

MUED 790 Thesis

**Equitable Access to Music Education
in the School District of Philadelphia**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to survey the different settings and situations of music education in the School District of Philadelphia with the hope to find trends of inequities that may guide future allocations of funds and resources. Teacher leveling and teacher retention are problems stemming from inequity of funding, supports and resource access in Philadelphia schools. A collection of interviews of music teachers who have left the district lays out the groundwork for traumatic teaching experiences. Then, an understanding of the word equity and how it relates to education is laid out before reviewing other research in the area of music education.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to look into the equitable access to music education at individual schools within the School District of Philadelphia (SDP). One of the most unique facts about SDP is that each school has decisions and programs that are decided upon solely by the principals' authority. Because each school is operated as an individual entity, there are substantial inconsistencies between every school building. This study will compare trends amongst schools with lower amounts of instruction time in music education to schools with higher amounts of instruction time in music education. We will compare the multifaceted factors of access amounts between schools, including the type of music instruction students receive at their school (instrumental or vocal), participation in performing ensembles, minutes of instruction per week, as well as interruptions to the master schedule, and then compare these to environmental factors, such as leadership and peer support, resources and culturally responsive preparedness.

The School District of Philadelphia is the 8th largest school district in the United States, serving approximately 119,000 public school students across its 143 square miles (Fast Facts - The School District of Philadelphia). In its 215 public school buildings, there is a wide variety of educational programs which make it one of the most diverse districts and also arguably one of the most inequitable districts in regard to accessibility to music education. This study looks closely at the inconsistencies among each school's access to music education, identifying existing trends or elements of inequitable access.

With this information, I hope the study can shed light on the areas that lack equity

and accessibility to quality music education so that proper action can be taken to bring equity and access to all students.

Rationale

While some schools have multiple music teachers, programs, and opportunities for students to participate in and expand their experiences in music, many schools are juggling funds and rationales to hire a single music teacher, as I have personally experienced in my career in Philadelphia. The School District of Philadelphia engages a process called “leveling,” with the intention of distributing an equal number of teachers across the number of students in each school. This process leads to a number of many undesirable outcomes and negative effects and leads schools further from equity than closer. Equitable teacher distribution is a million dollar project that aims to cover up the stark inequities between district school buildings and their opportunities provided to serve the student’s education. Moving a lone music teacher from one school and placing them into another leaves the imbalance of resources in reverse, sometimes even more imbalanced. To acquire equity, the process to this end goal must be prepared for, assessed and reviewed by many perspectives within the school’s community. This study serves as an assessment of current situations from the perspective of a specialist music teacher within the SDP.

The Leveling Process

Within the first month of the school year, the School District of Philadelphia requires principals to send a “final count” of the number of students enrolled in each grade. Due to high transience in the student population, population numbers fluctuate on a large scale within schools. Families will use the addresses of relatives’ houses, who live in a different catchment zone, as their own residential address, in order to enroll their child at a “better

school.” After this process, principals who have more teachers than necessary per student count will be required to cut a teacher at their discretion while still meeting the minimum graduation and state requirements in course offerings. This leveling process forces a teacher to transfer to a new school. Thus, the teacher is labeled as a “forced transfer” which makes their position at that new school expire at the end of the year, allowing for anyone to reapply for it, including the teacher who was forced transferred.

In my personal experience, leveling occurs often to arts and specialist teachers at a higher rate than the four standard subjects (English, Math, Social Studies and Science). After I was “leveled” several times, I had taught at six different schools within five years. The process undoubtedly affected all the children I was teaching, leaving them with no music instruction, and affected me, having to adjust to new grade levels, new schools, new students, and new classes after at least six weeks of instruction each year. Students who had spent the beginning of a new school year learning the rules, routines, environment, procedures of their teachers and school were suddenly flipped upside down and shaken apart. When their schedule changed, their grades were erased, they were placed in new classes or shuffled classes with a different teacher. The community that was built in those first days and weeks of school was destroyed.

I began my work in the School District of Philadelphia in April 2014, completing the school year at a magnet high school in West Philly. In the academic year 2014-2015, I was “leveled” from teaching 9th-12th graders at this school full time, to teaching there Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. I was placed Wednesdays at an elementary school, teaching an unpredictable set of classes ranging from K-5. When I arrived at that school Wednesday mornings, I was told what classes I would be teaching, which was usually different from the

schedule that was set for the marking period. In 2015-2016 I was re-hired full time at the magnet high school, but had to rebuild a trust with my students who had felt betrayed by my absence on Wednesdays in the previous year. In 2016-2017, I was reduced to a .5 position at that same high school and was hired .5 time at the middle school downstairs, who shared the building, and on October 7th, 2016, my position was then leveled from both of these schools and was placed at a middle school in a different part of the city, about 40 minutes away. This forced me to move my entire supply of self-obtained instruments (about twenty guitars, keyboards, stands and boxes of books) and resources to my new school, with no financial support from the district. After shedding thousands of tears with the students I had been teaching for three years, I hired a moving truck to move the instruments by myself with no reimbursement from the district.

Before I moved, I sustained a major injury from an auto-pedestrian accident that kept me out of work for six more weeks. I began working at this new middle school in mid-November and endured many hardships at this school (which had twelve teachers quit throughout the entire year). I was evaluated on my performance within the first month of working there by an administrator who sat next to a group of students and disrupted my lesson. The rating I was given: "Needs Improvement." Because of many factors that contributed to a poor working environment at that school in general, I had a difficult time adjusting to the environment, which included unattended children running through my classroom to the stage doors, which were unable to lock, children hiding in storage closets that were not locked, and had no follow-through support from the administration to enforce disciplinary action. The poor evaluation, which had put me on a track to be entirely dismissed from teaching in the district, placed me onto an improvement plan for the

remainder of the year (an improvement plan requires a teacher to have a peer teacher coach intervene and support them to help them improve before their next observation. The teacher coach also serves as a liaison between the teacher and their administrator).

Because I was a “force transfer,” the principal did not have to retain me for the following year, so I had to set out to find another school. The next year, 2017-2018, I was placed at a “turn-around” high school, whose principal subsequently cut vocal music in January’s budget planning of that year and did not inform me that I would have to job search for yet another school the next year. Of these three former schools, only one of them employed a music teacher for the following year, and that one teacher put in their 60 days notice to leave SDP by early Winter. Finally, as many colleagues promised me I would “find my forever school after five years,” I was requested to interview at a high school looking to hire their third music teacher. I have been there now for three years.

I am finally in a high school that seems to have a position for me for years to come and an administrative team who supports having a full gamut of music education for their students. While this is a positive result of my perseverance in the district, the truth is that there are still schools lacking a full time music teacher. The instability of the aforementioned situation was emotionally taxing for myself and especially for my students, whose schedules were completely rearranged six to eight weeks into the school year, and left hundreds of students without music education for potentially their entire school career. “In high schools, leveling can mean large swaths of students, and sometimes a whole school, must get new schedules,” declares Kristen Graham (2018). Overall, I am not the only teacher affected by this and my students are only a small fraction of students district wide who have these adjustments made after almost two months of instruction. According

to a 2018 Philadelphia Inquirer article, more than 100 teachers in the district would be leveled. Elected leaders, including Helen Gym, a city councilwoman, have also spoken out on this process, saying, "It has a profound impact on school communities, disrupting the school year, and severing the relationships teachers and students build throughout the first weeks of school." (Graham, 2018). Kristen Graham reports that the school district defends the process because it "is a way to "maximize the resources we can get in schools for kids," an imperfect process that maintains equity among schools." (2018) When resources are so disproportionate and unfair, the SDP will resort to these desperate attempts to show how they are "maximizing resources" (Graham, 2018) when in reality, they are stripping the sense of community in every school every Fall. This shuffle of resources is the message kids receive about their education in SDP: that when they start off a new school year on a positive note, they will be stripped of their resources.

Teacher Retention

Another problem in Philadelphia schools, partly in conjunction with the leveling process, is teacher retention and teacher turn over. A school is unable to maintain a solidified music program when the teachers are rotating in and out at an unpredictable pace. Principals sometimes use leveling as a way to cut inexperienced teachers with the hope of finding one with more experience in the year to follow. Looking back at my journey, I have seen many teachers leave the district and leave the profession because of the trauma they've endured from leveling, unsupportive administrators with no school vision, and unmanageable environmental situations, including hostile student behavior and toxic environments with no consequences. According to another article in the Philadelphia Inquirer, Kristen Graham states, "teachers say concern about leadership is still the number-

one reason they quit, according to an exit survey of departing employees” (Calefati, J., et. al. 2019)

An example of a music teacher leaving due to poor leadership is a former colleague of mine who wrote a testimony of their experience as a first year teacher in the School District of Philadelphia. They write:

The school culture was generally unsafe. While I made many connections with students, allowing many to hang out in my room during their lunch periods, inviting kids to help clean up the room, etc, I was not allowed to start any after/before school programming. I wound up having to cover other classes during [teacher] absences, meaning entire classes would miss their once per week music class. I was told by my mentor teacher that I was doing everything right in this context and that this school was just tricky. There were children who clearly needed emotional supports that they were not getting, or that they did not get during their "prep class."

I was completely unprepared to deal with principals and climate officers physically gripping up students, pushing them to the floor, yelling, and telling me to do the same. Other teachers told me to throw chairs and slam doors to establish my authority. I asked the kids how they were feeling about things and they would regularly tell me they were miserable and felt like they were in jail. Some students begged me to promise not to leave.

I reached a breaking point when the administration decided to go on "lockdown" to "return control of the school" to the adults. This was October into November. It was almost a month where this lockdown was in place. The rules were ridiculous: no recess, no "prep classes" (ie. gym, music, art), and only 2 bathroom/water breaks PER DAY for all students K-8. This was by far the hardest part of my time at [this school]. I had to go on a cart with no notice and change all my lesson plans. All of the kids were understandably miserable. I called the union and music admin at 440- - the response was mostly "some schools are just like this." Veteran teachers I looked up told me that most teachers do their due diligence at those "tougher" schools and move on to better openings.

To say I was furious is an understatement. I couldn't believe that so many people turned away from the incredibly abusive treatment happening to these children. With no notice, the admin decided on a random day before Thanksgiving break to end the lockdown. I wound up with multiple classes who were unaccounted for in the hallway alone because there was no communication. Kids started fighting and behaving in unsafe ways (of course, I do not blame them for this), and I was terrified something would happen to one of them and I would be responsible. I finished out the day with my room completely not set up for any learning (I thought I would still be on the cart), and decided not to return. I packed up with the help of some colleagues and resigned before Thanksgiving Break.

Because I didn't give 60 days notice, I am never allowed to teach at the school district ever again. (Interview Participant 1)

This testimony is a familiar story for many new teachers who come to Philadelphia with the hope to make a difference in the lives of children. The environments are dangerous and unsupportive. Learning cannot take place when the basic human needs of all individuals (sense of safety, security, belongingness, esteem) are met.

Via a telephone interview with another former colleague, one who worked for over 10 years in the School District of Philadelphia, we find that they left the poor working conditions in their schools for teaching in a suburban district. One of the most notable differences between the urban and suburban schools they have taught in is the cleanliness of the school within the suburban district. They note that in Philadelphia, mice run rampant through classrooms, even when students are present. This is a huge distraction for learning. The moment a student sees a mouse, the entire lesson is lost because the kids react: some start chasing the mouse, some are standing on chairs screaming. Mice and roaches have become a normal part of a single day in most school classrooms in the School District of Philadelphia.

The most significant difference in regards to cleanliness, they mention in their interview, is the significance of brightness in schools outside Philadelphia. Hallways in Philadelphia have faded colors, broken and missing lights and dark floor tiles which hide dirt and grime. Add in the actively trash covered floors of most SDP schools, when students are present, and the atmosphere is anything but cheery and welcoming. This teacher blankly stated, "these things [mice, trash and cleanliness] retard the process of education."

Leadership is an element that can negate the negative impacts of other elements within the map of equity. Leaders who provide a safe learning environment and positive sense of community are vital components for maintaining a healthy and welcoming environment for learning. This allows for teachers to feel supported, teachers to learn from and support each other, and ultimately leads the way to teachers focusing their energies on serving and supporting the learning of their students.

The leveling process and teacher retention are consequences of a larger dysfunctional system within the School District of Philadelphia: the lack of equity amongst its schools. From a diverse range of programs from school to school and the heavy reliance on non-profit and government funded organizations to bring in supplemental resources for education, schools have to find creative ways to appeal to their catchment community and families, sometimes sacrificing one art over another. I look back at my journey as a rocky, unstable, unfair and inequitable process that has been a disservice to many students and many teachers alike. Many teachers leave the district within the first few years due to leveling; many do not endure through with the hope I had of one day being hired at a school with a vision and value for music education. My hope with this research project is to collect and analyze data that would be useful for the School District of Philadelphia to consider when discussing and allocating funding for steady and intensive music programs and employing an equitable variety of full time music teachers in every school throughout the city.

Chapter 2 - Article and Research Review

Equity and its many dimensions

Equity, simply defined as “the quality of being fair and impartial,” (Oxford University Press (OUP)) is a complex word whose meaning overlaps with many ideals within an institution. It relies on the balance of many variables, which are impacted by many other levels of variables within a community. To look at equity within a school district, we must first understand how equity is influenced, how it can be measured and how it has evolved and continues to evolve over time. According to The Urban Institute, a nonprofit research organization, equity has “four underlying concepts” that influence considerations for measuring equity (Martín & Lewis, 2019, p. 2). The four dimensions to measuring equity are: the historical disparity implications, a specific population focus, identifying multifaceted metrics, and lastly; “equity should be measured for each component along an intervention: development, implementation, quality, and outcome” (Martín and Lewis, 2019, p.12). The last dimension indicates that equity’s measurement does not stop at policy implementation; the policy must have a follow up process in order to verify equity was achieved. Studies that influence change in an institution or organization will investigate some or all of these dimensions thoroughly.

Equity of access to music education can be achieved through different pathways and resources, but must be prepared for, assessed and reviewed by many perspectives within the school’s community. An equitable community, in a broad perspective, can refer to a global community, nation-wide community, or city community, or, in a narrow perspective, can refer to a neighborhood within the radius of a school building.

Different populations have been a core focal point of research on equity. Past research in educational equity has measured the differences and similarities through a lens of racial equity, comparing majority black schools to majority white schools, “Access to Music Education with Regard to Race in Two Urban Areas,” by Karen Salvador and Kristen Allegood, and through a lens of economic focus, comparing school facility funding in areas of concentrated poverty to nearby wealthier schools “Some Pennies are More Equal than Others: Inequitable School Facilities Investment in San Antonio, Texas” by Marialena D. Rivera and Sonia Rey Lopez. Both articles give insight into measuring and evaluating avenues of equity, and the latter provides paralleled insight to the School District of Philadelphia’s current crisis in its facilities.

In “Access to Music Education with Regard to Race in Two Urban Areas,” Karen Salvador and Kristen Allegood find and compare statistics of access to music education in schools in Detroit, Michigan and Washington, D.C. to a report by the National Center for Educational Statistics. What they find in their study exposes the many dimensions of equity discussed in the opening of this chapter.

One dimension of measurement, multifaceted metrics, was the angle of approach they kept in mind throughout their study. First, they compared schools from two different metropolitan areas, Detroit and Washington D.C., and included public and charter schools in their study. To keep a central focus, they filtered out schools that used outside organizations for the arts instruction, only looking at schools who had school funded music specialist instructors. They made sure both areas had similar population sizes, wide ranges of diversity in race, ethnicity, and wealth, and included a variety of types of schools (for example: arts focused and military disciplinary schools). They then chose the schools with

top and bottom quartile groups of low non-white populations and high non-white populations. In their study, they found that the schools in the Detroit area had significant parallels to the racial makeup of schools. Their data indicated that “100 percent of the low non-white sample offered music instruction but only 60 percent of high non white elementary schools, 39 percent of high non white middle schools and 40 percent of high non-white high schools offered any kind of music instruction at all.” (Salvador and Allegood 2014, p.88) When comparing this regional data to the National Center for Educational Statistics, they found that the National study fails to show this disproportionate difference within regions, finding “94% of elementary and 91% of secondary schools had music programs” (Salvador and Allegood 2014, p.88). The National study also included non-school funded music instruction, which the authors argue to be “short-term” grant projects. From this point of view, the authors make a clear point: “averaging disguises the stark differences among samples” (Salvador and Allegood 2014, p.89). When studies look beyond the average statistical data, they can find the multilayered “nuances”(Salvador and Allegood 2014, p.89) of the inequities present in a system, which can lead to more accurate and effective policy change. We learn from this study that it is important to look at data as a whole and also as individual pieces.

A major facet of school equity is rooted in the facilities of the educational environment. The authors Marialena D. Rivera and Sonia Rey Lopez (2019) dig deep into the school districts that make up San Antonio’s education system and use a mixed-methods approach to evaluate how policies regarding capital funding are being implemented within each district. Previous research in their field of study looked at facility quality from engineering perspectives that often left out the “connection to learning outcomes.”(Rivera

and Lopez 2019, p.6) Other researchers struggled to find agreeable bases to measure the quality of facilities and its effects on educational outcomes. Rivera and Lopez (2019) find an enormous number of factors that influence the equitable balance of educational funding. In Table 1, they show twenty-eight different influences on a respondent's district, including, but not limited to, the presence of private and charter schools (and losing students to those entities), public bonds funding the facilities, the growth of a district or school (including fast growth, slow growth or decline in growth), the socioeconomic status of the community, state policies, planning processes, inequity between districts or within their own district, race, state investment, school safety, voters, tax bases and more (Rivera and Lopez, 2019). Their scope of research only interviewed eleven individuals, which initially would be an excessive amount from whom to gather information, but I would argue that they dig deeper into each districts' individual schools to see even further disparities from financial inequity. After they interviewed eleven members of the district, they were able to find a wide range of constraints on the local level that further frustrated the effectiveness of policy changes within each district.

These local constraints are addressed by Christopher Chapman and Mel Ainscow (2019) in "Using research to promote equity within education systems: Possibilities and barriers." This article reviews the large improvement of schools in London, Manchester and Wales over the past decade. The authors bring large attention to, and mention often, the involvement of the UK's Minister of Education as an integral role in school reform. They found that when a large vision and strategy for success was implemented, the minister made their presence in most or all of the involved schools at least two times within an eighteen month period. (Chapman & Ainscow 2019) It is mentioned that "the

quality of leadership and management had improved in the majority of ... schools.”

(Chapman & Ainscow 2019, p.906) In Scotland, leadership has focused on six frequently studied priorities proved to improve educational outcomes: “school partnerships; class sizes and teacher numbers; use of data to drive improvement; parental involvement; leadership; and innovation.” (Chapman & Ainscow 2019, p.907) These six priorities make a well-rounded approach to understanding the many variables within equitable education. School partnerships allow school communities to interact with each other, to compare and contrast resources, and to find areas that are less than equitable and areas that are one’s strengths. Class sizes and teacher ratios have been an ongoing discussion in educational efficacy around the world for decades. Despite research results, there has been little attempt to fund the reduction of class sizes, as has been the case in Philadelphia.

The focus on leadership is also an interesting focal point because oftentimes the brunt of change is placed upon teachers and the local entity itself. However, the role of effective leadership, along the entire chain from top to bottom, is necessary for change. As Rost (1993) defines the term, “Leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real change that reflects their mutual purposes” (p.102) Chapman and Ainscow (2019) fiercely state, “In terms of impact, the presence of this form of high-status political leadership should not be overlooked” (p.904). Through the leadership accountability that the United Kingdom enacted, change towards a more equitable learning environment is possible.

Quality school leadership is one of the factors considered in a study by the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Researchers Susan Moore Johnson, Matthew A. Kraft, and John P. Papay(2011) look at the correlations of these social factors in their study “How

context matters in high-need schools: The effects of teachers' working conditions on their professional satisfaction and their students' achievement." They measure more than twenty-five thousand teachers in the state of Massachusetts on nine elements of the environmental context within a school climate: relationships with colleagues, community support, facilities, involvement in school governance, principal, professional expertise, resources, school culture, and time (Johnson et al., 2011). They take the responses from teachers and compare them at individual, small community, state-wide and other angles to find trends, influences, correlations and possible causation. A common narrative is that schools with low-income and large minority student populations have poorer working and learning conditions and many studies show higher teacher attrition rates in these schools. However, studies often overlook all possible contributors to the narrative. By using the nine school climate elements, Johnson, Kraft and Papay find "teachers consistently rate every condition of work element as lower, on average, in schools with more low-income and minority students." (Johnson et al., 2011, p.15) They use a measuring standard that compares individual answers to peer-averages at the school level to find the effects of each of the elements upon a teacher's intention to stay, move or leave the teaching profession. Upon doing this, they claim "accounting for differences in conditions of work across schools substantially reduces the apparent relationship between student demographic characteristics and these outcomes." (Johnson et al., 2011, p.19) Previous studies have not been able to measure teachers' claims in a manner as thorough as this study and isolate them on an individual level, as well as to compare to averages from similar schools with comparative settings.

Another commendable angle from their study is that while they are focusing on teacher's responses and intentions, they assume that the conditions of work for the teacher is parallel to the conditions of learning for the student. They support this angle by stating, "the apparent relationship between student demographics and our outcomes reflects, in large part, the poor work environments in which low-income and minority students are taught." (Johnson et al., 2011) This lessens the blame on teachers for 'walking away from students' in low-income and minority populations and starts a rhetoric that these conditions are also not acceptable for childrens' learning environments. Ultimately, they find that teachers who are working in unsupportive work contexts will predictably move from those schools at a higher rate. (Johnson et al. 2011, p.20)

In looking at teachers who are dedicated to making educational reform, Susan Wharton Conkling and Thomas L. Conkling (2018) investigate an individual's experience. Sarah, their subject of study, teaches at a turnaround school, whose strategy, alongside the school principal's vision, is to use performing arts to improve their status in school culture and test scores. She finds structural barriers within the school such as establishing uniform school-wide routines amongst a teaching staff mostly comprised of new teachers. She documents that only three of the thirty seven teachers have more than five years of experience. The process of developing a culture that facilitates support for new teachers and the learning of their students is "exhausting." (Conkling & Conkling 2018, p.522) She realizes that teachers need time to meet and plan together, but the loaded schedule hardly allows time or coordination for arts teachers to collaborate with grade level teachers or for arts teachers to meet simultaneously amongst themselves. Overall, the study shows that Sarah commits to a three year period at this school despite the struggles and challenges.

Her reasoning is that it “developed through a school leader’s compelling vision of what arts education might accomplish for children whose caregivers have access to limited resources.” (Conkling & Conkling 2018, p.525) This single teacher is an example of how upper leadership can involve their school based personale in their long-term vision plan and create a sense of unity. However, the flaw of this study is that it only asked the intentions of a teacher to stay at this school, who then said she would leave and follow her principal to another school, leaving that school in the same position as before they started.(Conkling & Conkling, 2018)

Another variable of equity and access to music education is culture, where culture can serve as an entrance or a barrier to music education. Multicultural music education has been a hot topic of debate and study since the civil rights movement, where inclusion of all cultures became a priority in educational preparation. Differences in culture have many facets that affect interactions between students and their teachers. Butler, Lind and McKoy remind us that teachers have a duty to be “sensitive to and knowledgeable about the influence of culture on learning.” (Butler et al. 2007, p.244) One of the traits of a teacher who is culturally responsive is that they “see themselves as responsible for and capable of bringing about educational change.” (Butler et al. 2007, p.244) Students of different cultural backgrounds have a varied perception of reality based on their race, ethnicity, gender roles, learning styles, language, interpersonal interactions and environment. It matters for a teacher to take these concerns into consideration to prevent student alienation from their program. (Butler et al. 2007) In Philadelphia schools particularly, each school building has varied cultures from the next. There is no “one size fits all” cultural training that will work for all teachers at all schools. Therefore, another trait of a

culturally responsive teacher is that they “know about the background of their students’ lives” and “use this background knowledge to design instruction that builds on what students already know.” (Butler et al., 2007, p.244) In an interview with Frank A. Machos (personal communication, October 8, 2020), Philadelphia’s executive director of Arts and Creative Learning, we learned that part of the SDP Arts and Creativity Framework (2019) is the focus on “culturally relevant and responsive arts education” within the sub-category of “professional learning” under the larger scope of “school-based conditions.”

Summary of Past Research

In summary, Karen Salvador and Kristen Allgood studied the population of urban students and compared their access to music education to the racial makeup of the community. They also made sure to compare their results to a similar national study that occurred within the same time frame. Marialena Rivera and Sonia Rey Lopez looked at the equity of facilities across their geographical region. Christopher Chapman and Mel Alnsow found more layers of equity to be considered for educational policy reform implementation such as partnerships, leadership and innovation, while the students at Harvard dissected these layers into many individual data groups to identify the effects of these conditions on teachers’ satisfaction. Susan and Thomas Conkling analyze how leadership and a vision can influence the length of a teacher’s career at a school. The following chapter takes these variables of equity and explores their role in the School District of Philadelphia’s department of music education.

Chapter 3 - Research Findings

The Survey Design: Data Gathering

The data for this study was gathered through a survey that was sent out by email to a master list of music teachers in the School District of Philadelphia. The survey's scope focused on instruction time during the 2019-2020 school year, before the COVID shutdown took place. The questions investigated quantitative data for each type of music teacher, separated into three categories: vocal music teachers (VMT), class instrumental music teachers (CIMTs, who are placed by the central office into multiple schools) and full time instrumental teachers (who are hired by a school principal).

For the vocal music teachers, who generally teach classroom vocal and general music, the survey asked what percentage of the student body in their school(s) they instruct, for how long their instruction lasts (quarterly, semesterly, or yearly), and how many minutes of instruction are allocated in their master schedule. It then asked questions about interruptions to their instruction. The survey also inquired if there was time allocated for a performing ensemble and if there were other music teachers in the building at the same time. With this question, the survey would find if there were multiple teachers at the school or only one music teacher. A general assumption about multiple music teachers (at a school with less than 500 students) means there may be both vocal and instrumental music instruction happening at the same time.

For CIMTs, the survey inquired about the number of students they teach per school instead of the percentage of students, as CIMTs have selected and assigned students per school. The reasoning for this was that it was assumed that a percentage of students would

be low for every school and would be too difficult to estimate for an accurate count for each of the schools at which the CIMT teaches. The survey asked the same questions about time of instruction and interruptions to instruction of the vocal music teachers' section.

For full time instrumental music teachers, the survey was the same as the vocal music teacher category.

All three categories of music teachers were asked to rate the sense of community within each school building, and to rate the quality of support by their administration and their peers and colleagues. Then they were asked to indicate if they had access to physical resources in order to teach a quality curriculum, and if they felt they were equipped with tools and knowledge to teach a culturally responsive music curriculum to the community of students that they serve.

One of the most common themes amongst music teachers' frustrations is the amount of time of instruction that actually takes place. For example, a music teacher will arrive at school with their lesson plans submitted, details on how to teach individual classes, with modifications for individual students with IEPs and specific plans to motivate children to participate, learn and succeed. Upon the teachers' arrival to school, their superior will inform them of a schedule change due to many variables. Because of this, a music teacher who spent long hours planning for the day will not be able to implement their planned lesson for these reasons and will adjust on the spot for the new classes that have been assigned to them. The variables include but are not limited to: a special assembly (which will either remove a class or entire grade from the regular schedule or displace a music teacher from their teaching space in the assembly space, usually an auditorium), classroom teacher absences (which requires an "unplanned coverage, where a

non-classroom teacher is assigned to cover for the class whose teacher was absent and a substitute guest teacher was not acquired), testing (kids get pulled from classes to do hearing tests, eye tests, literacy tests, state make up exams, or regularly planned standardized tests, which disrupt up to two weeks of a school's schedule), teachers holding certain students or entire classes from their assigned music time, and Holidays (for example, many Monday holidays affect a 5-day rotation schedule and Monday classes miss several days). The survey allows teachers to expand on interruptions to their planned instruction.

Data Received

From approximately 220 music teachers in the district, a total of 89 responses were received. Three responses were discarded as they responded to multiple school situations instead of individual schools. Those teachers were contacted to resubmit their form for the specific schools and two of the three complied. Eight teachers represented a total of 40 responses, as CIMTs are assigned to several schools each week. Two responses were from Full Time Instrumental teachers and the remainder were Vocal Music Teachers.

Totals from All Responses

From the initial responses, data was sorted into the respective teaching categories, CIMT, Vocal Music and Instrumental. In Appendix A, CIMTs most commonly reported 45 minute classes with a range from 0-120 total minutes per week. Realistically, most classes were reduced by 5-15 minutes time (Appendix B). (There was a data flaw in this question that only allowed 10-minute increments of time reporting.) About 44% of the teachers' schools reported many interruptions that changed the teaching schedule on a weekly basis (Appendix C). We asked teachers what the most common interruptions were and allowed

for teachers to write in specific interruptions significant to the specific school. The highest reported interruptions were holidays (74%), testing (67%) and in-school assemblies (53%)(Appendix D). Appendix E shows when there may have been other music teachers present, showing that the individual teacher was not the sole source of music education at that school. Almost 60% of teachers in the VMTs scope report that they teach their entire population, leaving 40% of teachers to only serve portions of their school population (Appendix F). 83% of VMTs indicate they teach their students for the full year (Appendix G), and while we didn't ask specifically, we assume based on experience and typical SDP scheduling that music classes occur once a week. Similar to CIMTs, VMTs also most commonly teach 45 minute classes (appendix H) and they lose time in reality situations shown in Appendix I. These results had to be broken down into individual answers, as the questionnaire options did not match what the teachers answers were. However, we do see a broad range of answers again, from less than 20 minutes to 250 minutes of instruction a week. In Appendix J, we also find similar to the CIMT results that holidays, assemblies and testing are again huge interrupters to a music teacher's schedule, with over 61% of teachers regarding testing as the most frequent interruptor. Lastly, we find that 44% of VMT schools do not provide time for a performing ensemble to rehearse (Appendix K) and 42% of VMT schools do not have instrumental music instruction in conjunction with vocal music instruction (Appendix L).

In looking at the equity variables of the school environment, we asked teachers to rate their sense of community, support from administrators, and support from colleagues on a scale of 0-3, three represent very strong community and support and zero representing none at all. Only 21% of teachers reported a 0-1, 34% percent rated their

schools having a divided sense of community and a strong 44% representing a solid sense of community (Appendix M). An overwhelming majority of 51% of teachers feel strongly supported by their administrators, and adding in another 23% feeling supported leaves 26% of teachers unsupported. Colleague support staggers behind the strong show of administration support with only 39% of strong support, 50% support, but only 11% no support from their colleagues(Appendix O). 36% of music instructors indicate that they could use more physical resources and materials in order to teach a quality music education (Appendix P) and only 57% of teachers feel entirely equipped to teach culturally responsive lessons.

K-8 Focus

The data was then separated out to focus on data in K-8 and PreK-8 schools, which are the most common type of elementary school in the School District of Philadelphia. (Other schools represent a variety of grade levels, including K-5, K-4, 5-8, 6-8, 6-12, 5-8, Prek-3 and other variations.)

From the selection of Prek-8 and K-8 schools, the focus honed in on schools where less than 80% of its students had music instruction, or where students only had music instruction for one quarter or one semester (half the year) of the school year, or if only one CIMT was in the building (most CIMTs teach only one whole or one half day at each of their schools). Nine schools stood out with these exceptions and have become the focus for further research. The nine schools are:

School A - grades K-4 are taught one semester, then 5-8 the other semester

School B - K-8 school where only grades 3-8 received music instruction

School C - K-8 school where only 70-80% students received instruction

School D - K-8 school where 70-80% for 30 minutes each week

School E - K-8 school where 70-80% for 30 minutes each week

School F - K-8 school where 100% receive music but quarterly, 20 minutes or less each week

School G - K-8 school where 100% students receive music but quarterly, 40 minutes each week

School H - K-8 school where 100% students receive music, but quarterly for 45 minutes a day

School I - K-8 school where only one CIMT teaches 26-50 students, 20 minutes a week

Schools with Significantly Lower Amounts of Access to Music Education

School A has only one music teacher in the building. The master schedule allows for 45 minutes of instruction for each class, but Holidays, Assemblies, Testing, Unplanned coverage interrupt for a reality of about only 30 minutes for instruction. The teacher also indicated that some teachers “just decide not to send students without telling me.” The school is reported to have a divided sense of community, with little administrative support, but strong teacher support. The teacher feels equipped to teach a quality music education that is culturally responsive.

School B has three or more music teachers assigned to the building. Only one teacher replied from this school and that teacher teaches 50-60% of the student body. Similar to School A, the master schedule indicates for 45 minutes of instruction, but only 30 minutes takes place on an average. The variables of interruption mentioned were Holidays,

Testing, Coverage, and Health Testing. The teacher indicated that half days/holidays/testing would mean that they “would not see a class for over a month.” The teacher indicates that the school has very little sense of community, that they needed more physical resources to teach quality music education and had some knowledge to teach culturally responsively.

At School C only 70-80% of the student body has access to music instruction from one individual teacher. From its initial 45 minutes of master schedule, interruptions including assemblies and testing can take away 5-10 minutes, but most instruction time is achieved. The teacher indicates that there is a divided sense of community, little administrative support, enough access to physical resources and primarily use traditional methods for teaching curriculum.

School D also only provided music instruction for 70-80% of their student body by a single music instructor and time loss from their 45 minute schedule indicated about 15 minutes, due to Testing and Unplanned Coverages. It also had a divided sense of community, and little administrative support. Support from their peers was present, though not strong. Access to physical resources was not a problem and the teacher primarily uses traditional methods for teaching curriculum.

School E is similar to School C and D, having 70-80% of students receiving musical instruction from a single music teacher and also having a 45 minute scheduled class reduced to 30 minutes. However, despite the 15 minute loss, the teacher indicated that instructional time was equal to the intended time. Perhaps this difference may be influenced by their sense of community factors: although the school is divided, the music teacher feels supported by their administration and strongly supported by their colleagues.

A teacher may not feel they are losing time if events (assemblies, coverage and testing) are beyond their control or if it benefits the students or school community. The teacher here indicated that they had the resources they needed and taught some current up to date lessons but primarily uses traditional methods and music for teaching.

School F has a quarterly system that teaches 90-100% of the 500 person student body. The vocal music teacher at school F indicates that a 45 minute class can be reduced to almost half the instructional time (25 minutes), selecting that many weekly interruptions reduced the amount of time. Along with Testing and Coverage, they indicate that student behavior is also a main factor in what reduces time for instruction. There is also another music teacher at this building, a CIMT. They taught 45 students. They report that instructional time is not affected, but lists holidays, assemblies, testing, lack of available space, field trips, and “uncooperative homeroom teachers” as factors for reduction in instruction time. Both teachers report a strong lack of support from the administration. The vocal music teacher strongly disagrees that their colleagues support them, whereas the CIMT feels supported. Both indicate the need for more resources at this school. The vocal music teacher indicates they teach some current lessons but primarily uses traditional methods and music for teaching. The CIMT feels that they stay up to date with current music for teaching culturally responsive curriculum.

School G has a 90-100% rate for access to music instruction, but on a quarterly schedule. The teacher says the 45 minute intended time was usually met, reduced only by 5 minutes. Interruptions included Holidays, Assemblies, Testing, and Health Testing. This teacher indicated they taught at 3 or more schools and that they were the only teacher for this building. They felt they had a solid sense of community, strongly supported by their

administrators, supported by colleagues and had the resources they needed. This vocal music teacher also indicates that they primarily used traditional methods and music for teaching, but adapts some lessons to their students' interests and needs.

School H reports a little sense of community, with non-supportive administrators and colleagues. 90-100% of the student body received musical instruction from the vocal music teacher, who indicated that more resources were needed. This school was also on a quarterly rotation for their music schedule. The only interruption reported was testing. Traditional teaching was primarily used by this teacher, indicating that they sometimes adapt lessons and music to their students' interests and needs.

School I only had one CIMT to provide music instruction. This teacher's schedule allowed for 20 minutes music lessons, and 15-20 minutes took place. They indicated that the administration and their colleagues alike were strongly supportive. They did not need additional resources. This teacher used current music to teach the curriculum in a culturally responsive manner.

Schools with Significantly Higher Amounts of Access to Music Education and Support

In contrast, the study found six (and many more) schools that had dramatically opposite results. These schools were chosen from the K-8 results, filtered by having high results in the minutes categories, positive responses in the community questions and had multiple music teachers in the school. They also all report 90-100% of students received music instruction, and some have more than one music teacher. These six schools are:

School J - K-8 students have 60 minutes instruction each week

School K - K-8 students have 40-45 minutes instruction and there are three or more music instructors present

School L - K-8 students with 40-45 minutes instruction and two music instructors present

School M - K-8 with 40-45 minutes instruction and high scores in community and support

School N - K-8 with 40-45 minutes instruction and three or more instructors present

School O - K-8 with 45 minutes instruction, high scores in community and three or more instructors present

School J has a full hour of music instruction and the only interruptions documented are Holidays. While this teacher is the sole music teacher there, the students still receive 15-20 minutes more weekly music instruction than schools A through I. The teacher reports that there is a high amount of support within the administration and teachers and has a solid sense of community, something that was rarely chosen for schools A through I. This teacher did mention that more physical resources were needed to teach a quality music program.

School K has 45 minute classes, but loses a notable 5 minutes due to holidays, assemblies, and testing. It had 3 or more music teachers at this school. One reports the school has a strong sense of community, albeit divided, and they feel strongly supported by their administration and supported by their colleagues. The teacher indicates that resources were sufficient for a quality education and that they stay up to date with music for teaching a culturally responsive curriculum.

School L reports 45 minutes of instructional time that is fairly maintained, only interrupted by testing. There are two music teachers at this building. The vocal music

teacher reports a solid sense of community, support from their administration and strong support from colleagues. They reported the need for more resources and felt adequately equipped with tools and knowledge to teach a culturally responsive music curriculum.

90-100% of students at School M received music instruction for the entire school year for 40-45 minutes, with the report of instruction time loss only due to “classes coming late or students being sent in small groups.” The community rating is high and the only music teacher there, the vocal music teacher, feels supported by both their admin and colleagues. The teacher indicates no additional resources were needed, and they taught with a primarily traditional approach, adapting some lessons to current music and students’ interests.

At School N, the time of instruction for 90-100% of its students was also 40-45 minutes a week for the entire year, only losing time for Holidays and Assemblies. However, this school has three or more music teachers at the building. The Vocal Music Teacher reported on the school having a divided sense of community and disagreed that their administration and colleagues supported them. Resources were not a limitation for quality instruction and they used current music for teaching the curriculum.

Finally, School O reports that none of the scheduled 45 minutes of instructional time is lost for its 90-100% students who have music class for the entire year. However, they selected Holidays, Assemblies, Testing, and Unschedule Coverage as variables. The vocal music teacher indicates that three or music teachers are at this building. They say the community has a divided sense of community, their administration strongly supports them and their colleagues also support them. The school has the resources they need for quality

music instruction and also stayed up to date with current music for teaching culturally responsive.

For all the schools mentioned above, four out of nine in the first set had a performing ensemble placed into their master schedule, while five out of nine did not. For the second set, the results were split in half, three of the schools had a performing ensemble and three schools did not.

Chapter 4 - Closing Remarks: Suggestions for Action and Implementation in SDP

Trends and Findings

One of the most significant standouts from the numbers wasn't in the K-8 schools at all. It was in the high schools, where students receive 2-5x as much instruction for music than their younger peers. While there were only a handful of responses from high school music educators, the findings were consistent: high school music education has a significantly higher time allocation for music instruction than schedules in K-8 schools. This means that during a child's formative years, they will receive formal music instruction for less than 0.4% of time each week. In high school, the average time of music instruction increases to 2% of a students' week.

The inconsistencies in the performing ensemble time allocation is another example of inequity. It is a result of principal based decisions; some schools will have ensemble time during the school day and others will not. Some principals will allow for extra curricular (EC) pay to be used for performance ensemble rehearsals before and after school. However, the EC budget also varies between schools: some schools do not offer any EC pay for before and after school activities, thus leaving the decision to the music instructor's ability to volunteer time before and after school.

A variable I wished I had included in my survey was to ask teachers to rate their building and teaching space. It is often found that specialist teachers' classrooms are in a corner room, an unused library, an auditorium or the only room in the basement next to a

boiler room. This information would have provided more data about the quality of music education in specific schools and is a major concern in current conversations about building safely.

Culturally Responsive Professional Development

Fifty-six percent of teachers claim to teach culturally responsive, and forty-two percent of teachers claim to teach *some* lessons with student interests in mind while teaching with mostly traditional methods. Even though this number is higher than those who do not, there would need to be further investigation into what exactly a culturally responsive teacher looks like and to identify a process to achieve a culturally responsive curriculum that is flexible for the diverse communities and ever evolving communities in SDP schools. It would be interesting to survey teachers who indicate that they sometimes use student interests for their lessons, but still primarily teach traditionally to see which percentage of them are open to learning more about culturally responsive teaching. District leaders could then use that information to guide their professional development session creations to address this insecurity in a productive manner.

Respecting Music Teachers' Time and Preparation

A Common variable between all schools is that music teachers' schedules are affected negatively by interruptions, whether they teach twenty minutes or fifty minutes. The idea that music teachers, or all specialist teachers, especially in K-8 schools, are expected to cover classes for classroom teachers in absence should become a pattern of the past. It should be changed in future teacher union contract language that specialist teachers should be respected to teach their assigned classes and only those that they

prepared for in their lesson plans. One or two teachers' daily schedules should not be rearranged to fulfill coverages for the entire school.

Holidays, Testing, Assemblies and other variable interruptions

Along with music teachers having to cover for other teachers' absences, music instruction is lost due to many other variables: Monday holidays, testing (either health testing, IEP, or state wide exams), and using the music classroom (which is sometimes auditorium) for assemblies, oftentimes unannounced until the day of. In my specific time teaching, students have been routinely scheduled for or pulled out of music classes at an excessive rate for health testing, tutoring, and other required services, appearing to reflect a value that music class is not an important subject. There needs to be an equitable process to make sure some students do not excessively miss music classes.

Standardizing Time Allocation for Music Education

In looking at the wide variety of time allocated for music instruction, moving forward, there should also be common language about how much music instruction our students should have in their formative years. There are national guidelines about recommended amounts of music and arts education that should be implemented for a well-rounded comprehensive education: "The Music Educators National Conference (MENC) believes that every student at every level, PreK-12, should have access to a balanced, comprehensive, and sequential program of instruction in music and the other arts, in school, taught by qualified teachers" (National Association for Music Education, 2014). The standards for this can be found in the "Opportunity To Learn" Standards published in May 2015 by the National Association for Music Education. If we begin with equal amounts of music instruction, then we can then develop strategic, sequential music programs that are

consistent across all the schools within the district. My personal recommendation is for over the next five years we strive to provide two weekly 45-minute general music instruction sessions for every student from Kindergarten to the sixth grade, in addition to opportunities to sing in a school based choir and the choice to participate in band and orchestra with instrumental lessons offered once a week.

Type of Music Instruction

My current school, specifically because of its large population (3500 students), provides instruction in many areas of music education within both vocal and instrumental subjects. We have opportunities for students to take brass instrumental lessons, upper strings, lower strings, and woodwind instruction as well. Students can choose between piano, guitar, band, choir, music technology, orchestra or dance classes in order to participate in music learning. In forty-two percent of K-8 schools surveyed in our study, the only type of music instruction they are offered is vocal music instruction. It is up to that sole music teacher to introduce the instrumental possibilities if they have resources available in their school. However, it is not required of them, nor feasibly possible, to teach these skills in addition to the limited time schedule allocated for their curriculum. It would be an equitable goal to make sure that all children who pass through the SDP system have equal access to every avenue of music instruction possible.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there are a multitude of variables that affect what both the quality and quantity of music education looks like for a student in the School District of Philadelphia. There are inconsistencies between school buildings and there are inconsistencies between grade levels. A student who goes to one school will have an

entirely different experience than another who may attend a school a few blocks away. A place to begin implementing change is to start improving access to music education for our youngest grades in their formative years. Then we can build upon music staffing in each school, from Kindergarten to 12th Grade, to have a quality and diverse quantity of programming. Another area is to look into how much power a principal has in dictating the use of a music teacher's time within their building and to make sure their planned instruction time is respected and used for teaching music.

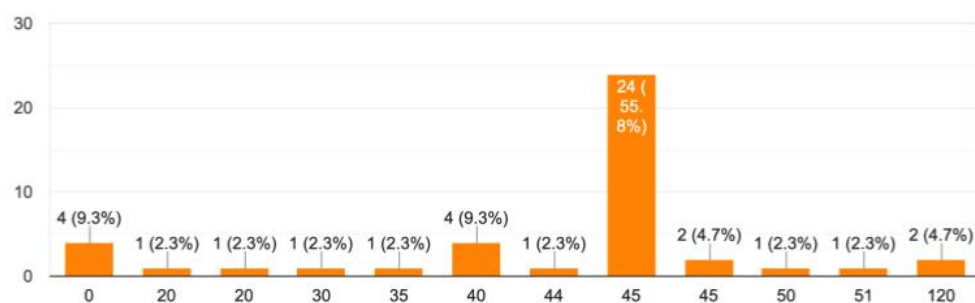
APPENDICES

Appendix A: CIMT Minutes in Schedule

CIMT - Minutes in Schedule

How many minutes of instruction time were allocated by the master schedule of your administration for each student or group of students? (answer with a number)

43 responses

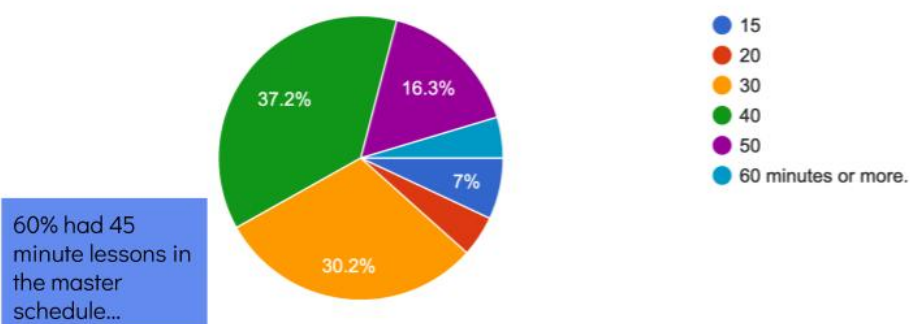


Appendix B: CIMT Minutes in Reality*

CIMT - Minutes in Reality

In an estimated average, how many minutes of actual instruction time occurred with each group of students on a weekly basis?

43 responses

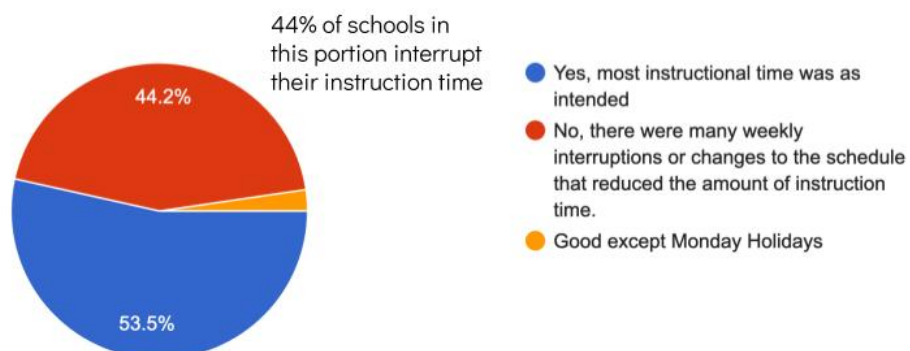


Appendix C: CIMT Interruptions

CIMT - Interruptions

Was the amount of intended instruction time equal to the amount of actual instruction time?

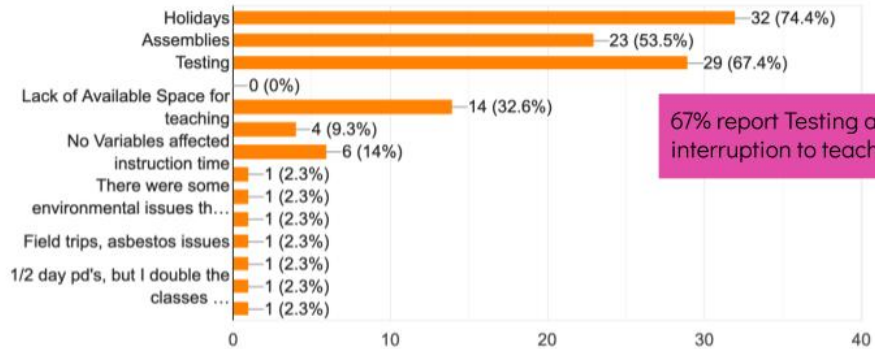
43 responses



Appendix D: Most Common Interruptions

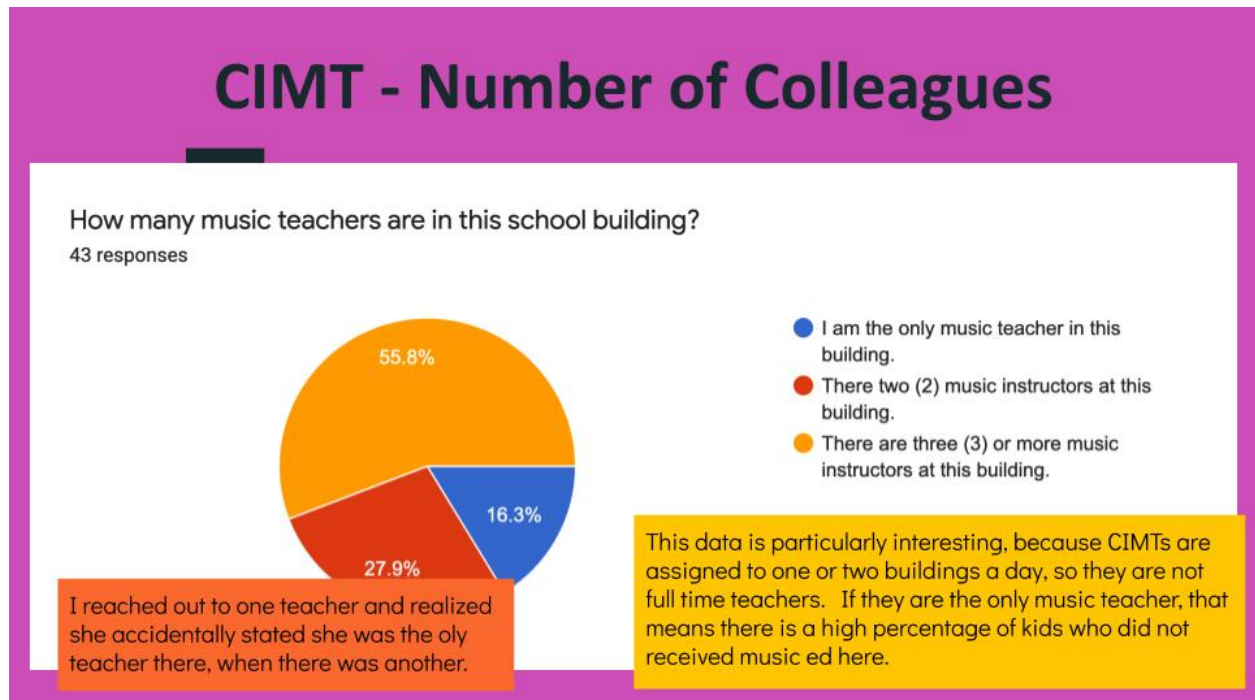
CIMT - Most Common Interruptions

Which variables directly influenced the amount of instruction time for your students as a whole?
43 responses



67% report Testing as an interruption to teaching

Appendix E: Number of Music Teachers in School (Inaccurate*)

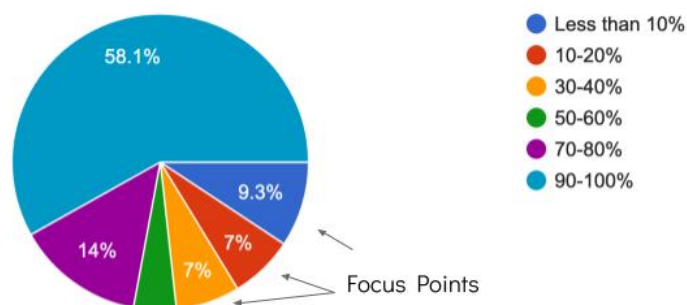


*Actual count is 8% CIMT schools have one instructor, and 36% have 2 instructors.

Appendix F: Percentage of Student Access to Music Education**VMT: Student Population Reached**

What percentage of students from your school did you teach throughout the school year?

43 responses

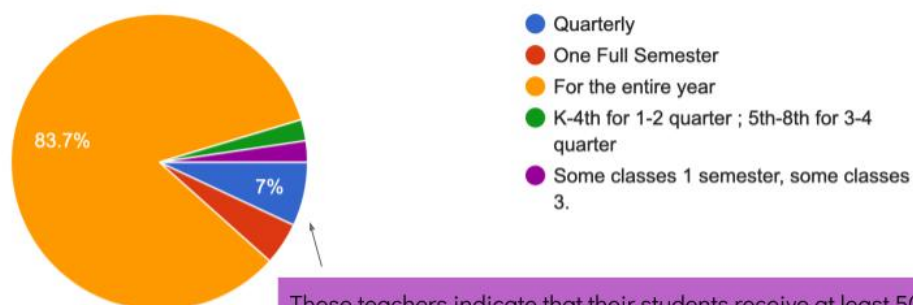


Appendix G: Annual Schedule

VMT: Annual Schedule

What portion of the school year were you assigned to instruct each class of students?

43 responses



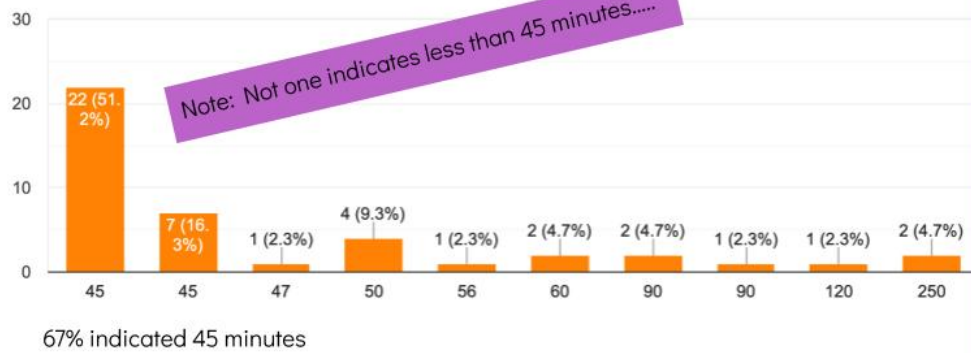
These teachers indicate that their students receive at least 50% less education than the schools with year-long instruction.

Appendix H: Minutes of Instruction in the Master Schedule

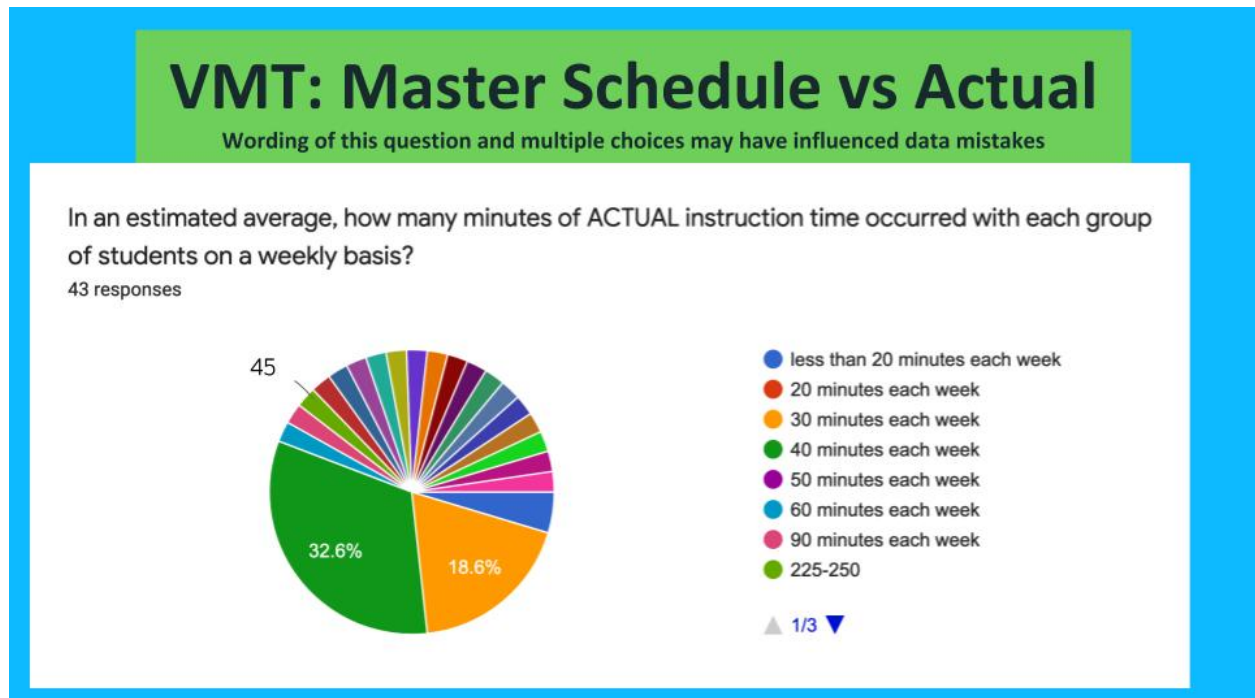
VMT: Master Schedule

How many minutes of instruction were allocated by the master schedule with each class? (answer with a number)

43 responses



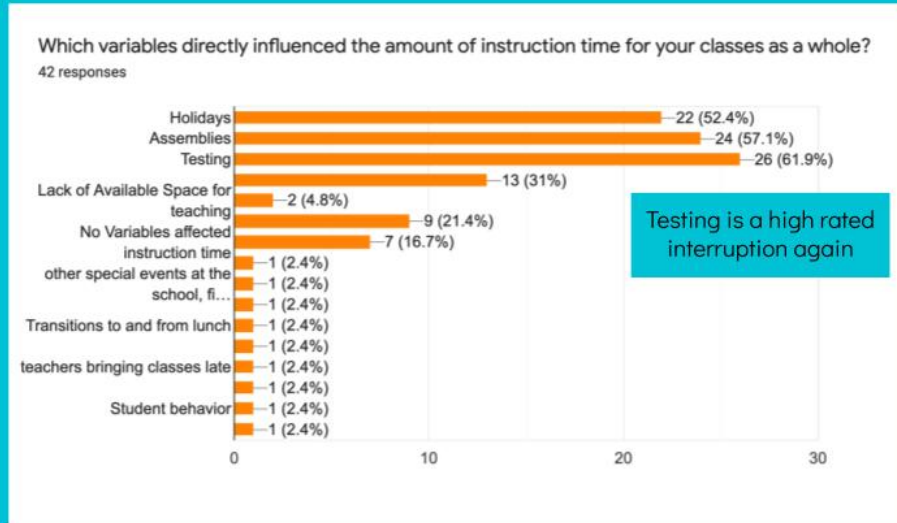
Appendix I: VMT Actual Minutes of Instruction*



*Wording of this question skewed results on the large scale, but was still used to measure in K-8 schools, as individual answers were pulled more accurately.

Appendix J: VMT Unscheduled Interruptions

VMT: Master Schedule Interruptions

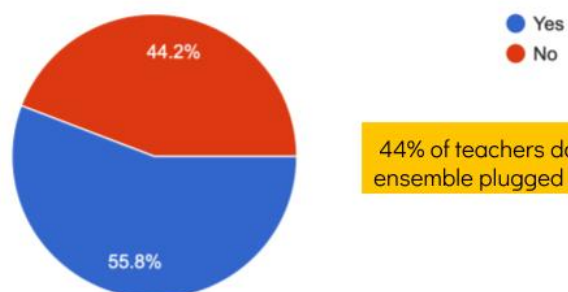


Appendix K: VMT Schedule - Time Allocation for Performing Ensemble

VMT: Master Schedule Ensemble

Performance Groups: Did your school's Master Schedule include time for a performing group (such as a choir, hand bell group, modern band group..etc) to rehearse?

43 responses



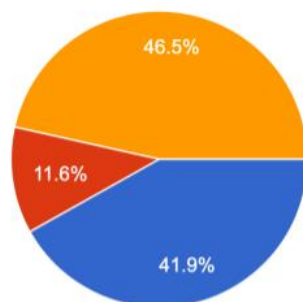
44% of teachers don't have a performing ensemble plugged into their day

Appendix L: VMT Note of other colleagues in building

VMT: Music Colleagues

How many music teachers are in this school building?

43 responses



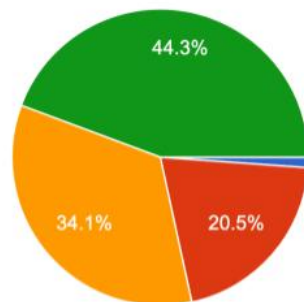
- I am the only music teacher in this building.
- There two (2) music instructors at this building.
- There are three (3) or more music instructors at this building.

Appendix M: School Community's Rating

All: School Community

Sense of Community - Rate your school's sense of community.

88 responses



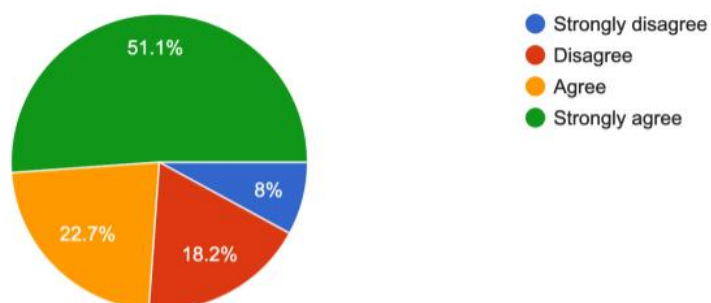
- 0 - My school had no sense of community: i.e. parents, teachers, students and administration are not co...
- 1 - My school had a little sense of community: there were pockets of connection throughout the school but...
- 2 - My school had a divided sense of community (some teams, grade levels...
- 3 - My school had a solid sense of community that connects the students...

Appendix N: Support by Administrators

All: School Community

I felt supported by my administration.

88 responses

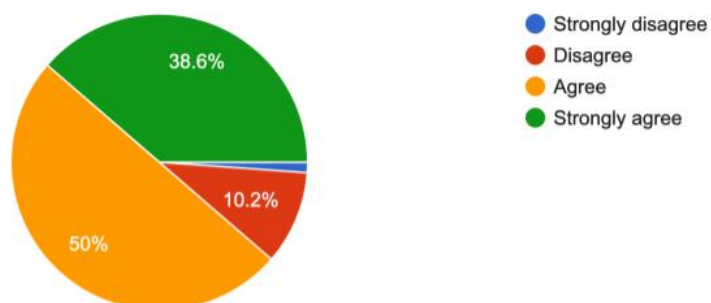


Appendix O: Support by Peers/Colleagues

All: School Community

I felt supported by fellow teachers at the school.

88 responses

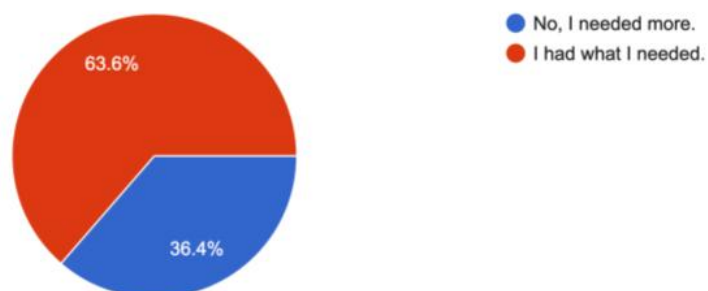


Appendix P: Access to Resources

All: Resources

I had access to the physical resources/materials I needed in order to teach a quality music education.

88 responses

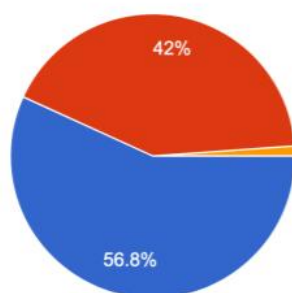


Appendix Q: Equipped for Culturally Responsive Teaching

All: Cultural Responsive

I (currently) feel adequately equipped with tools and knowledge to teach a culturally responsive music curriculum to the community of students I serve.

88 responses



- Yes, I stay up to date on current music and use music that students are interested in to teach the curriculum
- I have some lessons that I can adapt to my students' interests and needs but still primarily use traditional methods and music to teach the curriculum
- No, I am well trained in traditional methods of teaching and do not use student-centered feedback to influence my approach to teach the curriculum

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