 11:12 PM

Hello, I noticed the survey has not been posted. Do I need to create a new post for it to be accepted? Thanks!

12/29/19, 7:28 AM

I thought I approved it but I think [redacted] (the admin on call for Saturday) denied at the same time. Sorry but I think you will need to submit again.

I did find this. . Different aspect of your research? Note the number of responses. . .







12/29/19, 8:32 AM

What are you referring to?

No clue. Go ahead and resubmit your survey.


12/29/19, 1:02 PM

Posting now. I had posted it before, but it was during Thanksgiving break and thought everyone may have been too busy especially with concert season coming up. I'm hoping that sending it during winter break might be a better time. Thank you for your support!

I wish you the best of luck. It's an important topic.

Appendix C – Survey Invitation

The message below was posted to the “School Orchestra and Strings Teachers” closed group on Facebook (~9,300 members), and the “Social Justice Music Educators” closed group on Facebook (~1,900 members) on November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019 and December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019. The post for the former group was delayed until December 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

**Catina McLagan** shared a link.  
December 29, 2019 · 🌐

Hi everyone! I am conducting a study entitled “Culturally-Inclusive Recruitment Strategies for Elementary School Orchestra” as part of my research for my thesis in pursuit of a master's degree. All answers will remain anonymous. The survey takes approximately 7-12 minutes to complete. I'm based in Maryland and would love to hear perspectives from all across the country, especially if your school is diverse. Thank you in advance for your participation!



### Culturally-Inclusive Recruitment Strategies for Elementary School Orchestra

Hello! The following is a study I am completing in order to fulfill the requirements for a master's degree at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. All answers will remain anonymous. Feel free to contact me at [cramis@uarts.edu](mailto:cramis@uarts.edu). The survey takes approximately 7-12 minutes to complete. Thank you in advance for your participation!

\* Required

Do you teach orchestra in a public elementary school in the United States of

DOCS.GOOGLE.COM

**Culturally-Inclusive Recruitment Strategies for Elementary School Orchestra**

The message below along with the link to this survey was posted to my personal Facebook page on December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

**Catina McLagan**  
December 28, 2019 · 🧑

Hey friends! I am conducting a study for my master's entitled "Culturally-Inclusive Recruitment Strategies for Elementary School Orchestra". If you wouldn't mind taking a minute to fill it out or pass it along to your elementary string teacher friends I would be extremely grateful. 😊  
HoCo friends - I can show you where to find the data that the survey asks for about your school, just send me a message if you want help. Thanks everyone! 🎵



**Culturally-Inclusive Recruitment Strategies for Elementary School Orchestra**

Hello! The following is a study I am completing in order to fulfill the requirements for a master's degree at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. All answers will remain anonymous. Feel free to contact me at [cramis@uarts.edu](mailto:cramis@uarts.edu). The survey takes approximately 7-12 minutes to complete. Thank you in advance for your participation!

\* Required

Do you teach orchestra in a public elementary school in the United States of

DOCS.GOOGLE.COM

**Culturally-Inclusive Recruitment Strategies for Elementary School Orchestra**

I also emailed the survey to 37 elementary string teachers in my district with the following message on February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

Hi everyone,

I am in the process of writing my thesis on culturally-inclusive recruitment strategies for elementary school orchestra. I am conducting a survey to find out more about how teachers recruit students to their orchestra programs in elementary school.

I hope you will consider sharing your recruitment experiences with me by completing the survey below (and maybe even being an absolute rock star and passing this on to colleagues outside of HCPSS who may also want to contribute😊). Answers will remain anonymous. The survey takes approximately 7-12 minutes to complete.

(survey link)

If you need help finding the data requested in the survey, please see **attached**.  
Thank you in advance for your participation!

Best,

**Catina M<sup>c</sup>Lagan**

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