SECONDARY SCHOOL BAND:
STUDENT RETENTION AND DIRECTOR ISSUES-
CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES


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A MASTER'S THESIS PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT

OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS IN MUSIC EDUCATION




Liberty University

April 23, 2019

**ABSTRACT**

Student involvement in school band programs can be a positive learning experience. By featuring both physical activity and multi-level brain function, successful band programs support positive student results in both academic and social development. Graduation rates in band students are often higher than that of the overall student population. By recognizing this, increased graduation rates could be supported by increasing and retaining band student enrollment. This study examined and identifies the characteristics of band programs that contribute to increased effectiveness through the utilization of one director for both middle and high school. Additionally, the musical qualities band students having the same director for both middle and high school was examined. Social and peer issues impact the lives of most adolescents. The significant emotional support experienced by many band students during the development of multi-year personal relationships serves to enhance their development and success in areas outside of music. By examining existing research in this context, the study found that there is an increased enrollment in situations where band directors are utilized in both the middle and high school band situation. The literature suggests that the continuity of instruction illustrates a musical rapport and understanding between student and director unique to the band experience.

*Keywords:* Enrollment, School Band Programs, Continuity of Instruction, Adolescents, Director, Emotional Support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am thankful for gifts of grace given by my Heavenly Father who has provided a desire in me to help others through the teaching of music. He can do all things as He has provided all strength to persevere to continue this dream. I thank Him especially for the very gift of music. It is truly a gift of common expression which can put beauty into every person, every day, everywhere.

I have also been blessed with a wonderful, musical earthly father who demonstrated incredible passion for music and for his students. As my brother and I grew up, we learned that the hard work of moving band gear together created opportunities for sharing lifetime friendships along the way. I knew from an early age that I wanted to direct band. I miss him so, but feel he is watching and still directing. My mother, Hazel, is wonderful and did all she could to help by encouraging me to practice, making uniforms, driving me to rehearsals and games, and so much more.

I have been blessed to live this life with my wonderful wife, Beth, who I met in band, of course, and have been with ever since. We have played together, worked together, and travelled on the road together, and loved it all. God's gift of music has provided so many opportunities to share our lives. We have been blessed with triplet daughters, Jacqueline, Alexis, and Nicole, who I was blessed to have in band classes each day through middle and high school. My Heavenly Father provided a wonderful way to strengthen our family through all these shared times and experiences.

I personally thank the department of Music for the opportunity to learn with the incredibly knowledgeable and caring professors Liberty University provides. The faculty, staff, and administrators have always been Godly, caring, and focused, and have provided love, support, and encouragement that have been crucial to my progress. I especially thank Dr. Damon for

continually working to help direct me forward with her never-give-up attitude! The knowledge, direction, and positive approach she provides always gives me hope to continue and improve. I am truly blessed to learn from such amazing teachers who always provide focused direction and never-ending support. I can not say enough about God's beauty shown in His work you demonstrate at Liberty University each day, thank you.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Background

Public school band programs in rural areas of the United States, typically offer students the opportunity to join and begin instruction in the fifth or sixth grade.[1] Students that begin public school instrumental instruction before that age are usually located in more affluent metropolitan areas. Rural schools often have lower overall enrollment, which directly affects funding. Daryl Kinney notes that "access to and participation in school music programs often are mediated by demographic factors, such as socioeconomic status (SES), ethnicity, school size."[2] Since many secondary school music courses are considered electives, recruitment and retention are vital to their survival.[3]

Based on research, the most important factors both in initial recruitment and retention in instrumental music appear to be student socioeconomic status followed by school system funding.[4] Many rural and economically-disadvantaged schools lack adequate funding and resources to properly schedule, equip, and maintain band programs. In these situations, many beginning band students are not scheduled for daily meetings but are often 'pulled-out' of other

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1. Linda Hartley, "Influence of Starting Grade and School Organization on Enrollment and Retention in Beginning Instrumental Music," *Journal of Research in Music Education*,44(4) (1996): 306.

2. Daryl Kinney, "Selected nonmusic predictors of urban students' decisions to enroll and persist in middle school band programs," *Journal of Research in Music Education, 57*(4) (2010): 335.

3. Rachel M. Gamin, "Teacher perceptions regarding attrition in beginning instrumental music classes during the first year of study," *Contributions to Music Education, 32*(2) (2005): 43.

4. Kinney," Selected nonmusic predictors," 336.

classes. This limitation of instructional time negatively impacts student learning and student retention.[5]  Additionally, parents in these areas are often not able to afford the expense of purchasing or even renting an instrument. This may be an important factor leading to student attrition.

<center>The Attrition Issue</center>

"Attrition is a complex and possibly situation-dependent problem", says Rachel Gamin. She notes, "in-service instrumental teachers interact with large numbers of students and are often aware of their general behavioral and decision-making trends … veteran teachers in particular often have ad hoc theories and understandings, formed over years of experience with numerous students, about the choices students make."[6]  There are many possible reasons as to why students do not continue in band programs, but "the relationships that exist among intrapersonal, interpersonal, and environmental influences and retention in music programs are not clearly understood."[7] Band directors interact with students over multi-year periods. During this time, the unique experience of learning in class, and performing and travelling at outside events, often leads to the development of strong bonds between band director and student.

A high-school band program's growth depends on adequate numbers of beginning students enrolling in middle school, and how many decide to continue at the high school level. "With decreasing student participation in secondary school music programs, music teachers may

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5. Jennifer L. Stewart, "Factors Related to Students' Decisions to Continue in Band," *Contributions to Music Education, 32*(1) (2005): 60.

6. Gamin, "Teacher perceptions regarding attrition," 50.

7. Stewart, "Factors Related to Students' Decisions," 60.

feel pressure…to maintain or increase the number of students participating."[8] Once beginners

join the band program, directors need to set these students up for success in their early years

through the identification, achievement, and recognition of tangible results. Increased self-

efficacy forms a foundation for continued student improvement in musicality and technical

mastery of an instrument. "Research results support the premise that self-efficacy predicts

current and future performance behaviors and students who perceive their performance ability

associated with certain tasks as poor will most likely disengage themselves from those tasks."[9]

This study addresses the problem of increased attrition in band programs as students transition

from middle to high school in rural public-school systems. It focuses on band programs that

begin in the sixth grade, and high school programs that begin in the ninth grade.

Many factors may contribute to increased attrition rates, including student perceived self-

efficacy, views of non-band peer students, and potential scheduling conflicts with academic

courses or athletic participation. Of importance are effects noted due to the loss of student

relationship with the middle school band director and how this contributes to attrition. Physical

changes that occur to students during the period of adolescence may also have a bearing on their

decision to continue or discontinue in band programs.[10]

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8. Ibid., 59.

9. Albert Bandura, "Self -efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change," *Psychological Review*, 84 (2) (1977): 196.

10. Bridget Sweet, *Growing musicians- teaching music in middle school and beyond* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 3.

Student Characteristics

Adolescence is not a precise chronological age, but "teachers and researchers tend to agree that this developmental period extends across middle school and high school, perhaps going into and through the early twenties."[11] Major physiological changes occur during this period including puberty. "Different parts of the body change at different times and at different rates… hands and feet, along with the head, are the first parts of the body to grow faster at puberty."[12] This often leads to awkwardness as students struggle to retain control of their fine motor skills. "With longer fingers or arms, students may have trouble negotiating their instruments…, activities such as dancing, movement, or marching can be quite challenging."[13] Student unease regarding any of these issues may lead, either directly or indirectly to a decision to discontinue band.

Student-Director Relationship

One stabilizing factor in the life of an adolescent band student may be the fact that "in American middle school band classrooms, an adolescent will most often have the same teacher for each year of study."[14] Band directors teach beginning students to play band instruments, then guide and encourage them to become successful enough and interested enough to continue at the high school level. In a study of secondary school principals, principals were found to "consider

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11. Ibid.,4.

12.  Ibid.,5.

13. Ibid.,6.

14. Jared R. Rawlings, "Peer connectedness in the middle school band program," *Research Studies in Music Education,* 39 no.1 (June 2017): 122.

music teachers to have the greatest positive impact on a program."[15] This assumes that the middle school director is well-liked by the students, which is not always the case. Consideration must be given to possible adverse effects on band program growth and stability in situations where the band director is not well-suited to beginning instrumental instruction and establishing positive rapport with the students.

As students contemplate their move into high school, they may consider band a useful way to fit in. By the end of middle school, students have already played with their peers in band class for several years and have become accustomed to the same band director. "Involvement in activities can result in social recognition from peers, and important emotional connections between student members and adult sponsors of such activities, resulting in family-like relationships."[16] This shared experience gives students the chance to belong to a group. If this group, the band, is perceived by peers as a positive and desirable one, it may enhance social acceptance, which is important during the identity-forming adolescent years.[17] As they enter high school, this shared behavior may impact student continuation in band. "One unified finding from these investigations reveals that music is a powerful medium for social interaction."[18]

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15.Carolos R. Abril and Brent M. Gault, "The State of Music in Secondary Schools: The Principal's Perspective," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 56, no. 1 (April 2008): 70.

16. Mari C. Dagaz, "Learning from the Band: Trust, Acceptance, and Self-Confidence," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 41, no. 4 (08, 2012): 432.

17. Ibid.,454.

18. Rawlings, " Peer connectedness," 124.

Benefits of Being in Band

Research has suggested that for many students, band is a positive extracurricular activity,

and that "membership in school-based groups creates …an extended peer network that offers

support and alleviates alienation and anxiety."[19] If true, most band students would be expected to

continue playing in high school. Research indicates students often need to belong to some type of

peer accepted group. This may be achieved through trying out for athletics or joining a

performing group such as band. Since not all students will qualify to be on a school team, or if

accepted, may not perform regularly, the band program provides an opportunity for all students

to participate, learn, and grow.

Since band programs require large numbers of students, they often represent a wide

variety of socioeconomic levels while including students from several grade levels.  Students

may gain self-confidence and peer acceptance by being a member of what is often seen as a

popular and important extracurricular activity. "It provides students with greater opportunities

for membership and inclusion within the group than … traditional athletics might."[20] In many

athletic situations, students must 'sit on the bench' and wait to participate. Band provides the

opportunity for all to participate.

For band students, effective musical instruction is vital to success, enjoyment, and

ultimately a desire to continue. The cumulative knowledge and acquired skill required to succeed

in band is extensive. It takes many years of training to reach upper levels of performance

mastery. During those years, successful directors provide ample opportunities for students to

19. Dagaz, "Learning from the Band," 436.

20. Ibid., 438.

achieve meaningful musical performance goals. If students also perceive this success, they are more likely to continue. "Self-efficacy is one motivational construct shown to have a significant relationship with persistence and achievement in the music classroom."[21]

Usually, middle school band students have the same director for at least the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. As band students encounter adolescence and high-school, they may experience stressful changes involving unfamiliar settings and situations. "Membership in different groups in school often determines an adolescent's fit in the social hierarchy."[22] Jennifer Stewart noted that "higher attrition rates occur when students changed schools rather than when students remain in the same school. Simply changing from one building to another increased attrition rates."[23] Additional opportunities offered in both academic and extracurricular activities in high school may lead students to feel unable to continue participation in the band program due to the time required. A successful band student adds value to any ensemble with whom they perform. Any steps that minimize the loss of junior and senior, highly-trained, advanced level performers as they move toward graduation could be helpful in raising the level of musicianship across an entire program.[24]

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21. Lisa Martin, "The Musical Self-Efficacy Beliefs of Middle School Band Students: An Investigation of Sources, Meanings, and Relationships with Attributions for Success and Failure," *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education,* 191(2012): 46.

22. Dagaz, "Learning from the Band," 436.

23. Stewart, "Factors Related to Students' Decision," 66.

24. Cynthia Darling, "Small school, big effort, great success," *Teaching Music*, 23(2) (October 2015): 38.

## Statement of the Problem

Despite the presence of band programs in most middle and high schools, and the availability of qualified band teachers across the United States, there is a decline in the number of middle school band students who continue in high school to take band. Existing research has provided data on possible reasons for band student attrition, however there is little information regarding the impact having the same director throughout middle and high school may have on a band program. At the same time, principals at the high school level express the importance of the band teacher in the success or failure of the program. Additional studies considering the importance of close cooperation between middle and high school band directors and the relative success of band programs should be considered.

## Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to identify those factors that influence continued student participation in band programs at the high school level, and more specifically to determine what steps may be taken to improve student retention during the important transition from middle school to high school.

This study examines existing research concerning band student attrition, its causes, and strategies for remediation. There has been much discussion of a general decrease in band class enrollment nationwide. Proposals to reverse this trend have been tried with varying degrees of success.  By identifying factors common to successful band programs, specific procedures to replicate these positive results could be implemented on a larger scale. There is little data

regarding the efficacy of utilizing the same band director for both middle and high school, and

the possible effects that strategy may have on student attrition. Recent historical data from a rural

school district consisting of various middle and high school band director configurations will be

examined with the aim of identifying any measurable significance band director continuity may

contribute to student retention. Further, this study will examine what characteristics of band

programs might be improved by the utilization of one band director for both the middle and high

school band programs. This teaching model is used in some but not most situations. In situations

where different directors are utilized in the middle and high schools, the importance of close

cooperation will be examined. Stability and continuity in band directors is a major factor in the

development of successful programs. In school band programs where there is a director change,

an average drop in enrollment of almost nine percent occurs the following year.[25] Along with

identifying demonstrable real-world band growth strategies, this study seeks to prioritize those

factors specifically impacting the success of secondary school band program development.

Music education in rural secondary school systems in the U.S. is a vast and varied enterprise.

Band programs have historically yielded strong performing ensembles in comparison with public

school offerings in other countries. For this to continue, solutions to the band student attrition

problem need to be implemented.

### Significance of the Study

This study is important to secondary school education programs in the U.S. because it

addresses student retention by studying the effects of maintaining the same director through

middle and high school. Research continues to indicate the value of music education programs to

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25. Thomas E. Kloss, "High school band students' perspectives of teacher
turnover," *Research and Issues in Music Education*, *11*(1) (2013): 49.

overall student development during high school years and beyond. Since many band programs have experienced significant declines in enrollment, strategies to reverse this trend and retain valuable band members could yield significant positive effects for these students, band program development, and graduation rates.

## Research Questions

In general, band programs are experiencing significant declines in enrollment as students move from middle school to high school. Since demonstrable value for continued student involvement in these programs exists, reversing this trend of attrition could improve student outcomes while providing opportunities for lifetime musical enjoyment. This study seeks to answer the following questions:

Research Question 1:

What are the significant factors impacting student retention in band programs?

Research Question 2:

In what ways could utilization of the same band director in a given middle and high school band program improve musical development?

## Hypotheses

The working hypotheses are:

Hypotheses 1: The significant factors impacting student retention in band programs are socio-economic status, academic achievement, and family structure.

Hypotheses 2: Utilization of the same band director in a given middle and high school band program improves musical development in terms of student recruitment and retention.

### Definition of Terms

Adolescence: generally accepted to be the developmental period extending across middle and high school, perhaps going into the early twenties.[26] This period is often subdivided into early adolescence, from approximately age twelve to seventeen, and late adolescence, from approximately age seventeen to young adulthood.

Attrition: band students choosing not to continue enrollment.[27]

Enrollment:  students who elect to begin instrumental instruction.[28]

High School:  students in grades nine through twelve.[29]

Middle School:  students in grades six through eight.[30]

Retention:  student continuation in band.[31]

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26. Sweet, *Growing Musicians- Teaching Music*,1.

27. Carl B. Hancock, "Music teachers at risk for attrition and migration: An analysis of the 1999-2000 schools and staffing survey," *Journal of Research in Music Education, 56*(2) (2008): 130.

28. Hartley, "Influence of Starting Grade," 306.

29. Hancock, "Music teachers at risk," 130.

30. Ibid.

31. Kinney," Selected nonmusic predictors," 334.

**Chapter Summary**

Student enrollment and continuation in band programs in U.S. public-school systems is recognized as a positive indicator for overall student performance and behavior. This study seeks to identify factors that impact continued participation in band, and to identify specific strategies and procedures shown to improve retention as these students move from middle school to high school. Research includes student, teacher, and industry observations with a focus on how the qualities of a given band director may impact attrition and overall program development.

**CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to examine existing literature highlighting significant factors which lead to band student attrition and to explore what impact the band director has upon student retention and program development. The first section explores historical issues in band attrition. Section two explores initial recruitment and student retention. Section three discusses the impact changing directors has upon student interest in band. Section four explores attrition viewed from a teacher perspective. The fifth section identifies those components which most significantly impact student decisions to continue band. The final section identifies successful strategies and practices that have demonstrated increased band student retention

Historical Issues in Band Retention

To improve student retention in secondary school band programs, this literature review will account for research questions and address strategies for successful growth in rural public-school systems. Current research into band teaching practices will be examined to, as Creswell asserts, "identify the central issues in a field."[32] In his book *Research Design*, Creswell states, this type of review may "integrate what others have done and said and build bridges to related topics."[33]  Factors shown to influence student recruitment and retention are identified and prioritized. Those factors most significantly affecting continued participation in band as students

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32. John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, 2014), 24.

33. Ibid.

transition from middle school to high school are of importance, including how a change in band directors from middle to high school may influence continued student enrollment.

Author Kenneth Elpus has joined others in documenting the overall decline in band student enrollment (and arts program funding in general) since standardized testing of 'core' classes became mandated in 2001.[34] Though the overall decline of student participation in band programs nationwide is evident, successful band programs in rural areas do exist.[35]Practices and procedures that contribute to band program success in these instances may be identified for implementation in other school districts. This study focuses on prioritizing each factor impacting student decisions to continue band membership.

Research concerning band attrition may be broadly categorized into topics concerning initial recruitment, student retention, and transition. Initial recruitment involves convincing students rising into middle school to join band and learn to play an instrument.  Retention efforts include activities designed to strengthen student interest in continuing to sign up for band. Transition in this context involves band students moving from middle school to high school while they begin puberty and enter adolescence. Research indicates these changes affect every facet of student development: physical, emotional, and social.[36]Understanding the impact these major student developmental changes have on teacher efforts in a band class setting, may suggest strategies of instruction and procedure that create an atmosphere conducive to learning and

34. Kenneth Elpus and Carlos Abril, "High School Music Ensemble Students in the United States: A Demographic Profile," *Journal of Research in Music Education, 59*(2) (2011): 131.

35. Steve Hayes, "Top 10 ways to recruit middle school students into high school band," *Teaching Music, 13*(3) (2005): 48.

36. Sweet, *Growing Musicians-Teaching Music*, 28.

enjoyment. Research also indicates the retention of qualified instrumental music instructors is an important factor in the ongoing success of a secondary school band program.[37]

## Recruitment and Retention

Directors must train sizable numbers of beginning band students to retain enough 'surviving' members to build a viable high school band program.[38] A 1993 study by Patrick Fortney and others developed a 'how-to' approach aimed at helping band directors convince rising fifth and sixth grade students to become instrumentalists and begin band.[39] Emery C, Warnock stated in a 2005 study that participation in large music ensembles in the United States public-schools is rooted in attraction theory. "Attraction theory suggests that people have intentions toward associating with individuals that have similar interests or even groups formed by those individuals."[40] This reinforces the notion that band members often experience a strong unifying experience with other band members.

In a 2010 study, Daryl Kinney found academic achievement, family structure, and socioeconomic status (SES) as predictors to enrollment in the sixth grade and as predictors of continuation through the eighth grade.[41] He has noted that these findings are concurred in other

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37. Daniel Albert, "Strategies for the Recruitment and Retention of Band Students in Low Socioeconomic School Districts," *Contributions to Music Education, 33*(2) (2006): 55.

38. Hayes," Top 10 ways to recruit," 49.

39. Patrick Fortney, David Boyle, and Nicholas DeCarbo, "A Study of Middle School Band Students' Instrument Choices," *Journal of Research in Music Education, 41*(1) (1993): 29.

40. Emery Warnock, "Gender and Attraction: Predicting Middle School Performance Ensemble Participation," *Contributions to Music Education, 36*(2) (2009): 60.

41. Kinney, "Selected Nonmusic Predictors," 335.

studies, covering both urban and rural school districts. He goes on to note that "access to and participation in school music programs are mediated by demographic factors, such as socioeconomic status (SES) and school size."[42] Secondary school instrumental music programs are particularly affected by funding and resources available due to differences in SES. Kinney goes on to point out that "the elective nature of many secondary school music courses makes the recruitment and retention of students paramount to their viability."[43]

Organization of beginning band programs has much to do with the overall success of the program. Linda Hartley notes a nationwide survey shows beginning instruction spans from the third through the ninth grades, with the majority (71%) starting instruction in grade five or six. She notes students reaching the seventh grade who began band in the sixth grade had already matched the ability of those who started earlier.[44] This information should lead directors to consider if starting students before the sixth grade is a productive use of limited resources. Furthermore, students starting at an earlier grade level may become frustrated and drop out. Older studies by Martignetti and Silliman support these findings.

Hartley discusses findings concerning the importance of how often band classes meet and the resultant efficacy". Instrumental music programs that met daily had less attrition than those that met two or three times a week."[45] Hartley's study examined students beginning in fifth and sixth grade, asked whether they rehearsed in the same or different buildings in these grade levels,

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42. Kinney, "Selected Nonmusic Predictors," 335.

43. Ibid.,337.

44. Hartley," Influence of Starting Grade," 310.

45. Ibid.,314.

and asked director opinions concerning the appropriate grade-level to begin instrumental music instruction. In this study, Hartley sought answers to questions concerning the number of times beginners met each week and the impact of a change of directors between schools. Since not much literature exists regarding the change of directors and how it affects retention, this last factor is specifically emphasized in this study.

<div align="center">Changing of Directors</div>

Thomas Kloss cites the changing of directors as an important factor affecting retention of students as they move from one level of instruction to the next - specifically from middle to high school. He also examined the relationship between band teacher turnover and its impact on student participation going forward in "a number of ways, including the preparation of new teachers, the costs to school districts, and the impact on student achievement."[46] If the goal is to strengthen and grow band programs, teacher turnover must be examined and analyzed. Current data from the National Center for Education Statistics show that "15.5% of teachers leave the profession or move to other schools each year."[47]

Kloss cited The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF), which showed in a 2007 study that 38.5% of teachers left after only five years. This is significant because the Center for Public Education noted in a 2005 study that "it takes most teachers 5 years of classroom experience to become effective."[48] Teachers taking alternative methods of certification, including lateral entry, have much higher attrition rates, often approaching 80%

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46. Kloss, "Band Teacher Turnover," 46.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid.,48.

music positions with an alternate route to certification and the quality of musical experiences their students will receive." His detailed analysis includes a cost calculator that has produced results predicting a total cost of almost five billion dollars annually to school districts for training and hiring replacements. General information on teacher attrition is compared with music education teachers and yields results showing that qualified music educators on average have lower attrition and turnover rates than other educators. Kloss's study supports the importance of band teacher retention. "Focusing on retention of band teachers will not only save schools money but will also stabilize student participation."[49]

<div align="center">Teacher's Perspectives</div>

Teacher perceptions of student attrition during their first year of study has been examined by Rachel M. Gamin who included band and orchestra directors from different areas regarding scheduling method and demographics and found "the apparent effect of scheduling methods upon attrition rates is potentially important and could have significant impact on how instrumental music teachers view and design their programs."[50] She goes on to say, "the loss of students from instrumental programs has been, and will continue to be, a major concern among music educators, and continued study is warranted so that understanding can be increased and possible solutions found."[51]

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49. Ibid.,50.

50. Rachel M. Gamin, "Teacher Perceptions regarding Attrition in Beginning Instrumental Music Classes during the First Year of Study." *Contributions to Music Education* 32, no. 2 (2005): 49.

51. Ibid.,50.

Gamin goes on to describe the fact that most instrumental programs are elective in nature and may be dropped at any point. Also noted is the fact that high quality music experiences are dependent on a strong base of returning students.[52] No significant differences were found between band and orchestra in this study. Often, students are excited to begin band which may make initial recruitment comparatively easy. In order to have a better understanding of the complex issues that cause student attrition, this perspective seems especially valuable. Importantly, while this study only considered first-year students, improvement of student retention at this level would provide a higher basis for increased improvements at successive levels of instruction.

## Influential Components of Student Decisions to Continue Band

Noted researcher, Daryl Kinney, used academic achievement, socioeconomic status (SES), number of parents/guardians at home, mobility, ethnicity, and sex as explanatory variables to predict students' decisions to enroll and persist in middle and high school music ensembles. He studied initial enrollment (sixth grade) and retention (eighth and tenth grades) in band, string, and choir electives. He noted differences between band, string, and choir students and non-music students, and differences between choir students and instrumental music students. All music participation was predicted by academic achievement, followed by SES, and family structure. Instrumental music was differentiated from choir in that math and reading achievement predicted enrollment in instrumental ensembles while reading achievement by itself predicted choir enrollment.[53]

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52. Ibid.,45.

53. Kinney," Selected Nonmusic Predictors," 28.

Academic achievement is a significant predictor in band enrollment and retention. Conversely, several studies show notable differences from choir enrollees where academic achievement is equivalent to or lower than nonparticipants.[54] This was confirmed in a 2013 study in which choir students scored significantly lower than non-music peers on the SAT. Kinney went on to say that these differences may be due to sociodemographic factors. It is important to note these differences in cognitive measurement when comparing instrumental programs - specifically band - to other classes and activities.

Once a student elects to join a beginning band program, instrument selection must be made. A thirteen-school study of middle-school beginning student instrumental choices found significant factors influencing this decision include gender, student perception of the instrument sound, music teachers, parents, and friends. The results of this 990-person sample University of Miami study showed "although students did not indicate it directly, gender association with certain instruments seemed to override professed reasons for instrument selection."[55] They went on to note that of the study's respondents, 90 % of the flutists were female and nearly 90% of brass and percussionists were male. Although these findings are numerically high, the instrument category choices were validated in other research.[56]

After gender and instrument sound, people influential to the student, especially peers, play a role in instrument choice.[57] For many band beginners, this early encounter with peer

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54. Ibid.,30.

55. Fortney, Boyle, and DeCarbo," A Study of Middle School Band," 28.

56. Hartley, "Influence of Starting Grade," 310.

57. Fortney, Boyle, and DeCarbo, "A Study of Middle School Band," 30.

pressure only illustrates the beginning of its increased importance on student decisions. In this study, the perception of friends significantly surpassed the influence of parental preference as a decisive factor. An understanding of the student decision-making process of joining band and choosing an instrument along with an understanding the influence middle school band students have on each other seems vital to supporting future student retention.

The importance of peer influence on students continuing band is examined by Mari C. Dagaz in her 2012 study of two band programs. She found that band members in each instance "developed a close-knit, socioeconomically diverse community…[where] students created a culture of trust and acceptance of individuality …which many students related to a feeling of family.[58] Jared Rawlings, in 2017, explored the unique relationship engendered among band students. He reported that "adolescents feel band is often a 'home away from home', making this particular curricula and social context rich for study."[59]

Research supports the idea that socio-economic status (SES) has a significant bearing on student enrollment in instrumental music programs. "Students from a higher SES participated in instrumental coursework longer than those from a lower SES, and fewer students from lower SES begin instrumental music in school."[60] Most public-school parents must rent or purchase instruments and then find themselves responsible for maintaining them. This expense can be burdensome, especially in families with several children competing for instruments or other school and extra-curricular activities equipment and expense.

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58. Dagaz, "Learning from the Band", 432.

59. Rawlings, "Peer connectedness," 121.

60. Kinney, "Selected Nonmusic Predictors," 340.

Kinney noted that no research had been done regarding the effects financial considerations may have on student enrollment in joining the more expensive instrumental ensemble has versus joining the choir, and the relative effects this financial difference may have as it relates to continued student participation. This in-depth multi-level study contributes much to the overall discussion of recruitment and retention in instrumental music programs and provides strong predictors to band directors as they design and implement beginning band programs.

Once students join band programs, retaining them is of paramount importance. After academic achievement, SES, and home life, Michael Hewitt noted self-efficacy becomes important in predicting continuation in band programs. His 2015 study of middle and high school instrumentalists noted self-efficacy affects choices. People tend to choose activities and tasks they feel competent in and avoid those they do not. "Students with higher self-efficacy tend to engage in tasks for a longer period while also investing in activities that they believe will produce learning."[61] Perceptions between gender self-efficacy were noted. In general, males displayed higher self-efficacy than females in math and computer skills, and females showed higher self-efficacy in language arts. Some females report lower self-efficacy than males, even when performances were equivalent.[62] Hewitt's study seeks to understand student perceptions of their own abilities and enables music educators to use this knowledge to enhance student development and help them become continuing and successful performers.

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61. Michael P. Hewitt, "Self-Efficacy, Self-Evaluation, and Music Performance of Secondary-Level Band Students." *Journal of Research in Music Education*63, no. 3 (10, 2015): 298.

62. Ibid.,302.

In a 2017 study of middle school band student practice habits, Matthew D. Shatt found that self-efficacy impacted student desire and motivation to practice. Motivation, "an internal state that arouses us to action…and keeps us engaged in certain actions," is suggested to be responsible for up to twenty-five percent of student achievement.[63] Students who felt successful generally practiced more which often led to a virtuous pattern of increased practice followed by accelerated improvement. He notes "one fundamental way to improve on a musical instrument is to practice."[64]

## Transition

Since this study concerns middle school and high school age students, it includes the very essence of the often exciting and stressful years of adolescence: a time of great change in students.[65] During adolescence, life-changing cognitive and social development increasingly affects student decisions, including the choice to continue in band when they begin high school. As students grow and develop, peer perception becomes an increasing concern. The importance of acceptance and connection should not be underestimated.[66] In 2015, Jared Rawlings studied peer-connectedness noting that large band ensembles have been a fixture in American society and that pep band, jazz band, marching band, and others all consist of a group experience.

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63. Matthew Schatt," Middle school band students' self-determination to practice," *Psychology of Music*, *46*(2) (2018): 212.

64. Ibid.

65. Jason Thomas and Ted Nettelbeck," Performance anxiety in adolescent musicians," *Psychology of Music*, *42*(4) (2014): 626.

66. Rawlings, "Peer connectedness"*, 124.

Individuals identify with this common experience and "feel connected to one another due to their shared musical interests and the number of hours they share with the class outside of the school day."[67] Peer connectedness can be defined as feelings of closeness and being supported by friends. This has been identified as one of five primary outcomes for youth in American schools. To that extent, band can provide potentially large numbers of students the opportunity to achieve and experience this. Rawlings goes on to explain that adolescence is a time where the family relationships often begin taking a secondary role to peer relationships. Peer relationships play important roles in developing positive behaviors as children become young adults. This includes personal habits such as alcohol or drug use.[68]

Bridget Sweet's book, *Growing Musicians,* includes material dealing with the adolescent musician and the profound physical changes undergone during this time. The physical changes are addressed as Sweet notes, "Each student grows at different rates [with] some with body parts growing at different rates."[69] This impacts the ability of young musicians to control hands and fingers when playing an instrument. Sweet continues "with longer fingers and arms, students may have difficulty negotiating their instruments in our class; with longer legs, activities such as dancing, movement, or marching can be quite challenging."[70] Research is organized around the categories of late childhood and adolescence and the characteristics exhibited during each phase of development.  Alan Hewitt refers to the increased gross motor skills that begin in late

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67. Jared R. Rawlings, "The Effect of Middle School Music Ensemble Participation on the Relationship between Perceived School Connectedness, Self-Reported Bullying Behaviors, and Peer Victimization," University of Michigan, 2015.

68. Ibid.

69. Sweet, *Growing Musicians: Teaching Music*, 4.

70. Ibid.,6.

childhood, and the fine motor skills required for successful mastery of instrumental performance which may be acquired during adolescence. His 2012 study concerned band students participating in advanced performance opportunities such as honor bands, and their perceptions on enjoyment and value.[71]

Sweet's research continues with an analysis of adolescent cognitive development of instrumental music students. Brain studies show that learning through trial and error exercises parts of the brain that otherwise would not develop as well. This brain workout along with the classroom environment and learning styles of each student are other important factors in maintaining student interest in continued performance in school music ensembles.[72]

Ensuing chapters illustrate in greater detail, the peculiar differences the instrumental music student encounters while growing up. The material incorporates numerous cited studies from noted authors and scholars compiled and arranged in a useful, pragmatic fashion. As adolescent musicians continue their physical, emotional, and social development, school and school related activities, such as band, often constitute the single most common denominator in shared student experiences.[73] When the numerous hours of outside travel and performance are considered, band can become  a family-type relationship to students. Susan Haugland's classroom management book, '*Crowd Control'* acknowledges and explores the adolescent musician and their approach to band. Band classes are often larger than other classes, and often include a diverse multi-grade cross-section of the student population. Haugland notes the

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71. Allan Hewitt and Amanda Allan, "Advanced youth music ensembles: Experiences of, and reasons for, participation," *International Journal of Music Education*, *31*(3) (2013):  258.

72. Sweet, *Growing Musicians: Teaching Music*, 2*.*

73. Rawlings, "Peer connectedness*,"* 122.

importance of student relationships with the director in student decisions concerning continued involvement in band. Acknowledgement of individual students and their achievements by the director of a large group can often strengthen bonds between them.[74]

Additional topics include classroom décor and set-up, along with effective time-management practices to keep students engaged during instructional time. A 2007 study declares director efficacy in time management is critical, especially in a sight-reading situation. "Sight-reading is a process that reveals many learned proficiencies-aural, technical, and cognitive –of the performer, or performing group." Proficiency in sight-reading is considered revealing and is usually including in concert band adjudication.[75]

Haugland includes a wealth of useful information to achieve the best from adolescent band students based on the author's twenty-plus years of classroom experience. Her insight is informative and practical and offers effective responses to unproductive student behavior, does not overlook the importance of physical room settings, and discusses the importance of interpersonal intelligence acquired in band. "When students rehearse together and perform together as a team, they develop their interpersonal intelligence. Music performance teaches students to think creatively and solve problems. These skills will benefit students, no matter what they choose to do with the rest of their lives."[76]

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74. Susan L. Haugland, *Crowd Control: Classroom Management and Effective Teaching for Chorus, Band, and Orchestra* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2013), 7.

75. Evelyn Orman, Cornelia Yarbrough, Sheri Neill, and Jennifer Whitaker, "Time usage of middle and high school band directors in sight-reading adjudication," *Update - Applications of Research in Music Education, 25*(2) (2007): 38.

76. Haugland, *Crowd Control: Classroom Management*, 21.

Research in the field of instrumental music education continues to validate the positive elements for students if they continue in such programs. An acknowledgement and understanding of the importance of the development of potentially life-long positive attributes by beginning and persisting in musical performance points to the value of additional studies and research into this effort. Haugland contends that "through the discipline of music, students improve cognitive, communication, and study skills, all of which transfer to other areas of the curriculum." This author's recognition of the importance and value of music education is but one of many.[77] Her contention illustrates the importance public-school music education may have on general educational results and validates the importance our current study of understanding band attrition could have in improving these results.

In 2006, John W. Scheib studied an individual student as she described her experiences in middle school band. "Several studies have been done on the effect of school music instruction on the self-concept, as well as student perceptions of school music experiences, but few researchers have undertaken an in-depth inquiry of individual students to attempt to understand their possibly unique perceptions of school music."[78] In this study, a young trombonist called 'Lindy' explained her perceptions of band. Lindy was chosen because she was an average player. Her interviews suggested that band to her was competitive, task, achievement, and assessment based. In her experience, practice reports, scale learning, and chair placement enticed her to push forward. Interestingly, these results-based activities are continually brought up during her interviews, but the aesthetic qualities of music are not.

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77. Ibid,8.

78. John W. Scheib, "Lindy's Story: One Student's Experience in Middle School Band," *Music Educators Journal* 92, no. 5 (05, 2006): 34.

When asked about why she enjoys band, her responses "continually focus on non-music-specific statements…her motivation for being in band seems to come solely from the extrinsic qualities of the traditional band program such as competition and achievement, rather than from attributes specific to music or fine arts, such as qualities associated with performing or creating music."[79] As in other research, discipline and classroom control are prominent in Lindy's band experience. Her director used a system of demerits to assess student behavior. She noted that some students did not regard classroom rules as important. Still, Lindy planned to continue taking band in high school. Although this is one individual's perspective, it may be used as a point of discussion for directors to examine their approaches to classroom music education, as this type of perception came from a system that often becomes more concerned with practice and procedure rather than musical creativity.

Other research in the attrition of band students during the move from middle school to high school identifies individual factors including the band director's training, experience, and student likability as impacting secondary school band program development. This broad category is addressed from an administrator's perspective in the results of a 2008 research study which collected and analyzed written responses from almost one-thousand secondary school principals seeking to determine "how effective… principals think [current] music programs are in helping students attain specific learning outcomes and broad educational goals, and to what degree variables such as standardized testing, teachers, and parents impact a given music program."[80] The responses of these principals include perceptions of current school music education program offerings and effectiveness, and highlights their perceived importance of having a good, long-

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79. Ibid.,42.

80. Abril and Gault, "The State of Music in Secondary Schools," 77.

term, and effective director. Results indicated that "principals considered music teachers to have the greatest positive impact on a program."[81] These results verified an earlier 2006 Abril and Gault study concerning elementary school principals' perceptions of the impact good music teachers have on music education programs.

By the time students entered high school, receiving high quality band instruction over a multi-year period was found to be the most significant positive indicator for retaining student enrollment and ultimately improving ensemble performance in a given band program. Other information discussed the effects on the arts and specifically band programs due to scheduling issues, budgetary considerations and curriculum decisions mandated by national education legislation such as NCLB. This study illustrates the positive impact parental interest and support has on student continuation in band programs at the high school level. Abril and Gault included other findings indicating parents have a positive perception of the value in music education in secondary schools today. They also indicated that a "longitudinal study that followed specific programs over the course of several years could provide insight regarding how successful music programs manage challenges over an extended period of time, providing valuable ideas for policy makers and decision makers."[82]

Other issues impacting student retention involve a change of director. Though much research has been done on teacher turnover, the least studied perspectives involve *students* who experience teacher turnover. In 2013 Thomas Kloss examined how high school band students

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81. Richard Weerts, "'Secondary School Administrators' Attitudes and Perceptions on the Role of Music and School Bands,"- Richard Allen Greenwood, *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education* 118 (October 1, 1993), 56.

82. Ibid.,80.

experienced director turnover. He found that "turnover of a Performing Arts teacher does not go unnoticed…in most high schools [these] teachers may see the same students during multiple years of their high school careers."[83] Kloss continued noting that a band teacher's presence in student life "is further magnified by afterschool activities (marching band), and community events, (parades and concerts)."[84]

The relationship formed by students over time affects their decision to continue band when the director leaves. Most students do continue, but there is a significant spike in student attrition. Average student band drop rates are about 6.5% per year; however, band programs undergoing a change in leadership lose on average almost 10% student enrollment during the transition.[85] Results showed for most students, the enjoyment of performing music surpassed concerns of changing directors, so they stay to 'see what happens.' Kloss recommends more study, including the effect a 'revolving door' of teachers has on a band program. He noted schools with no band director turnover during the four-year study retained the highest number of students. This direct correlation further illustrates the long-term importance continuity of instruction has on a given band program.

In 2010, Robert D Gardner's research team examined music teacher attrition and retention as compared to overall teacher turnover. His research team gathered information from all categories of teachers and then compared those with teachers primarily assigned as music teachers. The findings showed "music teachers at the secondary level often teach performance

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83. Kloss, "High school band students' perspectives," 70.

84. Ibid.

85. Ibid.

ensembles, such as chorus, band, or orchestra. The unique nature of these positions often requires music teachers to deal with issues not generally encountered by other teachers, such as planning concerts, requesting transportation for offsite events, or budgeting expenses for sheet music or instrument maintenance".[86] Band programs exhibit a continuity of instruction when students have the same band director throughout middle school. As students contemplate continuing band in high school in what is most often an elective course, middle school band teacher turnover was negatively correlated with enrollment.[87]

### Strategies for Improving Retention

Steve Hayes explores strategies to improve band student retention from the perspective of the high school director. He focuses on getting to know the students by attending middle school band concerts and other activities. "Students often find it easy to drop band when switching schools or changing directors. If they know you well, joining high school band will seem more important to them."[88] He goes on to discuss bringing selected high school band members to sit in with the middle school classes and working closely with the guidance department.[89]

Jennifer Stewart's 2005 study of student intentions to continue in band included gender, starting grade, academic achievement, self-efficacy, and interest in band to determine which

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86. Robert D. Gardner, "Should I stay, or Should I Go? Factors that Influence the Retention, Turnover, and Attrition of K–12 Music Teachers in the United States," *Arts Education Policy Review* (2010): 114.

87. Nicole Robinson, "Correlations between teacher turnover and specific non-pecuniary school characteristics among secondary band and choral programs in a large urban district," *International Journal of Music Education*, *36*(2) (2018): 270.

88. Hayes," Top 10 ways to recruit," 49.

89. Ibid.

were determining factors." Students who chose to remain in performance classes often had higher grades and more advanced performance skills than those who chose to drop out."[90] She went on to note that findings indicated socio-economic status, home music background, and the influence of parents were important factors impacting student retention. She found the three most important reasons given by students to continue in band "included maintaining friendships, having fun, and taking trips."[91] These findings reinforce the perception that making music in large ensembles contains a large social component.

## Summary

Research shows the value of band participation in student life. The retention of existing students is of vital importance to continuing, developing, and growing a secondary school band program. The body of research sampled points to the peculiarity band has in comparison with other subjects taught. The areas of recruitment, retention, transition, along with director-specific issues have been researched to various degrees. There seems to be minimal study into the effect an individual director has on the success of maintaining student involvement in the band program. This study seeks to evaluate, analyze, and assimilate existing research into band attrition and identify procedures that exhibit demonstrable success in retaining band students.

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90. Stewart, "Factors Related to Students' Decision," 60.

91. Ibid.,64.

# CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Since band programs overall have suffered declines in enrollment, it is vital to understand significant factors impacting student decisions to discontinue band. Research shows the most critical time for students discontinuing band occurs as they move from middle school to high school. [92] This study analyzes existing band student attrition research identifying significant commonalities and identifying strategies already in practice that are being used to successfully increase band student retention. There exists much literature on band student attrition, but there is not much research on the impact having the same director at both middle and high school has on continued enrollment.

This study examines a specific study that contains quantitative research comparing band student enrollment in the eighth grade with band student enrollment the following year as students entered high school. Various band director teaching configurations were observed: middle school only, middle school and high school, band only, or band and chorus. This sample contained enrollment results from two counties representing two different public-school districts in a southeastern state.

## Research Design

Since research indicates students who continue to participate in public-school band programs often demonstrate improvement in both educational achievement and social development,[93] identifying factors which negatively impact student decisions to continue band

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92. Hayes, "Top 10 ways to recruit," 50.

93. Dagaz, "Learning from the band," 432.

enrollment would be of value to students, directors, and school administrators. This study analyzes existing research with a historical approach in an effort to identify and rank those factors impacting band student attrition, and to identify successfully implemented strategies which have demonstrated increased student retention and enrollment.

Researchers such as Martin, Elpus, and Kinney have studied the overall problem of band student attrition, [94] but little research exists concerning the impact teaching configuration, whether separate band director for middle school and high school, or one director for both, has on student retention rates. The loss of a band director is shown to negatively impact student retention during the following school term. Evidence indicates the reverse is also true; band directors who have served many years create stability in the program. This 'continuity of director' is a significant factor in retaining students in band programs.[95] This study seeks to improve band student retention by identifying successful band programs which enjoy higher rates of re-enrollment, and to identify procedures successful programs use which improve overall band student retention.

To illustrate the results of band student attrition research and the impact student losses have on band programs in real-world situations, a study including band enrollments compiled from two public-school districts was examined. The data indicates four of the six high schools experienced losses much greater than national band attrition averages. Teaching assignments at

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94. Kinney, "Selected Nonmusic Predictors," 338.

95. Gardner, "Should I stay," 114.

these schools included novice and veterans, some with grade six through twelve, and others high school only.[96]

## Research Questions

The research questions for this study are:

**RQ1:** What are the significant factors impacting student retention in band programs?

**RQ2:** In what ways could utilization of the same band director in a given middle and high school program improve musical development?

## Hypotheses

**H**1: The significant factors impacting student retention in band programs are socio-economic status, academic achievement, and family structure.

**H**2: Utilization of the same band director in a given middle and high school program improves musical development in terms of student recruitment and retention.

## Procedures

This study examines and analyzes existing research of band student attrition to identify significant factors impacting recruitment and retention of students. These factors are identified and prioritized noting any differences in band student attrition attributed to changing directors from middle school to high school. Strategies and procedures which have demonstrated success

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96. Jacqueline Henninger, "THE NATURE OF EXPERTISE IN INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC SETTINGS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF COMMON ELEMENTS OBSERVED IN BAND," *Journal of Band Research, 53*(2) (2018): 56.

in overcoming band student attrition are identified for implementation in band programs

suffering excessive student losses.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

## Overview

This chapter yields results of analysis concerning band student attrition derived from scholarly sources to seek to identify significant factors impacting student retention in band programs.  Existing research identifies common factors predicting band student attrition and are indicated in order of importance. This chapter also yields results of ways utilization of the same band director in a given middle and high school program could improve musical development. Research has yielded examples of successful strategies and implementation of procedures that have resulted in band student retention rates significantly higher than results in general. Procedures that have produced positive band student retention results are identified for introduction into other school systems with hopes of similar increases in band enrollment.

### Existing Research Findings

A study of existing research reveals common significant factors which indicate increased levels of band student attrition. Much research indicates the primary determinant in beginning and continuing band is socio-economic status (SES). Higher levels of SES predict higher levels of beginning enrollment, along with higher levels of retention and continuance into high school. [97] Academic achievement was second in predicting band student retention; however, it is not clear if that achievement is because of musical training or an indication of higher levels of achievement prior to entry into an instrumental program.[98] Still, performing in band leads to

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97. Kinney, "Selected Nonmusic Predictors," 336.

98. Ibid.,338.

improvements for many students in areas of peer acceptance, educational achievement, and leadership skills. The third most important indicator of band student continuance is family structure. Band students who experience a traditional two-parent home-life are more likely to continue band studies.[99] This may be influenced by economic factors which could hinder single-parent families from affording an instrument and associated expenses along with transportation issues getting band students to required after-school rehearsals and performances.

Another important factor in success of a band program is scheduling, or how often students rehearse each week. Programs that meet daily keep more students, which increases the student population available to continue in band each semester.[100] The development of large instrumental ensembles such as band typically found in American secondary schools depends on recruiting large numbers of beginners in hopes of overcoming expected student attrition and providing necessary enrollment to fill the instrumentation needs of a high school band.  Any procedural moves that increase retention of band students from one grade to the next increases the pool of available future band students.

Existing research concerning optimal teaching configurations for band program development, whether it is preferable to have one director teaching both middle-school and high-school bands or have separate directors at each school, is inadequate. However, there is much study of the transition period from middle-school to high-school and its impact on band students continuing at the high-school level. Change of director, whether by teacher attrition or due to

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99. Adria Rachel Hoffman, "Exclusion, engagement and identity construction in a socioeconomically diverse middle school wind band classroom," *Music Education Research*, 14:2, (2012):  216.

100. Stewart, "Factors related to students' decision," 63.

students as they transition from middle-school to high-school, negatively impacts band enrollment.[101] The amount of band director turnover is referred to as director continuity. One study reports a band program that has experienced ten different band directors in a ten-year period resulting in steep losses of student enrollment in the band.[102] When band students move from middle school to high-school they often change directors which appears to contribute to increased rates of attrition. In a 2012 four year study, Kloss found "bands with a consistent band teacher have consistent numbers and hold the highest amount of student participation".[103] Most secondary school principals report the band director has the most positive impact on success of the program.[104] This recognition highlights the need for better understanding of band teacher attrition and its negative impact on student retention. Research indicates stability of the band director position is a positive indicator for improvement in band student enrollment.[105] Studies note the retaining of trained music teachers past the critical five-year service mark is a positive indicator for continued employment in music education and a positive indicator for increased band student retention.[106]

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101. Kloss, "Band Teacher Turnover," 47.

102. Robinson, "Correlations between teacher turnover," 276.

103. Kloss, "Band Teacher Turnover," 49.

104. Weerts, "Secondary School Administrators' Attitudes," 118.

105. Kloss, "Band Teacher Turnover," 48.
106. Douglas J. Nimmo, "FACTORS OF ATTRITION AMONG HIGH SCHOOL BAND DIRECTORS," *Journal of Band Research, 24*(2) (1989): 21.

## Successful Strategies for Band Student Retention

Band programs that have better rates of student retention often practice strategies including greater involvement between the middle and high school directors and between students in different the schools in a program. Directors from high school attend middle-school concerts to familiarize middle school band students with the high school director.[107] This familiarity often improves student self-confidence and self-efficacy while increasing interest in continuing band at high school. Networking with parents at these events often has a positive impact on recruiting for the high school band. The importance of communication with the guidance office at both the middle and high school cannot be under-estimated.[108] Directors may consider having selected high school students come and speak with students about how important they feel band is. There may be opportunities to involve eighth-graders in the high school program by marching selected students with the high school band. Also, seventh and eighth-grade middle school students can be invited to play in the stands at a football game or other event with the high school band. Co-ordinating with the school athletic director may avoid potential scheduling issues when students have multiple competing activities in which they wish to participate. It is often best to work together to avoid forcing students to choose between band and other activities. These suggestions have been used successfully by many band directors to beat national attrition rates that average about 6.5% per year.

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107. Hayes, "Top 10 ways to recruit," 48.

108. Jacquelynne Eccles and Bonnie Barber, "Student Council, Volunteering, Basketball, or Marching Band: What Kind of Extracurricular Involvement Matters?," *Journal of Adolescent Research*, *14*(1) (1999): 26.

## Summary of Findings

Results indicate elevated student enrollment where the band director has the most years-of-service at a given location and teaches only band. One study indicates enrollment numbers worse than expected with results showing student losses exceeding national averages in schools with separate directors for middle and high school. Studies indicate band programs benefit from more continuity in the band director position but are not conclusive if the implementation of utilizing the same director for both middle school and high school bands increases band student retention. Additional teaching benefits may be gained by a focus on directing one type of ensemble, band. Studies of the effectiveness of any emphasis on specialization are needed to see if significant improvement in band student retention do occur.

Suggestions to improve band student retention include better coordination with the middle school director, school guidance departments and a realization that recruitment is an ongoing everyday event. Many young band students are not confident in their self-efficacy and need encouragement and support from the director. Since trained band students are difficult to replace, director comments perceived negatively by the student are difficult to overcome and can lead to a lack of desire to continue in band. All these factors contribute to the band student's decision to stay in band or discontinue.

# CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This chapter presents a brief summary of the study, purpose, and procedure. Prior research is compared to current findings and analyzed for reported trends and similarities. Significant factors impacting band student attrition rates are identified and practices and procedures that have demonstrated success in countering this trend have been noted. These practices should be implemented in additional band programs with various attrition rates to see if band student retention rates improve. If more students stay enrolled, then more students earn the opportunity to enjoy the ancillary benefits being a band member offers. Future studies are recommended to clarify the significant factors and issues which contribute in varying degrees to the problem.

## Summary of the Study

This examination and analysis of existing band student attrition research was conducted to identify factors which significantly impact student retention during the transition from middle school to high school. After identifying these significant factors, procedures that have demonstrated success at countering student attrition trends and improving student retention rates are presented.   In addition, analysis of studies comparing band enrollments from the important eighth to ninth grade transition did not conclusively indicate having separate band directors negatively impacts band student retention. Increasing band student attrition is a nationwide problem and indicates the importance of recognizing and implementing procedures and practices that have demonstrated improved band student retention.

Summary of Procedure

Existing research was analyzed to identify factors most significant in predicting band student attrition. These factors are identified and prioritized in order of significance. National rates of attrition were compared with results of a specific study of band enrollment. Band director teaching assignment configurations include middle-school only, high-school only, or a combination of both. The importance of finding workable solutions to the problem of band student attrition is reinforced by nationwide enrollment results.

**Discussion of Findings**

Analysis of existing research has yielded successful strategies and procedures which have produced attrition rates lower than national averages. These practices are examined and compiled for consideration by band directors and may be implemented in any band setting experiencing the stress of transition, especially as students move from middle school to high school- the most likely time for losing band students. Since increasing retention rates for band students is the aim of this study, if these procedures are implemented in a variety of teaching situations, and if positive results are successfully repeated, then band directors experiencing excessive student attrition will have some immediate, practical options to address the problem.

Studies by leading researcher Daryl Kinney list socio-economic status, academic achievement, and family structure as the most significant factors which influence students to begin band and are also significant factors contributing to the desire to continue taking band in high school.[109] Other factors of significance include scheduling issues and the continuity of director. Band programs with the least director turnover were identified as having the lowest

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109. Kinney, "Selected nonmusic predictors," 334.

student attrition rates. In her study of director turnover, Nicole Robinson found "some contributing factors identified specifically regarding music teachers include uninvolved parents and having a large percentage of transient students." [110]This last factor illustrates the very problem being studied, high band student attrition which leads to increases in transient students.

## Limitations of Study

Analysis of existing research illustrates general agreement of significant factors impacting retention of band students. However, there is little research into what impact teaching assignment may have on band student retention. One study of band enrollment yielded results showing differing rates of band re-enrollment in the sampled schools for students advancing from middle school to high school. The recognition that significant factors usually impacting band student retention negatively were present but still unable to account for the strong enrollment results in one school. Impacts due to individual director attributes were not addressed in this study. The impact of teacher assignment needs additional study. Qualitative study of student and teacher opinions could prove especially useful.

## Summary of Findings

The loss of band student enrollment as grade level increases has been noted and lamented by many researchers and music education advocates. Participants in public-school band programs generally have improved academic results and often enjoy greater social acceptance by peers than other students. By recognizing those factors that contribute to band student attrition, procedures may be put into place to counter these losses. Research studying the impact director

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110. Robinson, "Correlations between teacher turnover," 274.

teaching assignments have on band enrollment and overall program development is inadequate to yield a conclusive determination as to which arrangement is best.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

The findings of this study show general agreement in research concerning the factors which negatively impact band student retention. Research indicates elevated attrition rates as students transition from middle school to high-school. Band director continuation in a program positively impacts enrollment, but not enough research concerns the impact having the same director during this crucial transition may have on increasing band student retention. Additional studies considering the variable of teaching configuration are necessary to conclusively determine how this impacts band student retention. Surveys of students continuing band where one director teaches both middle and high school should be conducted concerning why they continued, specifically if keeping the same director encouraged student continuation. Resulting enrollment comparisons between schools which use different directors at each school should be made to determine any measurable impact utilizing the same director at middle and high school has on student retention in band.

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