

Liberty University

School of Music

And All Those Jazz Hands!

A Curricular Show Choir in an Elementary Public School: A Case Study

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by

Anne Valadia Binkley

Lynchburg, VA

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Abstract

Despite the known benefits of adolescent participation in secondary music ensembles and the advantages of singing for elementary-aged students, researchers have yet to evaluate the positive effects of student participation in a public school elementary curricular show choir. The potential benefits of an elementary show choir in a public school can reveal more possibilities for music educators to involve students in relevant music-making. This study examines the perspectives of former elementary show choir members, parents, city officials, and elementary school administrators concerned with a public school curricular show choir. Respondents have shared views on benefits to students, families, and the local community. The responses to survey questions gave rise to emerging themes by exploring a small body of existing literature. This qualitative study will include answers to survey questions of participants who have organized, participated, or partnered with a public school curricular elementary show choir. This work is essential because other music educators may realize the potential benefits of a curricular show choir and consider establishing a show choir within their elementary music curriculum. Incorporating a curricular show choir in a public elementary school could enhance elementary music-making by attracting a large population of students and providing families with an opportunity for their children to be involved in their community. Further, this study can encourage more research by demonstrating the value of integrating culturally relevant music in music education, realizing the social and emotional benefits of choir participation for elementary children, and involving all students regardless of socioeconomic status.

Keywords: music, education, elementary, show choir

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my excellent students, their families, the supportive administration and faculty/staff members of Ocean City Elementary School, and the exceptional community of Ocean City, Maryland. Additionally, this work is dedicated to the man who had the foresight to create the fantastic *OC Stars* show choir twenty-four years ago, Mr. Rick Chapman.

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Abbreviations

American Choral Director's Association (ACDA)

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)

Music Educators National Conference (MENC)

Music Learning Theory (MLT)

National Association for Music Education (NAfME)

Ocean City Elementary School (OCES)

Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP)

Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

Social and emotional learning (SEL)

Chapter One: Introduction

Many choir directors throughout the United States have established children's choirs in various cities and towns. Children's choirs can enhance a child's musical ability and provide an opportunity to improve social skills. Many children or families of children may desire participation in a children's choir but may experience financial challenges, transportation difficulties, fail an audition, or face other barriers preventing participation. In an elementary public school setting, where every child is guaranteed a well-rounded education, any child could participate in a curricular show choir.¹ Establishing a non-auditioned curricular show choir in an elementary public school may induce some challenges. However, the many possible advantages of producing such an ensemble may outweigh the complications. This study establishes the benefits of incorporating show choirs in public high and middle schools for schools, students, and communities. This study also analyzes the potential positive impact of including a curricular public school show choir for an elementary school, students, their families, and the community.

Background

In the 1980s, children's community choirs became popular in the United States, with Doreen Rao organizing the first National Children's Honor Choir in 1983.² However, the popularity of children's choirs in the twenty-first century has waned, evidenced by the current recruitment and retention challenges.³ Some probable causes of children's choir recruitment and retention challenges may include competition for families' time, student involvement in sports

¹ Deborah Mello, "Children's and Youth Community Choirs: Shifting in the Paradigm," *Choral Journal* 59, no. 11 (2019): 45, <https://go.openathens.net/redirector/liberty.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/childrens-youth-community-choirs-shifting/docview/2247564363/se-2>.

² Ibid., 47.

³ Ibid., 47.

programs, lack of family commitments to rehearsals, social media influence, academic challenges, and a “competitive market” of other performing arts offerings.⁴

Many high schools offer students choral elective choices, often including a show choir option. Show choir repertoire typically consists of popular music. While some choral and vocal instructors tend to shy away from popular music literature in a choir, educators Kastner and Menon found that adding popular music to a choral repertoire “provided an entry point for culturally responsive pedagogy.”⁵ According to author and choral education expert Kenneth Phillips, popular music groups in most schools do not meet during school hours and are considered extracurricular activities.⁶ Phillips’ research of choral ensembles concentrates on middle school and high school-aged choral ensemble students. Still, it does not include information about elementary show choirs, students involved in an elementary show choir, or curricular options for an elementary show choir.

Public high school vocal ensemble courses generally encompass a concert choir, a madrigal choir, a chamber ensemble, or a mixed chorus.⁷ A concert choir is typically an auditioned choir and the more advanced choir in a high school, while a madrigal choir, or chamber ensemble, may be defined as a smaller and more select group than the concert choir.⁸ Non-auditioned students or students not selected for the concert choir or madrigal choir generally

⁴ Mello, “Children’s and Youth Community Choirs: Shifting in the Paradigm,” 47.

⁵ Julie D. Kastner and Saleel Menon, “Popular Music in Choir: Helping Students Find Their Voices,” *Music Educators Journal* 106, no. 1 (September 2019): 49, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0027432119856083>.

⁶ Kenneth H. Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 58.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 55.

participate in a mixed chorus, often becoming a feeder choir to train basic skills to a group of students who may eventually audition for the concert choir.⁹ A mixed chorus, madrigal choir, concert choir, or chamber ensemble sings various music selections, while a show choir performs primarily popular music.

High schools and middle schools may incorporate show choirs within the school day. However, they might also add the show choir as an extracurricular course, meeting before or after school, and therefore, students would not receive academic credit for participating in an extracurricular ensemble.¹⁰ Show choirs also “emphasize choreography,” which involves dance-like movements coordinated with the music.¹¹ Some public high schools do incorporate a show choir in their music curriculum. Some educators like David Itkin have expressed that students do not need to experience a well-rounded education, including popular music, because “the influence on our students and community are already so far weighted toward the opposing side.”¹² Kenneth Phillips notes that some choir directors do not favor popular music choral groups in their schools because students should experience music differing from their typical music. Students likely favor current trendy popular music of genres like pop, rhythm and blues, country, rock, punk, or other similar styles, and music that likely appears on the various weekly American top music charts.¹³ As a consequence of the competitive and widespread nature of a show choir, show choirs can overwhelm the whole choral program by becoming the focal point

⁹ Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 55, 57.

¹⁰ Ibid., 58.

¹¹ Ibid., 58.

¹² David Itkin, “Dissolving the Myths of the Show Choir,” *Music Educators Journal* 72, no. 8 (1986): 41, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3396658>.

¹³ Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 58.

of the choral program.¹⁴ However, Constance McKoy states that students should engage with culturally relevant music in addition to great masterpieces, which are generally understood to be great works styled according to the Western European tradition.¹⁵ Therefore, ensemble directors could strive for a musical style balance to encourage growth in all ensembles.

In addition to concerns about incorporating popular music in a choral class and the possibility of a show choir overwhelming a school's choral program, individuals like David Itkin express that an institutional show choir is inferior musically to a traditional institutional choir because the primary premise of a show choir is the choreography.¹⁶ Author Tim Sharar addresses Itkin's criticism of the inferiority of the musicality of a show choir compared to a concert choir, pointing out that the added choreography and stage presence contributes to the "total music education" of students.¹⁷ Sharar also emphasizes that a choir director who focuses only on the musical aspects of songs but neglects the visual components of performance often delivers a very "stoic" and "boring" performance.¹⁸

According to Phillips, another concern about including a curricular show choir in a school setting is the type of vocal technique often encouraged, which could potentially damage voices.¹⁹ Sharar defends the vocal performance of popular music, sharing that choir directors can assimilate all styles into a choral program and that "any ensemble has the potential to become

¹⁴ Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 58.

¹⁵ Constance L. McKoy. "On the 50th Anniversary of the Tanglewood Symposium," *Journal of Music Teacher Education* 27, no. 1 (October 2017): 5, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1057083717719073>.

¹⁶ Itkin, "Dissolving the Myths of the Show Choir, 41.

¹⁷ Tim Sharar, "Eyes of the Beholder," *Music Educators Journal* 73, no. 1 (1986):17, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3400385>.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁹ Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 59.

vocally abusive and that good singing is good singing.”²⁰ According to an otolaryngologist study, prepubescent children who sang in a choir experienced fewer symptoms of vocal disorders than their non-singing counterparts.²¹ The researchers attributed the fewer vocal disorders of young singers to the singing training they received from participating in the choirs.²²

The nature of traveling to events for show choirs creates an advantageous opportunity for partnerships to be formed between a school and its families, as well as a school and its surrounding community. Amy Cox-Peterson emphasizes the importance of “parental participation” in a child’s education.²³ Cox-Peterson also contends that partnerships between schools and their community can foster a service attitude amongst the students as they serve the community through entertainment for various community functions.²⁴

Cox-Peterson emphasizes that the outcome of a school-family partnership, based on over forty years of research, is “parental participation [that] contributes to student academic achievement.”²⁵ Parent or guardian involvement in a child’s education increases the likelihood of academic achievement.²⁶ Much of the success of the show choir depends upon parental or guardian involvement with the show choir, allowing the show choir members to meet their learning objectives by providing resources that the school system cannot offer. The school’s PTA

²⁰ Sharar, “Eyes of the Beholder,” 17.

²¹ Pedro Clarós et al., “Association Between the Development of Pediatric Voice Disorders and Singing in the Children’s Choir,” *JAMA Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery* 145, no. 5 (2019): 446, doi:10.1001/jamaoto.2019.0066.

²² Ibid., 448.

²³ Amy Cox-Peterson, *Educational Partnerships: Connecting Schools, Families, and the Community* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2011), 129.

²⁴ Ibid., 139.

²⁵ Ibid., 139.

²⁶ Ibid., 129.

(Parent Teacher Association) providing accessories for the show choir's parade performances and the potential for purchasing matching jackets for colder weather are examples of successful parental partnerships with the show choir. Parents or guardians also provide transportation, and some parents or guardians chaperone for show choir events outside the school day. A few selected parents or guardians assist the choir director by keeping students aligned during a parade procession, and several parents or guardians place accessories on students as the students prepare for the parade procession. Some parents and guardians with experience as dancers or choreographers have offered their expertise to the show choir's director to assist with choreographing the elementary show choir's songs. Parents or guardians willing to donate their time and knowledge to the show choir further demonstrate a familial commitment to the school-family partnership.

Cox-Peterson explains another type of educational partnership, a community-school partnership, which could also "improve and enhance education for students."²⁷ One example of a school-community partnership is service learning. Service learning entails students performing a service for the community where all parties involved benefit from the partnership.²⁸ Students serve the community, benefiting the community, and the students profit by completing a learning objective.²⁹ The elementary show choir demonstrates service-learning activities by performing concerts for opening exercises to significant events in their local city. The city's economy revolves around tourism, and the partnership that the city has formed with the elementary school's show choir has created a tradition for more than twenty years. Nearly every year, a local

²⁷ Cox-Peterson, *Educational Partnerships*, 139.

²⁸ Ibid., 147.

²⁹ Ibid., 147.

television show, some local newspapers, and local news programs have shared footage of the show choir performing during the opening ceremonies of the city's major events.

Regardless of socioeconomic status, students can participate in a public school choir at a modest expense, which might include the cost of a uniform. Providing an inclusive curricular public school choir can enable students of lower economic status to identify as “singers, musicians, and artists” rather than as individuals who are members of a stereotypical “culture of poverty.”³⁰ All students, regardless of socioeconomic status, are more likely to develop increasing emotional awareness through participation in a musical ensemble than students who do not participate in musical groups, as evidenced in a study by Ros-Morente et al.³¹ Students involved in musical studies or ensembles were 55 percent more likely to develop leadership skills than students who did not participate in music ensembles.³²

Statement of the Problem

In more recent literature, little to no research addresses a relationship between a curricular elementary show choir and the benefits of forging connections between families, schools, and their community, as well as the challenges involved in including a show choir in an elementary public school curriculum. A recent study of adult movement during choral performance indicates that the movement enhanced the vocal quality of the performance. Choir

³⁰ Julia T. Shaw, “Toward Socially Inclusive Music Organizations: Promoting Socioeconomic Diversity in Choral Ensembles,” *The Choral Journal* 58, no. 4 (November 2017): 27, <https://shibbolethsp.jstor.org/start?entityID=https%3A%2F%2Fshibboleth.liberty.edu%2Fidp%2Fshibboleth&dest=https://www.jstor.org/stable/26412895&site=jstor>.

³¹ Agnès Ros-Morente, et al., “Beyond Music: Emotional Skills and Its Development in Young Adults in Choirs and Bands,” *International Journal of Music Education* 37, no. 4, (November 2019): 543, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0255761419853634>.

³² Ibid., 5

members preferred the audio version with movement because the sound was much more vibrant.³³ The authors also highlight that “synchronized movement” would be more visually appealing, supporting the choreographic nature of a children’s show choir. Movement prevents the tension from potential stiffness in singing posture and alleviates possible disasters resulting from performers locking their knees.³⁴ Much of the current literature discusses benefits such as what children might experience in a show choir and show choirs of middle or high school but does not address show choirs within an elementary public school.

Statement of the Purpose

This qualitative study aims to identify the benefits and challenges of incorporating a show choir in an elementary public school. Because the focal point of this study involves a choral group, which is essentially a social group, qualitative research can facilitate the “exploring and understanding [of] the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.”³⁵ Adults who participated as third- and fourth-graders in a public school curricular elementary show choir, past and current elementary school administrators, parents or guardians of the former show choir members, and local city officials shared answers to specific survey questions. The researcher collected data and then coded and analyzed the data for emerging themes.

³³ Melissa L. Grady and Tianna M. Gilliam, “Effects of Three Common Choral Movement Conditions on Acoustic and Perceptual Measures of Choral Sound,” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 68, no. 3 (2020): 299, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429420931498>.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 299.

³⁵ John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed. (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, Inc., 2018), 4.

Significance of the Study

Children may benefit from participation in a choral group. For example, involvement in a choral ensemble likely enhances children's social development through interaction with others and working together to accomplish goals.³⁶ Continuous involvement in a choir reasonably promotes a personal sense of "well-being" and optimism for the chorister through a better quality of life by accomplishing "meaningful goals" fostered by growing together in abilities with other members.³⁷ Barrett and Zhukov discovered that benefits to children in an "excellent" choir consisted of "positive emotions created by singing, new choral friendships, a sense of belonging to and being accepted by a unique community, and enhanced teamwork skills."³⁸ Accomplishing musical goals with peers or involvement with family participation in music are also positive indicators of a child's "music self-concept" and an excellent "predictor" of a child's future involvement in music-making and a capacity to sing.³⁹

This study fills in some of the "gap" in the literature by revealing how a curricular elementary public school show choir can benefit students on many levels, including socially, emotionally, and musically, and enhance connections with schools, students' families, and the community. Novel information may help other public school elementary music teachers or administration seeking to provide more music-learning options for students and create more

³⁶ Ros-Morente et al., "Beyond Music," 543.

³⁷ Nuria Fernández-Herranz et al., "Choral Singing and Personal Well-Being: A Choral Activity Perceived Benefits Scale (CAPBES), *Psychology of Music* 50, no. 3 (2022): 906, <https://doi.org/10.1177/03057356211026377>.

³⁸ Margaret S. Barrett and Katie Zhukov, "Choral Flourishing: Parent and Child Perspectives on the Benefits of Participation in an Excellent Youth Choir," *Research Studies in Music Education* (August 2022): 12, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103X221115080>.

³⁹ Steven M. Demorest, James Kelley, and Peter O. Pfordresher, "Singing Ability, Musical Self-Concept, and Future Participation," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 64, no. 4 (January 2017): 417, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44631463>.

connections, such as service-learning opportunities, with the surrounding community. The results of this study could also prove helpful for private schools desiring to expand their music programs and considering potential opportunities to seek community support for their music programs. Additionally, music educators may draw upon the possible positive outcomes to continue building robust elementary music education programs to preserve and protect their music programs from budget cuts by “putting the students first.”⁴⁰

Research Questions

As an exploration of the idea of elementary show choir, this study pursues answers to the following questions:

Research Question One: In what ways does a show choir differ from a traditional choral group within an elementary curriculum?

Research Question Two: What challenges can the incorporation of a show choir within an elementary curriculum bring to the school?

Research Question Three: In what ways can the students, families, and local communities benefit from the integration of a show choir into the elementary school curriculum?

Hypotheses

Research Question One (RQ 1): In what ways does a show choir differ from a traditional choral group within an elementary curriculum?

RQ 1 may be answered with the following hypothesis:

⁴⁰ John L. Benham, *Music Advocacy: Moving from Survival to Vision* (Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc., 2016), 203.

Hypothesis One: A show choir may differ from a traditional choir in music style selection, incorporation of choreography, and community performances.

Music education researchers provide little literature regarding show choirs.⁴¹ According to music historians, the earliest show choirs were “swing choirs” of the 1940s, which included limited movement at first and then evolved into modified staging with “stools, boxes, and layered platforms and risers.”⁴² The repertoire featured the popular music of the time, like “Broadway tunes and original arrangements.”⁴³ Television heavily influenced the movement of swing choirs, eventually leading to choreography that early show choirs like Fred Waring and the Pennsylvanians introduced.⁴⁴

Research Question Two (RQ 2): What challenges can the incorporation of a show choir within an elementary curriculum bring to the school?

RQ 2 may be answered with the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis Two: Challenges of incorporating a show choir within an elementary school curriculum may include scheduling challenges for students and the director/teacher, vocal technique, and financial considerations.

Adding rehearsal time to any music teacher’s schedule may be demanding and lead to a teaching overload, causing staffing concerns. The music teacher/director should be skilled in vocal

⁴¹ Christopher S. Kindle, “Characteristics of the High School Varsity Mixed Show Choir,” Order No. 13860742, University of Missouri - Columbia, 2019, in PROQUESTMS ProQuest Central; ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global; Social Science Premium Collection, 6, <https://go.openathens.net/redirector/liberty.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/characteristics-high-school-varsity-mixed-show/docview/2339172713/se-2>.

⁴² Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 244.

⁴³ Ibid., 244.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 244.

pedagogy or best vocal practices to ensure the safety of student voices. Students may also have to forego a recess or two each week to rehearse with the show choir. Establishing a show choir in an elementary school may depend on the school's scheduling. Examples of different scheduling may include students receiving music instruction every other day, in a block schedule, or in a six-day cycle.⁴⁵ A school should also consider the finances needed to initiate a curricular show choir, which adds additional work challenges for the music teacher/director.⁴⁶

Research Question Three (RQ 3): In what ways can the students, families, and local communities benefit from the integration of a show choir into the elementary school curriculum?

RQ 3 may be answered with the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis Three: Students, families, and local communities may benefit from the incorporation of a curricular show choir in an elementary school through socio-emotional student learning, musical learning, more opportunities for families to see their child perform outside the school setting, and communities forming a partnership with the school, which may bring in funds to enhance learning.

Much literature supports the idea that involvement in choral groups can likely enhance a child's social skills, increase a child's musical ability, and boost a child's morale. Partnerships created through performing in a community can complement the elementary school by forming a "two-way communication" with the intent "to improve and enhance education for students."⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 65.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 68.

⁴⁷ Cox-Peterson, *Educational Partnerships*, 139.

Core Concepts

Popular music, a core concept of this study, includes American music, which is accessible and written for the pleasure of an audience.⁴⁸ Crawford and Hamberlin describe popular music as music within a “popular sphere” where it typically “invites performers to use the original composition as a starting point, singing and playing it as they choose.”⁴⁹ Popular music suits a show choir because a director can be more flexible with a popular style by trimming the piece for performance or adding improvisation to existing musical work. Classical music often refers to great music masterpieces of the Western European tradition, and in contrast with popular music, classical music, or music of a “classical sphere,” embodies the idea that performers must follow the music strictly as intended by the composer, leaving little to no improvisation.⁵⁰ As noted by Andrew Krikun, popular music contains music genres that are popular and accessible to the masses at a particular time in history.⁵¹ Current popular music genres may include pop, rock, rhythm and blues, country, funk, hip hop, or other similar styles and may likely appear on the present or past American top music charts.

Another core concept, *choreography*, is the planned and coordinated movement or dancing to accompany the singing in a show choir. Christopher Kindle describes choreography as “the stage movement set to music.”⁵² A *choreographer* is the individual who designs the stage

⁴⁸ Richard Crawford and Larry Hamberlin, *An Introduction to America's Music*, 3rd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 2019), 97.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 97.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 97.

⁵¹ Andrew Krikun, “The Historical Foundations for Popular Music in the United States,” in *The Routledge Research Companion to Popular Music Education*, eds. Gareth Smith, et al. (London: Routledge, 2016), 39.

⁵² Kindle, “Characteristics of the High School Varsity Mixed Show Choir,” 7.

movement or dances. A director may also assume the role of choreographer in addition to teaching the music to students and leading the group in performances.

Repertoire refers to the body of music the choir performs. An example of repertoire could be the ensemble's selection of songs, such as songs from Broadway musicals or various popular music styles. A choir director may select music from a particular *genre*, which refers to a musical style like country, rhythm and blues, or rock.

Curricular classes occur within the school day, and students typically receive a grade or assessment for participating in curricular courses. *Extracurricular* activities refer to classes or events that occur outside a school day, and the primary function of the activity involves creating “goodwill in the community.”⁵³ *Cocurricular* activities differ from extracurricular activities because they are the natural culmination of a curricular learning project performed in the community but for an educational purpose like a summative assessment.⁵⁴ Author and music education advocator John Benham emphasizes the importance of understanding the differences between curricular and extracurricular music courses because allowing musical classes to occur outside a regular school day automatically places the music course in the “extracurricular” category and, therefore, renders the extracurricular course “more vulnerable to budget cuts.”⁵⁵

A final important core concept is the *show choir*. A show choir typically performs a modern, popular music style, including pop, country, rhythm and blues, funk, rock, or other similar musical genres. A show choir might also present show tunes from movies or Broadway,

⁵³ Benham, *Music Advocacy*, 203.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 202.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 203.

including coordinated movement or dancing in performance.⁵⁶ Show choirs often wear costumes, uniforms, or coordinated outfits.⁵⁷ A show choir usually strives to offer a pleasing visual performance with excellent singing.

Definition of Terms

Curricular – classes that occur during a regular school day, including rehearsals, which incorporate learning processes and a cocurricular summative assessment, potentially in the form of a concert.⁵⁸

Cocurricular – the culmination or summative assessment of a curricular rehearsal in the form of a concert that does not occur during a school day.⁵⁹

Extracurricular – final product of a rehearsal, in the form of a concert, but is not intended as an assessment, but rather a gesture of “goodwill” in the community.⁶⁰

Summative Assessment – a test or evaluation given at the end of a unit of study to analyze performance, for example, by assigning a grade or rating.⁶¹

Popular Music – music enjoyed by the masses, evidenced by many sales or “consumption,” or music “connected” to social groups and, sometimes, across social groups.⁶²

⁵⁶ Kindle, “Characteristics of the High School Varsity Mixed Show Choir,” 20.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Benham, *Music Advocacy*, 203.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 202.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 203.

⁶¹ Patricia S. Campbell and Carol Scott-Kassner, *Music in Childhood: From Preschool through the Elementary Grade*, 4th ed. (Boston: Schirmer, Cengage Learning, 2014), 341.

⁶² Richard Middleton and Peter Manuel, “Popular Music,” *Grove Music Online*, accessed October 1, 2022, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

Show Choir – a choir that emphasizes an entire show, including props, special lighting, background tracks with multi-instrumentation, costuming or matching outfits, and choreography.⁶³

Concert Choir – Auditioned choir in a public high school; the top choir meets five days per week, competes in festivals or other competitions, and is typically the touring choir.⁶⁴

Feeder Choir – A choir that prepares singers for higher-level choral groups or a “training ensemble” that feeds higher-level choral groups.⁶⁵

Mixed Chorus – non-auditioned, public high school choir; used to train male and female singers in vocal and choral fundamentals and becomes a feeder choir for the auditioned concert choir or show choir.⁶⁶

Choreography – the planned corporate movement of a show choir within a performance that may include dance-like movement or “hand gestures.”⁶⁷

Choreographer – one who creates dance or coordinated movements in show choir.

Repertoire – a selected body of songs from which an individual or group will perform.⁶⁸

Elementary School – a school in this study that includes prekindergarten through fourth grade.

⁶³ Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 245.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 55.

⁶⁵ Mark D. Porcaro, “Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints,” *Grove Music Online*, accessed October 6, 2022, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

⁶⁶ Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 55.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 248.

⁶⁸ *Merriam-Webster Dictionaries*, s.v. “repertoire (n),” accessed October 1, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/repertoire>.

Summary

Analyzing a show choir through the lens of a curricular elementary public school show choir reveals many potential benefits for schools, families, and communities, but primarily for the students. Some music educators may defend existing music programs without considering expending some energy to expand music programs. Dr. John Benham emphasizes that music educators and advocates should continually extend their music programs because music is for all students, for “making music is essential to learning, the enjoyment of life, and the preservation of culture.”⁶⁹

A curricular show choir in an elementary school allows students to make music with friends and develop their vocal skills to a higher level than ordinary general music classes. The energy of the show choir will likely attract more students than a more traditional show choir. Students whose families may be unable to afford the tuition of a community children’s choir or who may face sports practice conflicts could profit from an elementary curricular show choir option.

Challenges of incorporating a public school elementary show choir could include funding. For example, a general elementary music teacher might already teach a full load, and a school district may need to hire an additional teacher, requiring additional funding. Uniforms or costumes also demand funding from parents or other sources like the PTA. Additionally, community concerts, which may occur during the school day or, in some cases, after school, may warrant funding for group transportation.

Educational partnerships can significantly enhance a student’s academic performance in school. For example, Cox-Peterson emphasizes that parental involvement in a child’s education

⁶⁹ Benham, *Music Advocacy*, 31.

does increase the likelihood of academic achievement.⁷⁰ The PTA providing accessories for the show choir's parade performances and the potential for purchasing matching jackets for colder weather are examples of a successful parental partnership with the show choir. Parents or guardians also provide transportation and some chaperones for show choir events outside the school day.

The mayor of the local city, the city's events coordinator, and the principal of the local elementary school support another type of educational partnership, a school-community partnership. Much planning occurs between the town and the school to ensure the partnership's success. Cox-Peterson describes successful school-community partnerships as "planned endeavors that require time, commitment, respect, planning, and execution."⁷¹

A thorough review of an existing body of literature, including the benefits and challenges of incorporating a curricular show choir, provided information about the current scholarly data. After the rigorous literature review, the researcher invited former public-school elementary show choir members, parents or guardians of former show choir students, city officials, and past and present elementary school administrators to participate in a survey. Coding the data collected from the survey answers enabled the organization of the answers, following a qualitative research method described in Creswell and Creswell.⁷² Finally, the researcher discussed recommendations for successfully establishing an elementary curricular show choir overcoming many obstacles. The study findings could assist individuals wishing to expand their elementary

⁷⁰ Cox-Peterson, *Educational Partnerships*, 129.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 140.

⁷² Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 5th ed., 7.

school music programs to include a curricular show choir. Although this study focuses on a public school, private schools may also find the information helpful in building their elementary music programs.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Historical Background of American Choral Music Education

In the early American colonial period, colonists recognized the importance of instituting public schools for all children to learn to read and write; however, many early American colonists did not consider music education an essential element in the early public school curriculum.⁷³ Americans transmitted songs orally as time passed. However, their ability to read music notation waned. Many educated early Americans, particularly ministers, expressed dismay concerning a lack of musical skills and poor tone quality in congregational singing.⁷⁴ Poor singing quality in the early days of colonization gave rise to singing schools and the emergence of a prominent music educator, Lowell Mason. Mason believed that all children possessed some musical talent and presumed that he could develop the children's musical talent through singing.⁷⁵ Lowell Mason proved his ability to train any child to sing by presenting a successful concert featuring the children of Hawes Elementary School in Boston, Massachusetts. Following his successful children's choir concert, Lowell Mason became the first public-school music teacher in the United States in 1837, and consequently, current music educators consider Lowell Mason "the father of music education."⁷⁶

From Lowell Mason in the nineteenth century to the present, children's elementary music education through singing has experienced developments employing newer philosophies, technology, and innovation. In the early twentieth century, educators like Emile Jacque-Dalcroze

⁷³ Michael Mark and Patrice Madura, *Contemporary Music Education*, 4th ed. (Boston: Schirmer Cengage Learning, 2014), 4.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 4.

⁷⁵ Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 13.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 14.

and John Dewey influenced music education with their innovative ideas of music and movement. Dewey encouraged public schools to incorporate music as a core subject in a child-centered education.⁷⁷ Zoltán Kodály propagated a sequential children's music education method, beginning with singing. Kodály's method became popular in Europe, and American music educators began to embrace his teaching methods in the 1960s. Campbell and Scott-Kassner discussed the natural music education sequence of singing, movement, and playing simple non-pitched percussion, which led to xylophones, recorders, and keyboard instruments. Then, students could consider playing the strings of the orchestra and band instruments beginning in intermediate school.⁷⁸ While the most basic human form of music expression is singing, any form of group music-making, whether choral music or instrumental music, profits students extrinsically through "personal, social, and educational" benefits.⁷⁹ In the modern era, technology and innovation in the United States brought access to popular music through radio, television, and the Internet.

In 1967, the pivotal Tanglewood Symposium initiated the incorporation of diverse music in American public schools. The symposium led to critical discussions involving the use of relevant, popular music in the public school music classroom and laid the foundation for the future of American music education by including American popular music.⁸⁰ Music educators at Tanglewood drew several conclusions regarding the future of music education. One of the most pertinent conclusions to this study involves the second recommendation of the symposium:

⁷⁷ Patricia S. Campbell and Carol Scott-Kassner, *Music in Childhood: From Preschool Through the Elementary Grades*, 4th ed., (Boston: Schirmer, Cengage Learning, 2014), 11.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁷⁹ Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 28.

⁸⁰ Mark and Madura, *Contemporary Music Education*, 4th ed., 31.

Music of all periods, styles, forms, and cultures belongs in the curriculum. The musical repertory should be expanded to involve music of our time in its wide variety, including currently popular teenage music and avant-garde music, American folk music, and the music of other cultures.⁸¹

Following the Tanglewood Symposium, The Housewright Declaration of 1999 reaffirmed the conclusions of the Tanglewood Symposium.⁸² One tenet of the declaration stated that all students, “regardless of age, cultural heritage, ability, venue, or financial circumstance, deserve to participate fully in the best musical experiences possible.”⁸³ Another tenet of the Housewright Declaration proclaimed that “all music has a place in the curriculum” and “music educators needed to be aware of other music that people experience and be able to integrate it into classroom music instruction.”⁸⁴

In 2007, the Music Educators National Conference (MENC), the forerunner to the present organization, the National Association for Music Education (NAfME), held a conference to “address more specific issues than the previous declarations.”⁸⁵ A curriculum conclusion from the Centennial Declaration revealed a clear shift to a student-centered philosophy of music education:

Our curriculum must reflect more than our desires; it must reflect the needs and desires of the students we serve. We seek contexts and modes of instruction that will provide students with more musical roles practiced in our society and represented in the national content standards.⁸⁶

⁸¹ Mark and Madura, *Contemporary Music Education*, 4th ed., 39.

⁸² Ibid., 40.

⁸³ Ibid., 40.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 40.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 41.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 42.

As authors and contemporary music education experts Michael Mark and Patrice Madura proclaimed in their writings, “The music education profession continues to evolve for the benefit of students and society.”⁸⁷ Focusing upon a human being’s most basic music-making ability, singing, the following literature review explores the general characteristics of modern American children’s choirs, American school show choirs, physiological characteristics of third and fourth-grade American students, social development and economic challenges in American children’s choirs, the musical value of participating in music-making, and American school-community relationships.

Characteristics of American Children’s Choirs

According to Kenneth Phillips, “the last two decades of the twentieth century experienced a tremendous growth in children’s choirs, both in and out of school settings.”⁸⁸ Phillips attributed the significant increase in the growth of children’s choirs to “parents and students” being displeased with singing in general music classes, which had become “recreational.”⁸⁹ More “readily available” instructional publications for students, more “quality” publications of children’s choral literature, the motivation and support for children’s choirs provided by the ACDA (American Choral Director’s Association), inspiring performances and recordings of outstanding European children’s choirs facilitated in the United States by NAFME and ACDA, and “new research in the development of children’s singing voices” attracted and encouraged families to enroll their children in community children’s choirs.⁹⁰ Phillips highlighted

⁸⁷ Mark and Madura, *Contemporary Music Education*, 4th ed., 43.

⁸⁸ Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 409.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 409.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 409.

that the new research brought about a “renewed legitimacy” to the idea that children could learn to sing, and the singing would not necessarily be harmful.⁹¹ Presumably, Americans began to recall that Lowell Mason had successfully trained a children’s choir in 1837, earning a place for music education in the fledgling public school system. However, many parents seemingly lacked respect for public school general elementary music and sought choral opportunities for their children outside the public school setting.

Public school children’s choirs typically meet during general music classes.⁹² The music teacher then rehearses the entire group of students before a performance. Phillips also mentioned that some public elementary schools offer elective or “activity” periods where students can choose several different activities.⁹³ Another common option schools may offer their students is an extracurricular choir that meets before or after school. Phillips discussed the importance of choirs not being auditioned because some children could be discouraged from joining a choral group.⁹⁴ However, a graded choir possibility beginning with an elementary non-auditioned feeder choir could support more select vocal ensembles in the fifth and sixth grades.⁹⁵ Phillips did not mention incorporating a children’s show choir within the elementary public school in his discourse on children’s choirs. Phillips indicated that American community children’s choir directors generally structured their choirs to resemble adult community choirs.⁹⁶ Typical

⁹¹ Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 409.

⁹² Ibid., 409.

⁹³ Ibid., 409.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 410.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 410.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 409.

community children's choir directors audition children, families pay fees to join the choir, and children often practice weekly.⁹⁷ Children's choir literature would most likely involve more challenging music for children to perform, attracting families to participate; however, Phillips argued that although public school general music choirs may not perform complex music, "the fact that these choirs involve all students is important."⁹⁸

Within public school elementary choirs, many music educators have experienced a decline in male students' interest in singing. Researcher Eric Wyler sought to discover when male elementary students might have begun to experience less interest in singing, whether in school concerts or general music classes. Wyler surveyed students in two elementary schools within a large school district. Based on his findings, Wyler concluded that male students overwhelmingly began to lose interest in singing between the first and second grades.⁹⁹ In another study following the decline of male participation in public school choirs on a high school level, Michael Brand discovered that male students indicated that their peers considered participation in a school choir primarily a female activity, possibly influencing their participation choices.¹⁰⁰ Additionally, Brand found that the male students enjoyed singing casually but often associated school singing with performances, bringing about negative perceptions of singing.¹⁰¹ In a recent study of recruiting male middle school students, doctoral student Bryan Cody

⁹⁷ Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 409.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 409.

⁹⁹ Eric D. Wyler, "When Did You Stop Singing?" Elementary Boys' Attitudes and Self-Efficacy Toward the Act of Singing" (master's thesis, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2021), 33, <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/musicstudent/159>.

¹⁰⁰ Michael C. Brand, "Male High School Students' Perception of Choral Singing" (master's thesis, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2019), 57, www.ideals.illinois.edu:2142/104928.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 57.

experienced similar findings to Michael Brand, that middle school male students perceived choir to be a feminine activity and that peer pressure to prove masculinity often played a role in whether or not middle school males would join a chorus class.¹⁰² Phillips recommended encouraging boys to recruit their friends because boys must perceive that the choir will be a place to connect with their “pals,” and the environment created by the choral director must “make the boys feel good about themselves.”¹⁰³ A successful elementary choral program then becomes a feeder choir, which could inspire more males to participate in future choirs within the school system.

History of American Public School Show Choirs

Some authors may disagree on where show choirs originated, However, Mike Weaver and Colleen Hart traced the choir performance style to early American Vaudeville.¹⁰⁴ Vaudeville shows crept into towns with no clear beginning, having “no specific birth date, designated parents, or grandparents.”¹⁰⁵ Hart and Weaver eventually discovered similarities between the vaudeville and show choir performance styles, stating that *vaudeville* in American culture refers to various acts from the mid-nineteenth century through the early twentieth century.¹⁰⁶ The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines *vaudeville* as “a light, often comic theatrical piece

¹⁰² Bryan C. Rante, “Male Recruitment Strategies for Middle School Chorus” (DME diss., Liberty University, 2023), 65, <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/4728>.

¹⁰³ Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 48.

¹⁰⁴ Mike Weaver and Colleen Hart, *Sweat, Tears, and Jazz Hands* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Books, 2011), 4.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 1.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 1.

frequently combining pantomime, dialogue, dancing, and song.”¹⁰⁷ A vaudeville show may have featured seven to eight acts of comedy, drama, a “dumb” act, a small play, or a song and dance, to name some of the possibilities.¹⁰⁸ Similarities to a show choir may include singing, dancing, and transitioning from one act to another.

According to Alan Alder and Thalia Mulvihill, the first authentic American show choir found its roots in Fred Waring’s early men’s choral and instrumental ensemble, which first performed on the radio in 1920.¹⁰⁹ Waring’s men’s music ensemble performed popular music of the time, a departure from the norm of performing “choral masterworks.”¹¹⁰ Fred Waring added women to his singing ensemble, reorganized the ensemble to become “Fred Waring and the Pennsylvanians,” and added movement to his choral performances to enhance the new visual medium when the choir began to perform on television.¹¹¹ Waring’s television show lasted seven seasons, and then Waring and his Pennsylvanians toured worldwide.¹¹² Waring’s tour showcased the show choir’s qualities in their infant stage of development, including “strategically planned lighting effects, choreographed transitions, decorated dancers, scripted theatrics, and unforgettable music.”¹¹³

¹⁰⁷ *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. “vaudeville,” accessed September 22, 2023, [https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/vaudeville#:~:text=vaudeville%20%25CVAUD%2Dvil%5C,animals%2C%20comedian%2C%20or%20singers\).](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/vaudeville#:~:text=vaudeville%20%25CVAUD%2Dvil%5C,animals%2C%20comedian%2C%20or%20singers).)

¹⁰⁸ Geoffrey Hilsabeck, *American Vaudeville* (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2021), 23.

¹⁰⁹ Alan L. Alder and Thalia M. Mulvihill, *The Show Choir Handbook* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016), 2.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹¹² Weaver and Hart, *Sweat, Tears, and Jazz Hands*, 18.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 18.

As television became more popular in American homes in the 1950s, swing choirs thrived. Weaver and Hart reiterated the changes that televised performing groups had to produce. These changes from audio to audio and visual performance included appealing facial expressions, dancing, and other mild bodily movement.¹¹⁴ Some noteworthy musical variety shows that began in the 1950s included *Your Hit Parade*, *American Bandstand*, *The Ed Sullivan Show*, *The Andy Williams Show*, *The Mickey Mouse Club*, *The Perry Como Show*, and *The Lawrence Welk Show*.

In the 1960s, racial tensions mounted as public schools became more diverse following the outcome of The Civil Rights Act of 1964. Weaver and Hart suggested that swing choirs, with their popular music foundation, could attract various groups of students and create a “commonality” for students of divergent backgrounds.¹¹⁵ Fledgling American public show choir directors began introducing choral harmonic elements into swing choirs in addition to the “basic movement, staging, and dance” that appeared on the musical variety television shows.¹¹⁶ Alder and Mulvihill added that choreography and staging became standard in school show choirs. Still, the traditionally classical vocal technique shifted into more of a challenge with the changing popular music style with its “beat-driven and lyrically aggressive” style.¹¹⁷ A popular music style of singing could prove to be challenging for many choral directors as very few music schools, as

¹¹⁴ Weaver and Hart, *Sweat, Tears, and Jazz Hands*, 22.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 33.

¹¹⁶ Alder and Mulvihill, *The Show Choir Handbook*, 33.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 3.

of 2021, offered training in commercial music, and most voice teachers learned a classical vocal technique themselves.¹¹⁸

As the early show choir movement continued to develop, the show choirs, still identified as swing choirs, became competitive. Alder and Mulvihill recognized the Bishop Luers Show Choir Festival of 1975 in Fort Wayne, Indiana, as one of the premiere sites for show choir competition.¹¹⁹ Other popular sites for show choir competitions, following the initiation of the Bishop Luers Festival, involved sponsored competitions at Disneyland, Walt Disney World, the Grand Ole Opry in Tennessee, and other national competitions in larger cities throughout the United States.¹²⁰ Show choirs grew in popularity, and more competitions for high school show choirs became available at colleges, community centers, or high school auditoriums.¹²¹ Judged categories included choreography, showmanship, singing, show design, and instrumental accompaniment by students who attended the school.¹²² William D. Farmer performed a study on several different high school students' choral preferences and discovered that students overwhelmingly favored show choir over concert choir in their schools.¹²³ Farmer concluded that an integral reason the show choir was prominent among students included students' preference

¹¹⁸ Wendy D. LeBorgne and Marci D. Rosenberg, *The Vocal Athlete*, 2nd ed., (San Diego: Plural Publishing, inc., 2021), 267.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 4.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 4.

¹²¹ Weaver and Hart, *Sweat, Tears, and Jazz Hands*, 49.

¹²² Ibid., 45.

¹²³ William D. Farmer, "Relationships of Dimensions of the Meaning of the Choral Experience to High School Students' Preferences for Concert vs. Show Choir" (PhD diss., Auburn University, Auburn, AL, 2009), 66, <https://go.openathens.net/redirector/liberty.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/relationships-dimensions-meaning-choral/docview/304829813/se-2>.

for the popular music style incorporated in the show choirs.¹²⁴ The competitive nature of the show choirs may have also drawn students to participate in show choir over concert choir. Alder and Mulvihill argued that the competitions fostered a striving toward excellence, which could be very magnetic to youth.¹²⁵ Additionally, the internationally popular television show *Glee* generated renewed interest in middle and high school show choirs.¹²⁶

With the growing popularity of show choirs, new directors often discovered their unpreparedness for directing and managing a high school or middle school show choir. Alan Alder commented on his need for more preparedness for organizing a show choir, even though he initially felt confident because of his previous experiences as a show choir participant.¹²⁷ Alder found that specific struggles that he began to experience as a new music educator included musical and nonmusical difficulties like “how to teach a show choir,” “how to design a show for a show choir,” or “the use of accompaniment,” just to name a few.¹²⁸ Alder also discussed that although colleges and universities typically offer general choral methods courses, literature provided little to no information about the preparedness of new teachers, explicitly managing a show choir, which ultimately led to Alder’s contribution to the show choir literature.¹²⁹

¹²⁴ Farmer, “Relationships of Dimensions of the Meaning of the Choral Experience to High School Students’ Preferences for Concert vs. Show Choir,” 66.

¹²⁵ Alder and Mulvihill, *The Show Choir Handbook*, 4.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

Characteristics of American Show Choirs

Mike Weaver and Colleen Hart described a show choir as “a mash-up between a standard choir, a dance team, and a drama club, competing with similar groups throughout the country.”¹³⁰ Ken Phillips labeled show choirs as “pop groups” that incorporate “elaborate staging and choreography effects.”¹³¹ Phillips also mentioned an increased interest in show choirs in recent years due to the popularity of *Glee*, which first aired in 2009.¹³² A competitive high school show choir is often a large ensemble with approximately forty to fifty members; live instrumentation typically accompanies the choir.¹³³ A key difference between a show choir and another choir performing popular music, a swing choir, is that the show choir presents a “seamless” show from start to finish.¹³⁴ In contrast, a swing choir performs independent songs without transitions or links between songs.¹³⁵

An authentic, competitive show choir forms a separate ensemble from a high school’s typical auditioned concert choir or a non-auditioned mixed chorus. For example, according to a study by Christopher Kindle, high school show choirs whose directors were members of the ACDA formed a separate ensemble unrelated to the high school concert choir.¹³⁶ All show choir director respondents to Kindle’s interview questions affirmed that they mandated student singing

¹³⁰ Weaver and Hart, *Sweat, Tears, and Jazz Hands*, IX.

¹³¹ Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 244.

¹³² Ibid., 244.

¹³³ Ibid., 245.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 244.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 244.

¹³⁶ Kindle, “Characteristics of the High School Varsity Mixed Show Choir,” 68.

auditions to join the high school's show choir.¹³⁷ Kindle also discussed competition costs of show choirs and costuming and props costs, which suggests that typical high school choirs wear costumes or uniforms, use props, and directors prep the choir to participate in competitions.¹³⁸ Show choirs likely perform five songs of contrasting styles strategically placed in the thematic program designed by the director.¹³⁹ Competitions may range from local competitions, which are also opportunities to operate as fundraisers for the host school, to national competitions, likely located in larger "touristy" cities like Nashville or Orlando.¹⁴⁰ Alder claimed his high school hosted a show choir competition and collected a \$32,000 profit, the highest-grossing fundraiser for his show choir for that school year.¹⁴¹

Show choirs may become extracurricular courses in a typical high school essential and elective credit schedule. Kenneth Phillips stated that American high school administrations often schedule show choirs before or after a school day, likely establishing the ensemble as an extracurricular course.¹⁴² A challenge of creating an extracurricular group is that students would not receive credit for participation in the ensemble. Depending on the number of class periods in a school day, some high schools may include a show choir as an offered elective course, providing academic credit during the school day. The show choir then becomes a curricular show choir. An advantage of including curricular choirs is that directors must provide grading feedback, which would likely occur through summative assessments by evaluating the concert

¹³⁷ Kindle, "Characteristics of the High School Varsity Mixed Show Choir," 69.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 67.

¹³⁹ Weaver and Hart, *Sweat, Tears, and Jazz Hands*, 103.

¹⁴⁰ Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 249.

¹⁴¹ Alder and Mulvihill, *The Show Choir Handbook*, 12.

¹⁴² Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 248.

performance and self-evaluation by the students.¹⁴³ Phillips also stressed that show choirs often require extra rehearsals outside school hours and cautioned that directors must maintain the educational integrity of the ensemble rather than the entertainment value.¹⁴⁴ Additionally, Phillips alerted show choir directors to be conscientious of time spent on popular music ensembles because of the possibility of “adverse effects” of overextending oneself.¹⁴⁵

A central characteristic of a show choir is its choreography. Kenneth Phillips described how American show choirs “place much emphasis on choreography” in their performances, which might be one of the critical differences between show and concert choirs.¹⁴⁶ Phillips explained that choreography does not need to be present in every selection of a show choir, nor does every prominent show choir member need to perform with choreography simultaneously.¹⁴⁷ Choreography should not “interfere with vocal sound;” therefore, the more intricate dancing should occur during instrumental interludes of the song.¹⁴⁸ Choreography must be “simple and clean” and involve a variety of movements.¹⁴⁹ Choreography also occurs in transitions from one song to the next. Weaver and Hart suggested that the show design, with its choreographed transitions and strategically placed songs, is integral to a successful show choir program.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴³ Campbell and Scott-Kassner, *Music in Childhood*, 4th ed., 341.

¹⁴⁴ Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 249.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 249.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 58.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 248.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 248.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 248.

¹⁵⁰ Weaver and Hart, *Sweat, Tears, and Jazz Hands*, 102.

Show choirs likely intersperse choreography to keep the show interesting. In a unison choreography, performers move synchronously, and Alder and Mulvihill described the necessary technique as “clean.”¹⁵¹ Alder and Mulvihill recommended including a textured choreography where members performed a particular movement against another movement from a choir subgroup to maintain a connection with the audience or judges.¹⁵² The entire choir moving in one large “block” can lead to a boring show. Alder and Mulvihill described excellent choreography as including variety by creating “formations” and “pictures” in subgroups within the choir.¹⁵³

Alder and Mulvihill discussed the genre of show choir as uniquely American by highlighting that Americans are the innovators of the show choir genre, as evidenced by the rest of the world following and imitating the American example of the show choir genre.¹⁵⁴ Alder also discussed the American vocal technique of show choir in his dissertation as well as in his book, that American choral directors did not find a healthy balance between the pop style of singing with “guttural growls and glottal onsets and releases” and “proper techniques in breath management and tone production” until the 1990s.¹⁵⁵ Choral directors typically instructed students in Western European singing styles. However, realizing the lack of authenticity within the “classical” styles, show choir directors often permitted students to sing without proper breath

¹⁵¹ Alder and Mulvihill, *The Show Choir Handbook*, 80.

¹⁵² Ibid., 80.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 81.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 128.

¹⁵⁵ Alan L. Alder, “Successful High School Show Choir Directors: Their Perceptions About Their Teaching and Administrative Practices” (DA diss., Ball State University, 2012), 19, <https://go.openathens.net/redirection/liberty.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/successful-high-school-show-choir-directors-their/docview/1035153102/se-2>.

support and tone production.¹⁵⁶ Duane Cottrell admonished choir directors to incorporate appropriate vocal techniques in choir rehearsals, which has proven to deliver healthy voices beyond the high school years.¹⁵⁷ Cottrell continued to expound on his healthy vocal technique dialog by inspiring choral directors “to encourage the optimal vocal tract configuration, including a low larynx, firm glottal closure, raised soft palate, and slightly closed mouth.”¹⁵⁸ Therefore, healthy, authentic popular music singing is a desired element of an American show choir in addition to choreography, staging, costuming, and competitive excellence.

Repertoire Typically Performed in American School Show Choirs

Kenneth Phillips discussed the repertoire of American high school show choirs, which generally consists of popular music.¹⁵⁹ Christopher Kindle indicated that most high-school show choir directors reported that the musical genres employed most in their repertoire consisted of “pop, rock, and Broadway.”¹⁶⁰ The popular music genres performed by American show choirs typically represented American music styles, as noted by Allison Skerrett, who highlighted a Caribbean youth’s experience with American popular music in his New York high school’s show choir.¹⁶¹ Skerrett remarked that non-American youths would not experience multicultural music

¹⁵⁶ Alder and Mulvihill, *The Show Choir Handbook*, 3-4.

¹⁵⁷ Duane Cottrell, “Vocal Pedagogy in the Choral Rehearsal,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Choral Pedagogy*, ed. Frank Abrahams and Paul D. Head, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 515.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 515.

¹⁵⁹ Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 58.

¹⁶⁰ Kindle, “Characteristics of the High School Varsity Mixed Show Choir,” 70.

¹⁶¹ Allison Skerrett, “Learning Music Literacies Across Transnational School Settings,” *Journal of Literacy Research* 50, no. 1 (2018): 44, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1086296X17753502>.

in an American high-school show choir but would likely explore multicultural music outside traditional school show choir settings.¹⁶²

As American show choir directors search for repertoire, Alder and Mulvihill recommended that show choir directors select pieces based on the makeup of the ensemble.¹⁶³ For instance, the chorus might consist of all female voices, or certain voice types (e.g., soprano, alto, tenor, bass) may be more prevalent, suggesting a three-part harmony rather than a four-part selection. Although some directors may choose to arrange a particular song for the voices, Alder and Mulvihill emphasize that directors must seek permission from publishers to alter works and may have to pay an additional fee.¹⁶⁴ Because publishers recognized a growing need for popular music choral arrangements, many offer several options for voicing in their arrangements.¹⁶⁵

Weaver and Hart discussed how publishers have also initiated choral arrangements of popular music with “dance breaks” to accommodate show choirs.¹⁶⁶ Author and show choir director Jen Randall described a dance break as a music segment with no vocals and more intense choreography.¹⁶⁷ A show choir director should consider that the choristers must face the audience to present the singing and the lyrics in the most optimum environment. Andrew Martin noted that show choir arrangements typically include a smaller vocal range than typical choral arrangements, with more “linear” and more “singable” vocal lines and simplified harmony to

¹⁶² Skerrett, “Learning Music Literacies Across Transnational School Settings,” 44.

¹⁶³ Alder and Mulvihill, *The Show Choir Handbook*, 90.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 90.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 88.

¹⁶⁶ Weaver and Hart, *Sweat, Tears, and Jazz Hands*, 143.

¹⁶⁷ Jen Randall, *The Art of Competitive Show Choir: The Why, What, and How of Making Better Musicians and Humans* (Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc., 2020), 169.

assist choristers with the additional physical challenges of choreography.¹⁶⁸ Since third- and fourth-grade children possess a smaller vocal range than middle-school children through adults, choral arrangements with smaller vocal ranges ideally suit third- and fourth-grade show choirs. According to Andrew Martin, some competitive show choirs may “commission” specific pieces for their choirs. However, others may discover many readily available show choir arrangements from “sizable catalogs” of well-known music publishers.¹⁶⁹ Most high-school show choir competitions require live music, but some allow “recorded loops.”¹⁷⁰

Gene Grier, a well-known, internationally famous educator, recording artist, composer with over one thousand compositions, and author, suggested that choir directors listen to popular music, identifying singers or ensembles who implemented quality vocal technique in their performances.¹⁷¹ Recommended soloists and groups Grier mentioned that were popular during his publication included Billy Joel, Whitney Houston, Richard Marx, Phil Collins, Queen, Heart, The Beach Boys, Don Henley, and Chicago.¹⁷² Choosing a song for a show choir might consist of seeking out or arranging a song performed by an artist or ensemble demonstrating good vocal technique. Students will likely associate the music with the original performer or performers.

Alder and Mulvihill suggested that show choir directors embrace various styles and moods within their repertoire selection and consider the ensemble’s strengths and weaknesses

¹⁶⁸ Andrew Martin, “Expanding the Choral Canon with Arrangements of Popular Music,” (DA diss., Ball State University, 2022), 59, <https://go.openathens.net/redirector/liberty.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/expanding-choral-canon-with-arrangements-popular/docview/2759086535/se-2>.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 59.

¹⁷⁰ Randall, *The Art of Competitive Show Choir*, 45.

¹⁷¹ Gene Grier, “Choral Resources: A Heritage of Popular Styles,” *Music Educators Journal* 77, no. 8 (1991): 38, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.2307/3398151>.

¹⁷² Ibid., 38.

based on a competitive mindset.¹⁷³ Randall added that assessing a choir might include examining the dancing ability of the group, the number of participants, and the group's makeup, such as a mixed group versus a group of all women.¹⁷⁴ A typical show choir competition "set" may last for fifteen minutes.¹⁷⁵ If the choir includes a standard five songs in the set, the director may need to trim the arrangement to fit the allotted time for the competition.¹⁷⁶

Third- and Fourth-Grade Vocal Development

When considering and selecting repertoire for a children's choir, a director must evaluate the age and ability of the students. In a study devoted to choosing children's choir literature, Anita Davis mentioned the importance of a choir director understanding the vocal range of their children's choir.¹⁷⁷ Kenneth Phillips recommended considering a typical range, the broader possibility of pitches a person can sing, or tessitura, a comfortable "zone" of singing pitches within a range, when classifying children's voices or ultimately choosing literature that fits the range or tessitura of the children's voices.¹⁷⁸ Phillips also cautioned choir directors against classifying children's treble voices in the traditional sense of soprano or alto but instead, as a voice I or II to avoid confusion as children's voices develop.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷³ Alder and Mulvihill, *The Show Choir Handbook*, 89.

¹⁷⁴ Randall, *The Art of Competitive Show Choir*, 44.

¹⁷⁵ Alder and Mulvihill, *The Show Choir Handbook*, 8.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁷⁷ Anita P. Davis, "Analysis of Compositional Techniques Used in Selected Children's Choral Literature," *Visions of Research in Music Education* 1, no. 2 (2021): 2, <https://opencommons.uconn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1006&context=vrme>.

¹⁷⁸ Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed. 259.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 259.

Campbell and Scott-Kassner described third-grade student voices as possessing the ability to “maintain the same tonality throughout a song.”¹⁸⁰ Third graders may also be able to learn more complex and longer pieces than primary school grades.¹⁸¹ Fourth graders, or children aged nine, may perform simple harmonies, especially those based on repeated patterns.¹⁸² Fourth-grade students may also experience a fuller and more “resonant” vocal sound than third-graders as their voices begin to mature.¹⁸³ If choir directors instruct children in a healthy vocal technique and listen carefully for a healthy vocal sound in the ensemble, students are unlikely to experience vocal damage. In a study of a relationship between pediatric vocal disorders and singing, researchers concluded that when vocal trauma in vulnerable children was possible, a positive correlation did not exist between pediatric vocal disorders and children performing in choirs.¹⁸⁴

Joanne Rutkowski explained the importance of elementary-aged singers exploring vocal registers before concentrating on matching pitch.¹⁸⁵ Third- and fourth-grade singers likely struggle with stepwise ascending passages due to challenges in negotiating register changes.¹⁸⁶ Rutkowski noted that elementary students experience tremendous success with descending

¹⁸⁰ Campbell and Scott-Kassner, *Music in Childhood*, 4th ed., 75

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁸⁴ Pedro Clarós et al., “Association Between the Development of Pediatric Voice Disorders and Singing in Children’s Choir,” *JAMA Otolaryngology–Head & Neck Surgery* 145, no. 5 (2019): 450, doi:10.1001/jamaoto.2019.0066.

¹⁸⁵ Joanne Rutkowski, “Development and Pedagogy of Children’s Singing,” in *Engaging Musical Practices: A Sourcebook for Elementary General Music*, ed. Suzanne L. Burton and Allison M. Reynolds (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2018), 48.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 46.

stepwise melodies or melodies with “skip patterns.”¹⁸⁷ Rutkowski also reminded children’s choir directors that elementary students likely experience vocal fatigue faster than older singers and should sing shorter songs with repeating patterns like a verse-chorus form.¹⁸⁸

Social Emotional Development in Children’s Choirs

Social and emotional learning (SEL) may occur naturally in educational settings, or educational institutions may facilitate SEL deliberately. Gwendolyn Mason et al. suggested that knowingly employing SEL components in schools is a “promising approach to foster affective, cognitive, and behavioral skills among all children.”¹⁸⁹ Many school systems have chosen to incorporate tenets of SEL in learning to accommodate an increasing educational interest in SEL.¹⁹⁰ The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines SEL as “the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.”¹⁹¹ CASEL identifies five categories of

¹⁸⁷ Rutkowski, “Development and Pedagogy of Children’s Singing,” 46.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 47.

¹⁸⁹ Gwendolyn M. Lawson et al., “The Core Components of Evidence-Based Social Emotional Learning Programs,” *Prevention Science* 20 (2019): 457, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-018-0953-y>.

¹⁹⁰ Jessica Newman and Linda Dusenbury, “Social and Emotional Learning (SEL): A Framework for Academic, Social, and Emotional Success,” in *Prevention Science in School Settings: Complex Relationships and Processes*, ed. Kris Bosworth (New York: Springer, 2015), 288.

¹⁹¹ “What is the CASEL Framework?” Fundamentals of SEL, accessed July 15, 2023, <https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-is-the-casel-framework/#the-casel-5>.

SEL competence as “self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.”¹⁹²

In a review of literature relating music education to SEL, Judit Váradi noted that the experience of participating in an arts-based group activity like a choral ensemble enabled children to experience “the development of emotional self-regulation, responsibility, empathy, self-expression, and self-criticism.”¹⁹³ Additional studies revealed that choral groups of different sizes, varying frequency of rehearsal times, and diverse backgrounds, including age, all experienced positive social benefits. Daniel Weinstein et al. discovered that in large choral groups, which met a few times each year, people who were relatively unfamiliar with one another experienced a compelling “increase in social closeness.”¹⁹⁴ Members of choral groups of smaller sizes additionally experienced “feelings of inclusion and social connection.”¹⁹⁵ In another study, individuals from multiple backgrounds who participated in group singing experienced a closeness that transcended “social boundaries.”¹⁹⁶ Individuals who participated in a “social cure theoretical approach” study by participating in a choir experienced a “new group identity,”

¹⁹² “What is the CASEL Framework?” accessed July 15, 2023.

¹⁹³ Judit Váradi, “A Review of the Literature on the Relationship of Music Education to the Development of Socio-Emotional Learning,” *SAGE Open* 12, no. 2 (2022), 3, <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211068501>.

¹⁹⁴ Daniel Weinstein et al., “Singing and Social Bonding: Changes in Connectivity and Pain Threshold as a Function of Group Size,” *Evolution and Human Behavior* 37, no. 2 (2016): 156, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2015.10.002>.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 157.

¹⁹⁶ Eiluned Pearce et al., “Singing Together or Apart: The Effect of Competitive and Cooperative Singing on Social Bonding Within and Between Sub-groups of a University Fraternity,” *Psychology of Music* 44, no. 6 (2016): 1266, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735616636208>.

creating a “sense of belonging” that ultimately led to feelings of encouragement, “self-efficacy,” a sense of “purpose,” and generally “positive emotions.”¹⁹⁷

One may more acutely observe the positive social benefits of a choir, for example, when the opportunity vanishes due to a global pandemic. Töres Theorell et al. cited “social bonding” in choirs as a “consistent finding” in the literature that researchers could measure by comparing specific choirs before the COVID-19 pandemic and during the pandemic.¹⁹⁸ Theorell et al. found the social component of group singing to be the most significantly perceived loss amongst choristers during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁹⁹ J. Yoon Irons also cited the lack of personal socialization during COVID-19 as a means for researchers to rediscover group singing as “a social, shared activity [that is] good for physical and mental well-being.”²⁰⁰

Third- and Fourth-Grade Physical Development

Considering choreography for elementary-aged children, one must observe the physical capabilities of the children involved and the potential benefits for the children in the choir. A child’s cognitive development does seem to affect physical development. For example, an elementary-aged child may be excited to experience their “expanding world,” leading to more movement development.²⁰¹ In a recent study, Victoria Zakharova, Nataliya Maydankina, and

¹⁹⁷ Elyse Williams et al., “Enhancing Mental Health Recovery by Joining Arts-Based Groups: A Role for the Social Cure Approach,” *Arts and Health* 12, no. 2 (2020): 177, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17533015.2019.1624584>.

¹⁹⁸ Töres Theorell et al., “Choir Singers Without Rehearsals and Concerts? A Questionnaire Study on Perceived Losses from Restricting Choral Singing During the Covid-19 Pandemic,” *Journal of Voice* 37, no. 1 (2023): 19, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvoice.2020.11.006>.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 27.

²⁰⁰ J. Yoon Irons and Grenville Hancox, *Singing* (Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing, Limited, 2021), 3.

²⁰¹ Jacqueline D. Goodway, John C. Ozmun, and David L. Gallahue, *Understanding Motor Development: Infants, Children, Adolescents, and Adults*, (Burlington, MA: Jones and Bartlett Learning, 2021), 407.

Larisa Zakharova concluded that coordinated movement with patterns “contributes to the development of memory and attention.”²⁰² If one considers choreography as a coordinated movement with patterns, then physical activity, like choreography, and cognitive development possess the potential to affect one another positively.

Physical development is not an exact science but more of an approximation. Experts caution individuals like coaches or educators to consider that although much research relates physical development to age, those who work with children must consider that not all children develop physically according to an exact chronological age.²⁰³ Typically, elementary-aged girls are one year ahead of boys in physiological development.²⁰⁴ Eye-hand and eye-foot coordination may be challenging for young third graders but is generally more established by the fourth grade.²⁰⁵ Therefore, an elementary choir director must consider many factors, like age or gender, to create appropriate choreography for the elementary show choir.

Upper elementary-aged children respond well to physical training but may tire more quickly than older children.²⁰⁶ Pangrazi and Beighle also noted that elementary-aged children cannot achieve the same endurance as adolescents or adults, resulting from their inability to move efficiently.²⁰⁷ In physical education activities, they recommended that elementary students

²⁰² Victoria S. Zakharova, Nataliya Y. Maydankina, and Larisa M. Zakharova, “Investigating the Effects of Cognitive and Physical Development in Children Education,” *Propósitos y Representaciones* 8, no. 2 (2020): 15, <http://dx.doi.org/10.20511/pyr2020.v8n2.475>.

²⁰³ Goodway, Ozmun, and Gallahue, *Understanding Motor Development*, 409.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 408.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 408.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 408.

²⁰⁷ Robert P. Pangrazi and Aaron Beighle, *Dynamic Physical Education for Elementary School Children*, 19th ed. (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 2020), 29.

alternate between short intervals of strenuous and non-locomotor exercise during recovery.²⁰⁸ A choir director must consider the time spent on specific choreographed movements. Margo Mastropieri and Thomas Scruggs noted that teachers who consider the needs of all students in their classroom are “also generally effective classroom teachers.”²⁰⁹ Students will likely respect a teacher who acknowledges the needs of all students, contributing to a more effective choral rehearsal.

Socioeconomic Challenges in American Children’s Choir Settings

Many activities for American children outside of school require a fee. However, public funding or grants may provide funds for after-school activities. Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to attend fully funded programs than those that require a fee.²¹⁰ For example, many community sports programs offer some government subsidy, but low-income families must often choose between making financial sacrifices or discontinuing participation in sports due to continuing fees.²¹¹ Nicholas Holt et al. concluded that many low-income families could not experience consistency in a sports program because of barriers like financial challenges.²¹² A children’s community choir entrepreneur, Barbara Tagg, discussed

²⁰⁸ Pangrazi and Beighle, *Dynamic Physical Education for Elementary School Children*, 19th ed., 29.

²⁰⁹ Margo A. Mastropieri and Thomas E. Scruggs, *The Inclusive Classroom: Strategies for Effective Instruction*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007), 124.

²¹⁰ Anne R. McNamara, Thomas Akiva, and Lori Delale-O’Connor, “Opportunity Gaps in Out-of-School Learning: How Structural and Process Features of Programs Relate to Race and Socioeconomic Status,” *Applied Developmental Science*, 24, no. 4 (2020): 362, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2018.1513794>.

²¹¹ Nicholas Holt et al., “Benefits and Challenges Associated with Sport Participation by Children and Parents from Low-Income Families,” *Psychology of Sport and Exercise* 12, no. 5 (2011): 498, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2011.05.007>.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 499.

children's community choir budgets, which generally included tuition paid by choristers.²¹³ Tagg also acknowledged possible transportation challenges that could arise from a family's financial situation; however, she encouraged inclusivity by recommending options to assist families with transportation challenges.²¹⁴

Musical Benefits of Participating in Children's Choirs

Kenneth Phillips discussed vocational and avocational opportunities available to students following high school.²¹⁵ Vocational options may include music therapy, music performance, technology, education, and more. Phillips shared that public schools must make students aware of the billion-dollar music industry by stating, "School music programs are vocational education."²¹⁶ Phillips also focused on adult choral involvement following high school, divulging an increase in American adult choral participation since 2009.²¹⁷ Jennifer Moder found that band students attributed their continued involvement in adult band endeavors to the enjoyment of playing their instrument and a positive school experience, rounding out the top two responses of the non-music primary college students surveyed.²¹⁸ Fundamentally, children sing before playing instruments and reading music notation. Music education methods like Music Learning Theory

²¹³ Barbara Tagg, *Before the Singing: Structuring Children's Choirs for Success* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 67.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 88.

²¹⁵ Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 28-29.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 29.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 29.

²¹⁸ Jennifer A. Moder, "Factors Influencing Non-Music Majors' Decisions to Participate in Collegiate Bands," (Ph.D. diss., University of Missouri, 2013), 71, <https://go.openathens.net/redirector/liberty.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/factors-influencing-non-music-majors-decisions/docview/1424274189/se-2>.

(MLT) emphasize singing as the first sequential step in music learning before students begin playing instruments.²¹⁹ Later in the MLT learning sequence, singing and playing instruments occur together before students learn to read music notation.²²⁰ Elementary singing experiences may logically lead to instrumental experiences and additional choral experiences in students' continuing education and the years to follow.

Public School Music Programs in the Community

With potential challenges and barriers for families who wish to be involved in after-school activities, many options may exist for support from a community. "When two parties come together for the common good of a school or to enhance student learning," Amy Cox-Peterson calls this "an educational partnership."²²¹ Cox-Peterson described three significant purposes for establishing educational partnerships: "enhancing public relations, seeking additional funding, and working toward a particular cause or issue."²²² Joyce Epstein emphasized that in academic partnerships, students must retain the main focus, with partnerships encouraging students to "produce their successes."²²³

In addition to the potential of providing financial assistance to families or educational benefits to students, a school-community educational partnership for music also fosters an opportunity for music-making in the community. The community offers an occasion for

²¹⁹ The Gordon Institute for Music Learning, "Specific Applications to Music Instruction," accessed Nov. 18, 2023, <https://giml.org/mlt/applications/#t-1611751837415>.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Cox-Peterson, *Educational Partnerships*, 5.

²²² Ibid., 5.

²²³ Joyce L. Epstein, *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, a SAGE Company, 2019), 13.

performance, and “community is increasingly recognized as a key factor in music sustainability.”²²⁴ Kenneth Phillips also emphasized the importance of bringing school music into the community so that the local community knows the school music performing group exists.²²⁵ Providing more opportunities for performance in the community creates excellent learning opportunities for students and exposes the learning practices of the local school music program to parents and businesses.²²⁶ Phillips also recommended that the choir director invite the community to sing a simple melody with a school choral ensemble, for example, to further the positive experience of performing in the community.²²⁷

School-community educational partnerships are also valuable for music education advocacy. When budget cuts or mentions of budget cuts occur in school districts or counties, administrations often consider defunding arts programs. According to John Benham, many administrators “incorrectly perceive” music education as “non-core in the academic curriculum.”²²⁸ Benham stressed that music educators and other community members wishing to prevent future budget cuts to the school music programs must form a local community coalition to preserve music education for all students in the district or county.²²⁹ In addition to a community coalition, Phillips recommended that school ensembles forge community connections through advertising concerts at local places of business, offering performances in “lobbies” or

²²⁴ Huib Schippers, “Community Music Contexts, Dynamics, and Sustainability,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Community Music*, ed. Brydie Leigh-Bartleet and Lee Higgins (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 32.

²²⁵ Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 40.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 40.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.

²²⁸ Benham, *Music Advocacy*, 5.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

other spaces available in businesses, and encouraging parents to patronize businesses that choose to support the local public-school music programs.²³⁰

Summary

This review examines literature featuring the historical background of choral music education, the history of American public school show choirs, characteristics of American show choirs including typical repertoire performed, vocal, physical, social, and emotional development of third- and fourth-grade students, the musical benefits of music-making, socioeconomic challenges in American choir settings, and public school music programs in the community. The researcher explores characteristics of typical show choirs and the development of third- and fourth-grade students, revealing a gap in the literature. Little to no literature discusses a children's third- and fourth-grade show choir. This study is also unique because the show choir operates within a public school curricular setting. The researcher could not locate literature addressing a third- and fourth-grade show choir within a curricular public school setting. This study addressed the gap in the literature by presenting the benefits and challenges of incorporating a curricular third- and fourth-grade show choir within a public school.

²³⁰ Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 40.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter aims to identify the research methodology employed in this study and provide scholarly support for the research methods involved. The methodology involves qualitative research incorporated through a case study. The information discussed in this chapter demonstrates qualitative research in the research design and describes the aspects of data collection. The chapter also includes descriptions of the participants, the setting of the case study, methods of data collection, and the research questions with their corresponding hypotheses. Additionally, the researcher presents the procedures used to gather data, the method of collecting and coding data, a list of the survey questions for each group, the study's validity, and ethical considerations of surveying human subjects.

Research Design

Based on the work of John Creswell and J. Creswell, this study incorporates a qualitative research method derived from sociology.²³¹ Because the focal point of this study involves a choral group, which is essentially a social group, qualitative research can facilitate the “exploring and understanding [of] the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.”²³² Qualitative research operates well with open-ended questions or questions that require more information than merely agreeing or disagreeing with a statement within a question. Unlike quantitative research, which functions more like a deductive scientific method, qualitative research allows research to occur in a more natural environment “without controlling and

²³¹ Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 5th ed., 15.

²³² Ibid., 4.

manipulating what is being explored.”²³³ Qualitative research is inductive rather than deductive, demonstrated by the researcher gathering specific data, leading to broader theories and ideas.²³⁴ Within qualitative research, the individual collecting the research is the primary “instrument for data collection and analysis” and collects data from multiple sources.²³⁵

The research of this study centers upon a constructivist worldview. According to Creswell and Creswell, constructivism, or social constructivism, is “typically seen as an approach to qualitative research.”²³⁶ The researcher asks broad, open-ended questions to allow the respondents to communicate their experiences fully, enabling the researcher to construct “the meanings others have about the world.”²³⁷ A researcher then collects data from multiple surveys where “the participants may share their ideas freely.”²³⁸ Individuals directly involved with the show choir answered survey questions to assist the researcher in gaining necessary information about the benefits and challenges of incorporating a curricular show choir within a public elementary school.

Before issuing the surveys, the researcher gathered and analyzed literature to create a baseline to build an inquiry into the benefits and challenges of incorporating a curricular show choir in an elementary school. Since existing literature reveals answers to general questions about show choirs, but not specifically a public school elementary curricular show choir, the

²³³ Siti S. L. B. A. Kamal, “Research Paradigm and the Philosophical Foundations of a Qualitative Study,” *PEOPLE: International Journal of Social Sciences* 4, no. 3 (January 2019): 1388, <https://doi.org/10.20319/pijss.2019.43.13861394>.

²³⁴ Kamal, “Research Paradigm and the Philosophical Foundations of a Qualitative Study,” 1387.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 1387

²³⁶ Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 5th ed., 7.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 181.

researcher surveyed former male and female students who participated in a public school curricular elementary show choir, the elementary school administration who worked in the school's administration when the show choir was active, male and female parents or guardians of former show choir members, and city officials. Influenced by a grounded theory research method, the researcher collected and coded the data, analyzing the data for emerging themes.

As advised by Creswell and Creswell, one should design interview questions to be open-ended, rather than yes or no, and the data gathered and organized into “codes and themes that cut across all of the data sources.”²³⁹ Coding the data assisted the researcher in comparing data throughout the process, explicitly identifying emerging themes and allowing the possibility of revision of original ideas.²⁴⁰ Coding also qualified for the possibility of “rejection” of ideas from changing data or redirecting the research to “further analysis.”²⁴¹ To identify the emerging themes in the collected data, Google Forms conveniently amasses data for each question on one page. After identifying emerging themes, one compares the survey answers to identify the common themes.

Case Study Methodology

The researcher chose to analyze one unique ensemble, the OC Stars, establishing a case study of the ensemble. In a case study, the researcher typically follows an event, a process, a group, or a program for a select timespan and gathers the research “over a sustained period of

²³⁹ Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 5th ed., 181.

²⁴⁰ Kathy Charmaz and Robert Thornberg, “The Pursuit of Quality in Grounded Theory,” *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 18, no. 3 (2021): 322, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2020.1780357>.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 322.

time.”²⁴² A case study may often involve observation, but Cozby and Bates suggest that some case studies may not include direct observation but rather interviews or formal research.²⁴³ For this project, the researcher surveyed individuals who had participated or whose children had participated in the show choir. Former choir members ranged in age from twenty-two to thirty.

Additionally, the administrators and city officials discuss information that spans at least ten years. Over the ten years, the researcher hoped to gain insight into how the ensemble grew to connect with the surrounding community and families and how the students grew musically, socially, and emotionally following their involvement with the ensemble. For instance, in many cases, the researcher could ask former members or parents about music involvement during the remainder of their school years and beyond.

Questions and Hypotheses

To guide the study, a qualitative researcher develops central research questions. The central questions must be broad, and a concise focus will allow an open-ended quality to foster descriptions of the studied case.²⁴⁴ In qualitative research, one approaches the “central phenomenon,” allowing for exploring many meanings and possibilities.²⁴⁵

The study will address the following questions throughout the analysis:

Research Question One: In what ways does a show choir differ from a traditional choral group within an elementary curriculum?

²⁴² Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 5th ed., 14.

²⁴³ Paul C. Cozby and Scott C. Bates, *Methods in Behavioral Research*, 12th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2015), 125.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 134.

²⁴⁵ Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 5th ed., 133.

Research Question Two: What challenges can the incorporation of a show choir within an elementary curriculum bring to the school?

Research Question Three: In what ways can the students, families, and local communities benefit from the incorporation of a show choir into the elementary school curriculum?

Research Question One

Research Question One may be addressed with the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis One: A show choir may differ from a traditional choir in music style selection, incorporation of choreography, and community performances.

Although a choir in a high school, middle school, elementary school, or community chorus may perform some of their repertoire with similar elements of a show choir, a show choir features a typical set of five connected songs rather than five independent selections.²⁴⁶ Show choirs perform popular music, including many pop and rock subgenres, and also include Broadway tunes.²⁴⁷ A traditional concert choir may consist of some popular music in their program, often occurring in a final repertoire set.²⁴⁸ A director usually includes the “heavy” or “masterwork” style of singing early in the program, indicating that a traditional choir does not perform popular music exclusively, and the selections are independent of one another.²⁴⁹ Also, a masterwork section of the repertoire includes selections from a traditionally classical style of music in which the incorporation of choreography would not be appropriate. Both traditional and

²⁴⁶ Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 244.

²⁴⁷ Kindle, “Characteristics of the High School Varsity Mixed Show Choir,” 70.

²⁴⁸ Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 381.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 381.

show choirs may perform in the community; however, Phillips expressed that the more entertaining portion of a concert should be toward the end because the director must consider the audience's engagement and the academic value of the choral process.²⁵⁰ For example, due to the more competitive nature of a show choir and the power of engagement within a show choir's characteristics, a choral director would more likely select the show choir to represent the school at a competitive parade or the opening of a community event.

To answer the first research question, the researcher systematically developed survey questions for former OC Stars participants to answer. From their perspective, the researcher could determine how the OC Stars differed from a traditional choir through its unique characteristics of repertoire selection, singing style, and inclusion of choreography.²⁵¹ Former students answered the following questions relating to the differences between a show choir and a traditional choir:

1. How did participating with the OC Stars contribute to your musical development?
2. Have you been a member of both choirs, show choir and concert choir?
3. If you have been a member of both types of choirs, which choir did you enjoy more?
4. If you have been a member of both types of choirs, how was the singing different?
5. What did you dislike about the OC Stars?

The open-ended questions allowed former students to elaborate on their answers, providing essential details to the researcher to uncover emerging themes. Although some questions did not directly inquire about the differences between show and traditional choirs, the responses could

²⁵⁰ Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 381.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 58.

include additional information from individuals who did not participate in choral ensembles following their elementary education.

To address the engaging nature of a show choir, the researcher also created survey questions for past and present elementary school administrators. During a job interview, one of the administrators discussed the importance of continuing the OC Stars in the same manner as in the past. She suggested that the sound of the singing and the tone of the ensemble needed to remain the same. From this prior information, the researcher crafted questions to explore the engaging nature of the group with the community, another characteristic of a show choir.²⁵² The following questions could provide answers supporting the entertainment value of a show choir and the resulting connections created with the community:

1. Why did you decide to continue the OC Stars after the founder/director retired?
2. What are some key benefits that this show choir has brought to the elementary school?
3. How has the implementation of OC Stars been an asset to the school, students, families, and surrounding communities?

Additional questions for city officials could provide supplementary insight into the captivating quality of the OC Stars at community events:

1. How has the OC Stars contributed to building a connection between the school (OCES) and the city?
2. How was the connection initially made to involve the OC Stars in the openings of two major city festivals?
3. What benefits does an OC Stars performance bring to the city?

²⁵² Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 381.

Research Question Two

Research Question Two may be addressed with the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis Two: Challenges of incorporating a show choir within an elementary school curriculum may include scheduling challenges for students and the director/teacher, vocal technique, and financial considerations.

Scheduling challenges within an elementary school often involve the absence of an activity period where students may select an elective course like an extra chorus class or a violin class. Many elementary schools have fixed schedules with no elective opportunities, and the different music classes must become extracurricular. If the ensemble became extracurricular, many students would be unable to participate due to transportation challenges or conflicts with other unrelated after-school commitments. A director may have to take on extra courses of a curricular nature without receiving the extra pay offered to individuals who teach extracurricular courses. Another challenge for a director is to balance good vocal technique with creating a visually appealing show for the audience. Male students struggle to find an attractive, healthy vocal style they do not perceive as feminine.

For this reason, many male students begin to lose interest in singing as early as the second grade.²⁵³ Although an elementary show choir would not likely wear costumes as elaborate as a high school show choir, costumes or uniforms are essential for the visual appeal of a show choir. A financial challenge may be that some families may need financial assistance to purchase a uniform.

Scheduling challenges involve families as well as the school itself. Therefore, the researcher sought positive and negative scheduling information from former OC Stars members,

²⁵³ Wyler, *When Did You Stop Singing?* 33.

parents of former OC Stars, and the elementary school administration. Most of the scholarly literature discussed shows choirs in a high school setting or general children's choirs in an elementary school setting. Phillips addressed the possibilities of scheduling an elementary children's choir during extra elective class periods, available music classes, or after school as an extracurricular function.²⁵⁴ The only two options for scheduling at OCES were during recess or after school. To discover the benefits and challenges of designing the OC Stars, the researcher asked former OC Stars members the following survey questions:

1. How likely would you have joined OC Stars if the group met after school as an extracurricular function versus meeting twice a week during the school day?
2. What did you dislike about the OC Stars?

Parents of former OC Stars responded to the following survey question:

1. How likely would your child have joined OC Stars if the group met after school as an extracurricular function?

Past and present elementary school administrators answered the following questions:

1. What are some challenges that you have found with continuing the show choir in the elementary school?
2. Why did you choose to schedule the show choir during the day rather than after school?

The researcher also asked former OC Stars members and parents of former OC Stars about their gender because she predicted that answers may reflect some differences in opinion. Eric Wyler found that boys in elementary school began losing interest in singing between the first and second grades.²⁵⁵ Male members reflecting on their time with OC Stars may reveal different

²⁵⁴ Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 409.

²⁵⁵ Wyler, "When Did You Stop Singing?" 33.

priorities than their female counterparts. Scheduling challenges could emerge in the former members' responses, including giving up recess during the school day or sports conflicts if the group became extracurricular. Male parents could also reveal concern about conflicts with sports practices or games after school. The researcher received many inquiries from current male parents about how participation in OC Stars could interfere with their child or children's athletic events. However, some female parents may share similar feelings. Some parents may also struggle to provide transportation for their child after school, as Tagg mentioned in her discussion of including all students in a community choir by finding solutions to transportation challenges.²⁵⁶

Research Question Three

Research Question Three may be addressed with the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis Three: Students, families, and local communities may benefit from the incorporation of a curricular show choir in an elementary school through socio-emotional, physical, and musical learning for students, more opportunities for families to see their child perform outside the school setting, and communities forming a partnership with the school which may bring in funds to enhance learning.

Incorporating a show choir within the elementary school could facilitate many opportunities for forging connections with the school's community. Students build relationships with other students in the choral group, often students with whom they have limited interaction in other aspects of the school because of different class placements, for example. Students learn coordination skills in addition to good singing and communication. The opportunity to perform

²⁵⁶ Tagg, *Before the Singing*, 67.

in the show choir may enhance children's confidence in performance and inspire a lifelong interest in music learning. Show choir performances can bring the local elementary school into full view and promote a positive relationship between the school and the community.

To ascertain the benefits of the OC Stars to the students, their families, the school, or the community, the researcher constructed survey questions to address simple components rather than "double-barreled questions that ask two things at once."²⁵⁷ Former OC Stars members responded to questions about the social and emotional benefits of choir participation to determine if the answers supported Váradi's findings of positive social and emotional experiences among members of collective arts groups.²⁵⁸ Parents of former OC Stars also answered questions to fill in more gaps regarding the social or emotional benefits of their children's choir participation. Former OC Stars members replied to the following questions:

1. How did participating with the OC Stars contribute to your social development?
2. How did participating with the OC Stars contribute to your emotional development?

Parents of former OC Stars provided feedback to the following questions:

1. How did participating with the OC Stars contribute to your child's social development?
2. How did participating with the OC Stars contribute to your child's emotional development?

In addition to avoiding "double-barreled questions," the researcher refrained from language eliciting specific responses. The survey questions' wording allowed participants to respond positively, neutrally, or negatively.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁷ Cozby and Bates, *Methods in Behavioral Research*, 12th ed., 137.

²⁵⁸ Váradi, "A Review of the Literature on the Relationship of Music Education to the Development of Socio-Emotional Learning," 3.

²⁵⁹ Cozby and Bates, *Methods in Behavioral Research*, 12th ed., 137.

Furthermore, the researcher desired to determine the musical benefits experienced by former members of the OC Stars. Phillips discussed vocational and avocational musical opportunities following high school.²⁶⁰ Vocational possibilities included the many available jobs in the music industry. Avocational options involved adult participation in voluntary music ensembles like choruses. Phillips cited that the United States has sustained an increase in adult participation in choral activities since 2009.²⁶¹ To trace student involvement in music ensembles following elementary school and to establish positive, negative, or neutral feelings of former members of the OC Stars, the members answered the following questions:

1. How did participating with the OC Stars contribute to your musical development?
2. What music courses did you take following elementary school?

To provide additional insight, parents of former OC Stars responded to the following survey questions:

1. How did participating with the OC Stars contribute to your child's musical development?
2. What music courses did your child take following elementary school?

The local community may profit from a partnership with the local public school. Amy Cox-Peterson identified the primary purposes of establishing educational partnerships: "enhancing public relations, seeking additional funding, and working toward a particular cause or issue."²⁶² The school and community profit from an equal partnership. The students create valuable experiences performing in the community, and the parents and local businesses discover the valuable music program of their local public school.²⁶³ To uncover perceptions of the school-

²⁶⁰ Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 28-29.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 29.

²⁶² Cox-Peterson, *Educational Partnerships*, 5.

²⁶³ Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 40.

community partnership resulting from OC Stars performances, city officials answered the following questions:

1. How has the OC Stars contributed to building a connection between the school (OCES) and the city?
2. How was the connection initially made to involve the OC Stars in the openings of two major city festivals?
3. What benefits does an OC Stars performance bring to the city?

OCES administrators responded to the following question:

1. How has the implementation of OC Stars been an asset to the school, students, families, and surrounding communities?

Participants

The selection of the participants for this study was purposeful because the participants met specific criteria. Creswell and Creswell suggested the idea of “purposeful selection,” which would help the researcher “understand the problem and the research question.”²⁶⁴ In their article examining open-ended questions and saturation, researchers Susan C. Weller et al. concluded that discovering “a few widely held ideas, a small sample size will suffice.”²⁶⁵ Therefore, the researcher selected twenty-six individuals to participate in this study. A sampling of three city officials connected with the school and community events consented to participate in an anonymous survey. A mixture of female and male parents of former elementary school choir

²⁶⁴ Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 5th ed., 185.

²⁶⁵ Susan C. Weller et al., “Open-ended Interview Questions and Saturation,” *PloS one* 13, no. 6 (June 2018): 15, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0198606>.

members also agreed to join the study by completing an anonymous survey. Four administrators of the elementary school who had been present during the transition from the first show choir director to the next show choir director assented to participate in an anonymous survey because they could share information about renewed purposes for continuing the show choir with the new music teacher. Former female and former male members of the ensemble who are over eighteen years of age also responded to the survey to discover how the show choir may have impacted their lives from an adult perspective. By including male and female parents and former students, the researcher wished to discover if any commonalities or differences emerged based on the gender or age of former OC Stars participants. Tables 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5 summarize the descriptive statistics of participant gender.

Table 3.1 Gender of Parents

Gender	N	Percentage
Male	4	44.4%
Female	5	55.6%

Table 3.2 Gender of Former Choir Members

Gender	N	Percentage
Male	5	50%
Female	5	50%

Table 3.3 Gender of School Administrators

Gender	N	Percentage
Male	0	0%
Female	4	100%

Table 3.4 Gender of City Officials

Gender	N	Percentage
Male	3	100%
Female	0	0%

Table 3.5 Gender of All Participants

Gender	N	Percentage
Male	12	46.15%
Female	14	53.85%

Table 3.6 identifies the age of the former member participants of the OC Stars and pairs the age with the participants' gender. The equal number of males and females ranges from twenty-two to thirty years of age.

Table 3.6 Current Age of Former OC Stars

Former OC Stars	Age
Male 1	24
Male 2	24
Male 3	27
Male 4	30
Male 5	30
Female 1	22
Female 2	26
Female 3	27
Female 4	28
Female 5	29

Researcher's Role

Creswell and Creswell encourage researchers to disclose direct experiences with the study group to address any possible bias and to explain how their experience might shape the research.²⁶⁶ The researcher currently directs the OC Stars and has been doing so since 2019. The researcher collected observational data by shadowing the previous director in his last year of

²⁶⁶ Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 5th ed., 184-185.

teaching, attending his final performance with the OC Stars, and observing the choir under her direction during the last four years. The researcher has no existing relationship with former members of the OC Stars who answered survey questions. In some cases, parents of former OC Stars members, administrators, and city officials are acquaintances of the researcher, but none of the relationships extend beyond the work setting. In this sense, the researcher experienced little to no bias because the surveys were also anonymous. Memos containing observable data of the OC Stars served to “shape” or frame the emerging codes and themes that developed during the survey data collection.²⁶⁷

Setting

The setting of the public elementary school and the community it serves is Ocean City Elementary School in Ocean City, Maryland. The school educates 545 students, with 84 students in the third grade and 100 students in the fourth grade. The breakdown of male and female students is nearly equal, with 272 male and 273 female students as of the 2021-2022 school year. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) recognized Ocean City Elementary as a National Blue Ribbon School in 2006 and again in 2019.²⁶⁸ According to the MSDE, to qualify for a Blue Ribbon distinction, an elementary, middle, or high school must exhibit “high performance and/or significant improvement in student achievement.”²⁶⁹

The OC Stars, founded in 1999 by Rick Chapman, is a curricular, non-auditioned show choir. Third and fourth graders may participate in the choir, rehearsing during recess. For the

²⁶⁷ Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 5th ed., 185.

²⁶⁸ Rachel Ravina, “OCES Named National Blue Ribbon School,” *OC Today* (October 3, 2019), https://www.oceancitytoday.com/news/oces-named-national-blue-ribbon-school/article_87f1be26-e5f8-11e9-b70f-97dbc0a21803.html.

²⁶⁹ Maryland State Department of Education, “Blue Ribbon Schools Award,”

period involved in this study, students rehearsed during their recess twice weekly, Tuesday and Thursday, and the whole choir typically practiced for several days together a week before the first performance. Third and fourth grades have different recess times; therefore, the entire group could only rehearse at a particular rehearsal time that the school accommodated.

Instrumentation

The survey questions included a design to answer the research questions using different types of questions. Open-ended questions proved helpful to gain a deeper understanding of the topic, and most of the questions were open-ended. According to Susan C. Weller et al., researchers may use open-ended questions alone or in conjunction with other methods to understand processes and identify potential causes of correlations.²⁷⁰ The researcher used open-ended questions, short answers, and yes/no questions to identify specific themes and correlations. The questions featured simple language to ensure that respondents understood them. The survey also included language encouraging respondents to share positive and negative responses.

The researcher acted as a nonparticipant observer to remain objective and avoid bias. This approach helped to ensure that the conclusions were based on facts and not influenced by personal opinions. The researcher did not participate in developing initial community relationships, creating the show choir, deciding to continue the curricular ensemble after the founder retired, scheduling the choir, or determining that the elementary choir would function as a show choir. The design of the survey questions intended to provide new insights into the research questions.

²⁷⁰ Weller et al., "Open-ended Interview Questions and Saturation," 2.

To “adequately describe” the study’s participants, respondents answered demographic survey questions when necessary for the researcher to distinguish between individuals in the parent and former OC Stars members sample groups.²⁷¹ Simple language provided respondents with understandable questions. A fellow educator, not included in the survey, informally answered some survey questions to test comprehension.²⁷² The researcher avoided “double-barrel” questions, asking more than one question within a single question.²⁷³ However, question six of the administrator questions contains a list within the question. All four items serve to describe the community partnership. A single response or additional responses may provide sufficient data. The researcher may consider a follow-up question if community partnership data is insufficient. Loaded questions, leading to particular answers, may also skew the results of a survey.²⁷⁴ For example, the researcher asked, “How did participating with the OC Stars contribute to your social development?” The respondent could answer the question positively, negatively, or neutrally. However, if the survey question asked, “How did participating with the OC Stars *positively* contribute to your social development?” the survey participants would likely answer the question with bias.²⁷⁵ Survey questions for administrators about the benefits included counterpart questions about the challenges.

²⁷¹ Cozby and Bates, *Methods in Behavioral Research*, 12th ed., 135.

²⁷² Anonymous, email, July 2023.

²⁷³ Cozby and Bates, *Methods in Behavioral Research*, 12th ed., 137.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 137.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 137.

Survey Questions

Former OC Stars Members:

1. Please indicate your gender
2. What is your current age?
3. How likely would you have joined OC Stars if the group met after school as an extra-curricular function versus meeting twice a week during the school day?
4. How did participating with the OC Stars contribute to your social development?
5. How did participating with the OC Stars contribute to your emotional development?
6. How did participating with the OC Stars contribute to your musical development?
7. What music courses did you take following elementary school?
8. Have you been a member of both choirs, show choir and concert choir?
9. If you have been a member of both types of choirs, which choir did you enjoy more?
10. If you have been a member of both types of choirs, how was the singing different?
11. What did you dislike about the OC Stars?

Parents of Former OC Stars Survey Questions:

1. Please indicate your gender.
2. How likely would your child have joined OC Stars if the group met after school as an extracurricular function?
3. How did participating with the OC Stars contribute to your child's social development?
4. How did participating with the OC Stars contribute to your child's emotional development?
5. How did participating with the OC Stars contribute to your child's musical development?
6. What music courses did your child take following elementary school?

Ocean City Officials Questions:

1. How has the OC Stars contributed to building a connection between the school (OCES) and the city?
2. How was the connection initially made to involve the OC Stars in the openings of two major city festivals?
3. What benefits does an OC Stars performance bring to the city?

OCES Former and Present Administrator Survey Questions:

1. Why did you decide to continue the OC Stars after the founder/director retired?
2. What are some key benefits that this show choir has brought to the elementary school?
3. What are some challenges that you have found with continuing the show choir in the elementary school?
4. Why did you choose to schedule the show choir during the day rather than after school?
5. According to your observations, how has the show choir specifically benefited student participants in the school?
6. How has the implementation of OC Stars been an asset to the school, students, families, and surrounding communities?

Procedures

The researcher invited participants by email to join the study and provided the respondents with an overview and purpose. Several current faculty and staff of Ocean City Elementary School had adult children who participated in OC Stars, or they suggested students they remembered teaching who had been members of OC Stars. Faculty and staff who had children in OC Stars also participated in the surveys, and several of their spouses who are not employed at Ocean City Elementary School also responded to survey questions. OC Stars's

founder and former director also suggested individuals who would likely participate in the survey. Survey information sent to potential participants included the time to complete the survey, the voluntary nature, and the option to withdraw from the survey at any time. The researcher also informed participants that there would be no compensation for participation in the study. By taking the survey, participants indicated that the research study could include their responses.

Data Analysis

Participants anonymously answered open-ended questions on a Google form. The researcher collected and read the responses. The researcher then hand-coded the data to discover emerging themes.²⁷⁶ Creswell and Creswell suggested using three types of coding, which include “expected codes,” “surprising codes,” and “codes of unusual or of conceptual interest.”²⁷⁷ The researcher formed the themes into headings, creating a descriptive narrative with details of similar findings from the survey questions. Interpretation of the findings followed by comparing the findings to the literature. In addition to the literature, the researcher will discuss her views of the findings, seeking to expose what the study revealed.²⁷⁸ Finally, the researcher will report the limitations and recommendations for future research.

²⁷⁶ Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 5th ed., 194.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 195.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 198.

Trustworthiness

To maintain validity in this study, Creswell and Creswell suggest “triangulating” the data by establishing themes “based on converging several perspectives from participants.”²⁷⁹ The researcher will check and recheck the data to confirm the accuracy of the survey response transcriptions. A challenge of bias could exist because the researcher is the new director of the show choir. However, the Google forms used to collect answers to the survey questions are anonymous, and the researcher only knows the categories of participants based on the categories listed on the forms. The researcher may compare the survey findings to her observations of what may occur within the studied ensemble. The researcher will carefully expose positive and negative survey answers because the study aims to find the benefits and challenges of including this show choir within the elementary school’s curriculum.

Ethical Concerns

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed this study and exempted the analysis from further review (see Appendix B). The IRB evaluated the study, considering the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations. Qualifications for exemption from further study included preserving the anonymity of the human subjects by preventing identifiable information from being readily discoverable directly or indirectly where unauthorized individuals can link the data to the subjects. The human subjects were also over eighteen at the time of data collection. The researcher will store the survey data securely on a password-protected device and will delete the data after three years.

²⁷⁹ Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 5th ed., 200.

Chapter Summary

This qualitative case study purposed to examine insights from former members of the elementary show choir, parents of former members of the elementary show choir, city officials, and administrative members of the school during the transition period when the school administration elected to continue the curricular show choir within the elementary school. The insights determined the outcome of the benefits and challenges of incorporating a curricular show choir within an elementary public school. Findings may provide implications for other music educators' consideration by providing a viable elementary curricular choir option that could stimulate growth in the choral programs of the schools that follow the elementary school. The chapter included the rationale used to select a qualitative research case study, a review of the research questions addressed with their corresponding hypotheses, a method for selecting respondents for the study, how the data was analyzed and interpreted, and how the researcher would ensure validity, including addressing bias, and compliance to ethical standards.

Chapter Four: Research Findings

Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher will present the findings of the OC Stars qualitative case study. Recent literature provided a baseline of information involving show choirs, third- and fourth-grade children's development, community connections, socio-economic benefits of participating in a choir, and socio-emotional learning. The literature also revealed some challenges general children's ensembles may experience and possible difficulties students and families may encounter when school functions are extracurricular. Surveys with open-ended questions served to answer the questions in the literature gap. The researcher has experience working with the OC Stars for four years and will compare survey findings with observational data from the classroom. To gain a fuller understanding of the OC Stars ensemble, the researcher presented a personal background of her experience directing the OC Stars.

When considering the position of teaching elementary general music and directing the OC Stars, concern mounted regarding having minimal experience with any choral ensemble that remotely resembled a show choir. The researcher experienced some simple second-grade-level choreography in an internship and observed the OC Stars in their final performance with their retiring director. Similar feelings to those of Alan Alder surfaced that many choir directors find themselves directing a show choir with very little preparation from college years or an internship.²⁸⁰ The former director composed pieces for the choir and offered the transcripts and recordings to the OC Stars so they could continue using his songs for specific events in Ocean City. Events include Winterfest and Springfest. Additionally, the students sing a theme song that

²⁸⁰ Alder and Mulvihill, *The Show Choir Handbook*, 2.

the founder and director wrote for them. Fourth graders from his last choir shared the choreography with the new director, and she recorded them to share with future choirs and to preserve them in case anyone needed to review the choreography.

Third- and fourth-grade students comprise the group of OC Stars. The group is non-auditioned and can be very large, depending on interest and the number of students in the grades. The OC Stars typically include over one hundred students from the third and fourth grades. In the first two years following the founder's retirement, the group rehearsed twice weekly during recess. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the group had to abide by a distancing mandate, and the administration had to reduce the size of the OC Stars. Each grade had to be divided in half to include more members, with one weekly rehearsal for each group. The rehearsals with smaller groups were so successful that the director permanently changed the two-times-per-week rehearsal to one time per week. Rehearsing smaller groups enabled better classroom management, and students appreciated only missing one recess per week rather than two.

OC Stars performs throughout the community for Winter and Spring events. Winter events in Ocean City include the opening of the Winterfest of Lights, a Christmas tree lighting event for a prominent Ocean City hotel, and the Ocean City Christmas Parade. Additionally, the students perform in a nearby town's Christmas parade and serve at least one home for older adults. In the Spring, OC Stars will perform at the opening of Ocean City's Springfest and will perform for Worcester County's annual fine arts festival. The OC Stars will perform the National Anthem for a local minor league baseball team in May. The performances allow the OC Stars to forge valuable connections with their community and surrounding communities and provide students with essential experiences serving others. Author Kenneth Phillips mentioned the

importance of public school music groups performing in the community to showcase the local school's music program.²⁸¹

The OC Stars show choir typically performs five songs for the opening city events. The Winter events follow a holiday theme or a Winter theme. Four songs will feature a popular music style and incorporate choreography, revealing characteristics of an authentic show choir. The director designed the spring shows to follow a theme related to Ocean City's Springfest. For instance, the founder of the group wrote a song about Springfest. The pieces that coordinate with Springfest must foster a vibrant atmosphere because the opening of Springfest is exciting. The OC Stars also perform at least two Spring program songs for the county's Fine Arts Festival. Based on observation and feedback from audience members, the audience for the Fine Arts Festival prefers lively, spirited performances from the various ensembles.

Restatement of Research Questions

The researcher sent surveys to individuals who met the requirements for this study. The surveys included open-ended and short answer-based questions. Responses to the research questions served to answer the following three research questions:

Research Question One: In what ways does a show choir differ from a traditional choral group within an elementary curriculum?

Research Question Two: What challenges can incorporating a show choir within an elementary curriculum bring to the school?

Research Question Three: In what ways can the students, families, and local communities benefit from the integration of a show choir into the elementary school curriculum?

²⁸¹ Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 40.

Results

Differences Between an Elementary Show Choir and a Concert Choir

To answer research question one, the researcher surveyed former OC Stars members to discover how the two types of choirs would differ from their perspectives. One of the female former members described the difference between a show choir and a concert choir as including an “additional emphasis on movement/dancing,” which supports Kenneth Phillips’ statement that a fundamental difference between a concert choir and a show choir is that a show choir “places much emphasis on choreography.”²⁸² The same individual described the traditional choir as one that “allows one to truly focus solely on technique, and therefore, one is more likely to produce a better, relatively even sound without having to factor in choreography.”²⁸³ The researcher acknowledges that choreography work during choir rehearsal leaves less time for perfecting vocal technique among the OC Stars. The choreography aspect of the OC Stars does provide one of the challenges of incorporating a show choir into the elementary school; however, author Duane Cottrell believed that show choir directors could incorporate a healthy vocal technique in show choir and encouraged directors to be conscientious of a proper vocal technique which would help students to maintain healthy voices beyond the high school years.²⁸⁴ With preparation and ideal time management, a show choir director can achieve a visually pleasing performance and a beneficial singing technique.

Kenneth Phillips also encouraged the show choir choreography to occur mostly during instrumental breaks or interludes because the movement could interfere with the optimum

²⁸² Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 58.

²⁸³ Former female member of OC Stars, interview by author, 2023.

²⁸⁴ Cottrell, “Vocal Pedagogy in the Choral Rehearsal,” 515.

singing resulting from vocal tract alignment.²⁸⁵ The OC Stars director may include some light choreography during singing. However, a concern is to encourage students to face front during the movement because the volume of the collective sound will be lost if students sing facing the sides. Vocal tract alignment may also be a struggle if the singer's body is not facing the same direction as the singer's head. Therefore, the ideal section of a song to include dance-like choreography must be instrumental sections and interludes.

Another difference between show choir and traditional concert choir is repertoire, which former OC Stars members cited, surfaced as a common theme among the former members. The repertoire performed by OC Stars included popular styles of music. A former male member of the group described the show choir music as “more upbeat.”²⁸⁶ A female respondent shared that the show choir music “focused more on pop tunes.”²⁸⁷ Including more popular music tune arrangements aligns with Kenneth Phillips' perspective that show choir repertoire consists primarily of popular music.²⁸⁸

Challenges of Incorporating a Curricular Elementary Show Choir

Former male and female students offered a mixed response to the question, “How likely would you have joined OC Stars if the group met after school, as an extracurricular function, versus meeting twice a week during the school day?” Table 4.1 presents former student reactions to an extracurricular OC Stars:

²⁸⁵ Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 248.

²⁸⁶ Former male member of OC Stars, 2023.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 58.

Table 4.1 Former Student Response to Participation in an Extracurricular OC Stars

Student	Likely	Somewhat Likely	Not Likely
Female 1	x		
Female 2	x		
Female 3	x		
Female 4			x
Male 1		x	
Male 2	x		
Male 3	x		
Male 4			x
Male 5			x

According to Table 4.1, 33.33 percent of former OC Stars students responded that they likely would not have joined an extracurricular OC Stars. 75 percent of former female members may have participated in an extracurricular show choir. However, 25 percent may not have been able to practice after school due to sports commitments. The female who answered that she would not have participated cited sports as the reason she would decline the after-school choir opportunity.²⁸⁹

A large percentage of former male OC Stars, 40 percent, would likely not have participated in OC Stars, and the reasons stated by students included sports conflicts and transportation challenges. An administrator commented, “Many students have obligations after school (sports, church, family, scouts) that they may not allow them to participate in OC Stars if

²⁸⁹ Former female member of OC Stars, interview by author, 2023.

rehearsals occurred after school hours.”²⁹⁰ Barbara Tagg discussed transportation as a potential barrier for children joining community choirs.²⁹¹ Similarly, students attending Ocean City Elementary may not have access to transportation for a various reasons, including parents working, other after-school activities, or a family’s lack of a vehicle. One of the school’s administrators also responded that some students would need access to transportation after school. Problems in equity may arise if a child cannot participate in the school’s extracurricular show choir because the child needs transportation. Kenneth Phillips praised the public-school music choral programs compared to community children’s choruses, considering that public school elementary choirs include all students, and community choirs are more selective and exclusive.²⁹² An extracurricular public school show choir would likely inhibit some students’ opportunity to participate in the show choir.

²⁹⁰ Administrator of Ocean City Elementary School, interview by author, 2023.

²⁹¹ Tagg, *Before the Singing*, 88.

²⁹² Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 409.

Interestingly, parents of former OC Stars shared similar answers to those of the students. Few parents surveyed were acquaintances or relatives of the students who responded to survey questions:

Table 4.2 Parent Response to Their Child’s Participation in an Extracurricular OC Stars

Parent	Likely	Somewhat Likely	Not Likely
Female Parent 1	x		
Female Parent 2	x		
Female Parent 3			x
Female Parent 4	x		
Male Parent 1			x
Male Parent 2			x
Male Parent 3			x

Of the parents who responded to the survey question, “How likely would your child or children have joined the OC Stars if the group met after school, as an extracurricular function, versus meeting twice a week during the school day,” 57.14 percent answered that their children would not likely have participated in an extracurricular show choir. A male parent said their children had “too many other activities after school.”²⁹³ A female parent cited sports practices conflicting with her child participating in an after-school show choir.²⁹⁴ A school administrator

²⁹³ Male parent of former OC Stars member, interview by author, 2023.

²⁹⁴ Female parent of former OC Stars member, interview by author, 2023

discussed that after-school activities like “sports, church, family, or scouts” could interfere with student opportunities to participate in an extracurricular OC Stars.²⁹⁵

OC Stars former students and administrators commented on the challenges of scheduling the show choir during the school day as a curricular ensemble. One female student commented:

I don’t recall how I felt about it being during the school day versus potentially after school. However, as a teacher now, I see the benefits of recess and how important that is for a child that I could see OC Stars benefiting as an after-school group rather than not having recess.²⁹⁶

Two male former students discussed their dislike of missing recess, and one student suggested that the administration should consider scheduling the show choir during class time rather than recess.²⁹⁷ However, an administrator stated that the scheduling that was in place, rehearsal during recess, “worked well” and felt there was no reason to change the rehearsal time.²⁹⁸ The current director modified the rehearsal schedule to reconcile the conflicting opinions regarding OC Stars rehearsing during recess. OC Stars now practices once weekly with the group divided into four sections. During COVID-19, the county required social distancing, which mandated a smaller number of students in a classroom simultaneously. The director discovered she could rehearse the smaller group with less distraction and then elected to continue the same schedule after the distancing mandates ceased.

²⁹⁵ Administrator of Ocean City Elementary School, interview by author, 2023.

²⁹⁶ Former female member of OC Stars, interview by author, 2023.

²⁹⁷ Former male member of OC Stars, interview by author, 2023.

²⁹⁸ Administrator of Ocean City Elementary School, interview by author, 2023.

Table 4.3 OC Stars Population for School Year 2022-2023

Grade	Male Students	Female Students	Total
Third Grade	9	30	39
Fourth Grade	27	31	58
All Students	36	61	97

Table 4.4 OC Stars Population for School Year 2023-2024

Grade	Male Students	Female Students	Total
Third Grade	27	32	59
Fourth Grade	18	50	68
All Students	45	82	127

During the school year 2021- 2022, the administration limited the OC Stars choir to forty-six participants from the fourth grade to accommodate the COVID-19 distancing mandate. Only twenty-three students could rehearse in the music classroom to maintain a six-foot distance between students adequately. In the prior year, 2020-2021, the county's administration canceled OC Stars and most of the live concerts for the county's elementary schools. The increase of forty-six students to ninety-seven students positively impacted the survival of the OC Stars. This school year's growth of thirty students to a healthy choir of 127 students participating in the OC Stars provides a testament to a thriving program. Male students became the most difficult to recruit in the initial third grade following COVID-19. The director discovered that the male students did not want to miss recess time, and they did not have much exposure to OC Stars within the school because of the limitations of the group during their first few years attending

OCES. Male participation in their class, now fourth grade, doubled this school year. Kenneth Phillips recommended that choir directors who wished to experience a higher enrollment of male students should encourage male students to recruit their friends.²⁹⁹ Following Phillips' advice, the director encouraged male participants to invite their friends, which resulted in a higher fourth-grade male population for this school year.

Social Benefits of Participating in the OC Stars

Former OC Stars members responded, "How did participating with the OC Stars contribute to your social development?" Five of the ten respondents shared how practicing with the OC Stars allowed them to develop new friendships with students they would not likely see during the school day because of opposite schedules. One male student responded, "It grew my social skills by becoming friends with kids I might not have talked to in school."³⁰⁰ A female student stated, "Participating in OC Stars allowed you to develop friendships outside of the class you were in, and this led to me being more open and capable of making friends in the future."³⁰¹ Another female student shared her experience with new friendships:

As a participant in OC Stars, it provided the perfect opportunity to create new friendships and a sense of purpose for myself and my peers. This was especially important when we as children took it upon ourselves to practice the songs and dances learned in class when we were at recess, and we would even teach them to our peers who were not in the chorus.³⁰²

Parents of former OC Stars members also answered a survey question that asked, "How did participating with OC Stars contribute to your child's social development?" Male parents

²⁹⁹ Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 48.

³⁰⁰ Former male member of OC Stars, interview by author, 2023.

³⁰¹ Former female member of OC Stars, interview by author, 2023.

³⁰² Ibid.

shared elemental comments like “in a positive way.”³⁰³ However, female parents communicated that their children either became friends with students outside their home classroom or existing friendships became more robust, resulting from spending more time with their friends at OC Stars events occurring after the school day. Developing friendships in a choir supports Judit Váradi’s findings that participating in a music ensemble contributes to individuals developing positive social skills like empathy, and positive social skills foster stronger relationships.³⁰⁴

Emotional Benefits of Participating in the OC Stars

Former OC Stars members responded, “How did participating with the OC Stars contribute to your emotional development?” Two of three former male students who answered the question shared positive responses, but the other male student commented, “Not so much.”³⁰⁵ A more positive male student discussed the feelings of happiness and “pleasure” he experienced while participating in a singing group during the school day.³⁰⁶ All five female respondents experienced positive emotional growth while participating with the OC Stars. One of the former female members stated:

Being a part of a group helped teach me how to get along with peers and work together well. In turn, this helped me greatly with my emotional development because I felt a sense of unity with my classmates, and it made me feel like I was a helpful part of the group.³⁰⁷

³⁰³ Male parent of former *OC Stars* member, interview by author, 2023.

³⁰⁴ Váradi, “A Review of the Literature on the Relationship of Music Education to the Development of Socio-Emotional Learning,” 3.

³⁰⁵ Former male member of *OC Stars*, interview by author, 2023.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Former female member of *OC Stars*, interview by author, 2023.

The researcher also asked the parents of former OC Stars and school administrators to comment concerning the emotional benefits their child or children experienced through their participation in OC Stars. Female parents mentioned positive emotional growth, building confidence, and developing a higher sense of self-esteem as primary themes. Three of four male parents shared positive responses regarding their child or children's participation in OC Stars, with themes of confidence and responsibility through commitment becoming preeminent themes among their responses. One of the male parents claimed that the OC Stars had no impact on his child's emotional development.³⁰⁸ School administrators also discussed the main themes of confidence and school pride as emotional benefits students gained from participating in the OC Stars. An administrator commented that OC Stars "promoted excellence and hard work."³⁰⁹ Another administrator stated, "Students gain confidence in the ability to perform and learn to overcome the nervousness of standing in front of an audience."³¹⁰

Most respondents shared that participation in OC Stars affected emotional development positively. The two responses that were not positive could be considered neutral. Themes of confidence, healthy pride, excellence, and responsibility all relate to positive emotional experiences of choral participation shared by Judit Váradi. Váradi stated that participation in a choral ensemble generally contributed to "the development of emotional self-regulation, responsibility, empathy, self-expression, and self-criticism."³¹¹

³⁰⁸ Male parent of former *OC Stars* member, interview by author, 2023.

³⁰⁹ Administrator of Ocean City Elementary School, interview by author, 2023.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Váradi, "A Review of the Literature on the Relationship of Music Education to the Development of Socio-Emotional Learning," 3.

Music Benefits of Participating in the OC Stars

Among the ten former OC Stars members who answered the survey questions, eight shared positive musical benefits from participating in the show choir. Two former members, one male, and one female, responded indifferently toward musical benefits, stating that they did not intend to enroll in any further music courses during their high school career or experienced little musical benefits from performing with the show choir. The researcher asked the former OC Stars members about courses they had taken after elementary school. Worcester County Public Schools students must enroll in a music course from the fifth through the eighth grades. However, the course could be an essential general music, not necessarily a music ensemble or instrumental class. Many former OC Stars enrolled in ensemble courses (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.5 Music Courses Taken by Former OC Stars Following their Education at OCES

Student	Band	Concert Choir	Show Choir	Orchestra	Musical Theater	General Music
Male Student 1	x					
Male Student 2	x					
Male Student 3	x					
Male Student 4			x		x	
Male Student 5						x
Female Student 1		x				
Female Student 2	x	x				
Female Student 3		x	x	x		
Female Student 4	x					
Female Student 5	x					

Of the former OC Stars members surveyed, 90 percent enrolled in ensemble courses. One male student selected general music courses following his education at Ocean City Elementary School. Since most former students surveyed shared that participation in OC Stars profited them musically, one might infer from their collective answers that performing with OC Stars challenged them to continue their enrollment in music ensemble courses following their education at OCES. The extrinsic benefits they experienced from OC Stars may have contributed

to their continued interest in more active ensemble music courses.³¹² A female former OC Stars member commented that participation in OC Stars “encouraged me to continue in music courses after elementary school when music courses were not mandatory.”³¹³ Another female student who chose music performance as her career responded:

After OC Stars, I continued to take every music class available to me through high school (and studied privately with a voice teacher in addition to public school courses). From there, I majored in vocal performance and earned a Bachelor of Music from Towson University and continued my studies at The Juilliard School, where I earned my Graduate Diploma. I have since been working as a professional musician with some of the most prestigious opera houses, symphonies, and venues in the United States, including the Metropolitan Opera, Washington National Opera, and Carnegie Hall. I attribute much of my success as a musician to those early days as an OC Star because this group gave me a chance to learn various repertoire that was enjoyable and sufficiently challenging for my age group while also providing so many opportunities to sing on stage in front of an audience and express myself.³¹⁴

One of the male respondents also performs professionally with two others in an indie rock band. In response to his music development from participating in OC Stars, the male student stated, “It made me the singer and entertainer that I am today.”³¹⁵

Benefits of OC Stars for Families

Many benefits to families overlap in the social and emotional categories discussed in previous sections. A prominent theme among parents regarding their children’s participation in OC Stars surfaced as the experience “built confidence.” Five of nine surveyed parents shared similar thoughts about how their child or children’s performance with the OC Stars contributed to the maturing of their confidence or self-esteem. School administrators commented on the

³¹² Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 28.

³¹³ Former female member of OC Stars, interview by author, 2023.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Former male member of OC Stars, interview by author, 2023.

beautiful memories that students and their families and friends shared as they performed throughout the community. An administrator also discussed the opportunity that OC Stars provided for students and families when children were not necessarily athletic, for example:

Students who are in OC Stars give 100% to participating in the program. OC Stars has given students who are not athletic an outlet to perform and work together with others.³¹⁶

Because the group is non-auditioned, anyone in Ocean City Elementary's third and fourth grades can join the choir at the beginning of the school year. Many families might be unable to involve their children in a community choir because of strict auditions, transportation challenges, or scheduling conflicts. A non-auditioned curricular choir, or a show choir in the case of Ocean City Elementary, allows families to expose children to enjoyable singing and performing in an equitable environment. Phillips discussed the importance of all children embracing an option to sing without the barrier of an audition because most children can sing on pitch.³¹⁷

Benefits of OC Stars' Performances in the Community

The researcher asked current and former OCES administrators how including a curricular OC Stars has been an asset to the school, students, families, and surrounding communities. All four administrators shared positive feedback. An administrator commented, "OC Stars are a wonderful representation of our school in the community."³¹⁸ Another administrator shared, "OC Stars is known around the community for being a singing group with pride and admiration for the school."³¹⁹ A third administrator stated, "It [OC Stars] promotes unity, acceptance, and

³¹⁶ Administrator of Ocean City Elementary School, interview by author, 2023.

³¹⁷ Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 409.

³¹⁸ Administrator of Ocean City Elementary School, interview by author, 2023.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

value.”³²⁰ The fourth administrator discussed that OC Stars “1,000%” has been an asset to the school, students, families, and surrounding communities.³²¹

Although OC Stars does perform for events in surrounding communities, whether in parades or for residents of assisted living communities, Ocean City town officials shared much pride and appreciation for their own hometown elementary school choir. When asked, “What benefits does an OC Stars performance bring to the city?” city officials discussed many positive connections created from the partnership between Ocean City Elementary School and Ocean City. Cox-Peterson claimed that a healthy partnership between the school and the surrounding community fostered excellent opportunities for the students to participate in music-making.³²² The partnership also assists Ocean City in becoming a closer-knit family community. A city official commented on OC Stars performances as acting as a catalyst to transform Ocean City, the resort, into Ocean City, the family community:

As an ocean resort community with a tourism-based economy, many of our residents work throughout the year, hosting our visitors with little time to enjoy all the attractions and events for themselves. Having the OC Stars perform at our festivals gives our families a chance to take time out and participate in our events in a unique way. At the same time, our visitors get to see that Ocean City is more than just a big amusement park. We have families we care about and children we are very proud of. In summary, the OC Stars’ performances at the beginning of our festivals are the bridge that links Ocean City as a resort to Ocean City as a community.³²³

Another city official shared:

The OC Stars have performed at numerous city events over the years. Different generations of students and their families have participated at these events and continue

³²⁰ Administrator of Ocean City Elementary School, interview by author, 2023.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Cox-Peterson, *Educational Partnerships*, 5.

³²³ Ocean City town official, interview by author, 2023.

to see the Stars performances. This has developed a real connection between the students, student families, and the town.³²⁴

In an additional comment by a third city official, he directly attests to the OC Stars assisting the city in becoming more than a tourist destination:

One of the goals in the Ocean City strategic plan is to attract more residents to live in our city. The OC Stars performances are a great way to showcase our school system and demonstrate that Ocean City is to live, not just visit.

As community residents line the street for local winter parades, many gleefully express their excitement when they recognize the OC Stars. The choir members proudly carry their banner featuring their name and the Blue Ribbon status of their school. The uniforms remain the same navy-blue collared shirts with OC Stars monogrammed on the top left of the shirt. Students don winter hats with the OC Stars monogram during the winter programs. Students from third grade typically join the ensemble again in fourth grade after experiencing the excitement and success of the competitive parades and the pride of performing as the hometown children's ensemble at the openings of major city events. Joyce Epstein claimed that music programs should create connections with their community to forge their musical successes.³²⁵ OC Stars has earned many parade awards, the most recent being a first-place award at last year's winter parade.

The school-community partnership also fosters showcasing Ocean City Elementary's music program to the community, and this partnership facilitates support for the local public school music program.³²⁶ Support may reveal itself financially or as potential advocacy if

³²⁴ Ocean City town official, interview by author, 2023.

³²⁵ Epstein, *School, Family, and Community Partnerships*, 4th ed., 13.

³²⁶ Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, 2nd ed., 40.

necessary.³²⁷ For example, a parent of one of the students rewarded the entire group with an ice cream party after they earned their first-place parade award. The school's PTA purchased a very impressive and expensive tower speaker for the group's outdoor performances. Additionally, the county has supplied the school with several quality cordless microphones to enhance the group's sound. A local business that provides the monogrammed hat a shirt also contributes free shirts and hats to families who struggle financially. The owner of the monogramming company has supported the OC Stars for many years, and her children attended OCES, participating in music concerts at the school and in the community. A city official shared the following about the connection between OC Stars and the local community:

The OC Stars brings a musical experience that all can connect with, and the well-rehearsed professionalism of the choral group means observers will look forward to the experience year after year. Their participation brings not only strong local entertainment and families of the students to the event but also shows a level of "quality of living" that is relatable to our destination resort town in terms of education, favorable environment to raise a family, a safe area, good health and wellness (this is a sizable student choir), and proof of positive recreational activities. It shows a strong creative culture, good moral and ethical values or standard of living, and some proof of higher income for the area. Finally, it also acts as a conduit to create a sense of connection to the barrier island resort town from its mainland suburbs. The positive experience the students and families have at our events through the participation (and access) of the OC Stars performance can help build a sense of loyalty to Ocean City for years to come.³²⁸

Summary

The results of the survey questions provided valuable insight to answer the original research questions. Challenges involved in incorporating the show choir as a curricular choir in the elementary school primarily focused on scheduling conflicts. The responses to questions concerning the possibility of creating an extracurricular equivalent of the show choir brought

³²⁷ Benham, *Music Advocacy*, 5.

³²⁸ Ocean City town official, interview by author, 2023.

overwhelming reactions to the difficulty of many students participating in the show choir. The answers revealed that the choir may have lost as many as one-third of its members, resulting from after-school conflicts or transportation dilemmas. A small percentage of the former students stated that they would support an extracurricular choir option because they perceive that recess is essential for elementary students during a school day. However, missing only one recess a week may have provided the necessary concession to appease all negative opinions about the scheduling.

Most students who answered the surveys experienced positive social, emotional, and musical benefits from participating with the OC Stars show choir. Parents and school administrators overwhelmingly agreed that the show choir provided growth opportunities socially, emotionally, and musically. Many parents of former members of OC Stars also noted that their child or children's experience with OC Stars contributed to building confidence and self-esteem among their children. Engagement with the OC Stars also allowed families to involve their children in a significant musical experience without the expense of enrolling their children in a community choir. The non-auditioned OC Stars created an inclusive, equitable opportunity for all students.

The connections created between the OC Stars and their community in Ocean City fostered an essential partnership between the city and their local public elementary school. This partnership has encouraged a sense of community pride and has provided a catalyst between the resort town and the family community. Families who may not visit local festivals will likely attend festivals because their children are performing in the opening ceremony of the events with the OC Stars. Tourists may also experience exposure to the town as more than a tourist destination but a fine community to raise a family. Ocean City families and businesses

reciprocate their appreciation for the show choir by contributing necessary equipment and uniforms to the OC Stars.

Chapter Five: Conclusions

Introduction

Many researchers have examined the benefits and challenges of incorporating a show choir in a middle or high public school setting. Other researchers have explored the advantages of children participating in a community choir. However, individuals have conducted little to no research concerning how a curricular show choir in a public school could profit students, families, the surrounding community, the school, or the difficulties arising from including a curricular show choir within a public elementary school's schedule. The results of this study propose to "fill the gap" in the literature regarding the pros and cons of instituting an elementary public school curricular show choir.

Summary of Study

This qualitative research employed a case study to explore the benefits and challenges of incorporating a curricular show choir in an elementary public school. The case study began with exploring the most current literature on the history of American music education, American show choirs, show choirs in public schools, children's community choirs, physical, emotional, and social development of children, musical benefits of participating in choir, and community connections with local public schools. The researcher then developed primarily open-ended survey questions for former OC Stars members, present and past Ocean City Elementary school administrators, city officials, and parents of former OC Stars members.³²⁹ Chapter Three discussed the qualitative method involved in the research, the setting of the case study, and the participants involved in the case study. The researcher surveyed an equal number of male and

³²⁹ Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 5th ed., 8.

female individuals whenever possible. Interestingly, all the school administrators were female, and the city officials were all male.

Chapter Three also restated the hypotheses, research questions, and survey questions. Respondents shared answers to the questions anonymously through Google Forms, and the researcher coded the collected data to discover emerging themes and then discussed the themes in Chapter Four. The researcher also journaled observations of the OC Stars to compare to the answers on the surveys. Connections between the current literature and themes also emerged in Chapter Four.

Summary of Findings and Prior Research

Findings generally supported prior research. Former OC Stars members shared that they performed a popular style of music. Some former students also discussed the choreography performed by the group, exposing the difference between this choir and a traditional choir. Another former student stated that the singing style differed from a traditional choir, and a school administrator responded that the singing should resemble a more natural child sound than a classical technique, indicating a departure from a traditional children's choir.

The challenging aspects of incorporating a curricular show choir in the elementary school emerged as mostly scheduling challenges. Although including the show choir within the school day as an added curricular course proved challenging for the students, the music teacher, the administration, and other teachers arranged schedules to create extra rehearsals when necessary. The survey responses demonstrated that at least one-third of the students would be unable to participate had the choir become an extracurricular club. The benefits of the choir's curricular status outweighed the scheduling difficulties.

Participation in the choir benefitted most participants socially, emotionally, or musically. Several former students mentioned they forged new friendships with students they did not encounter outside the choir class. Many former students and parents discussed music ensemble courses they or their children enrolled in following their education at OCES. Two former OC Stars expounded on their music-performing careers in their current lives, attributing their initial performing interest to their time in OC Stars.

The city officials enthusiastically support the local elementary school ensemble and eagerly anticipate the show choir's performances for the opening of the city's major festivals. Administrators commented favorably concerning the show choir's involvement in community events, establishing a positive connection between the school and the community. OC Stars orders uniforms from a local business, and the business reciprocates the partnership by donating uniforms to students whose families experience financial hardship. Essentially, the OC Stars show choir becomes a catalyst to connect the school to families and the surrounding community.

Limitations

A limitation of this study involves the location of the analysis. The researcher conducted this study in a resort town seeking to create an off-season stable family community. The tourist city offers many opportunities for a show choir to perform. The location could affect the outcome of duplicate studies. Also, the researcher needed assistance accessing data for the number of participants in the choir dating back more than two years. The school did not preserve records of students in the choir or the breakdown of male and female students participating in the chorus.

Another limitation could be that students must enroll in a music course in intermediate and middle schools in Worcester County. However, students can skip music courses at the high

school level. Another factor that could interfere with student participation in music courses in high school is scheduling conflicts. The reason for declining enrollment in music ensemble courses may not necessarily correlate to a student's disinterest in continuing to study music or attending music ensemble courses.

A final limitation may include the genders of groups of people who responded to the survey. For example, all the past and present administrators responding to the survey were female, while all city officials were male. A study that includes more balance in gender distribution in all categories could yield different results.

Recommendations for Future Study

Future research should include more studies on the decline of male interest in participating in public school choirs. Interest seems to wane following the primary grades, and researchers should seek to discover the reason for the decline and propose options to increase male participation. Further research could determine if adjustments made on the elementary level to recruit more male students might impact male involvement in the intermediate, middle, and high school levels. One might also consider if a show choir opportunity in an elementary school may attract more males to participate in this singing activity. These studies would require more time to study the outcomes, but finding solutions to the decline in male student choral participation would be worth the time and effort.

Implications for Practice

Elementary music teachers might consider the value of establishing a curricular show choir option in their schools. Many public elementary schools schedule optional violin or music courses during the day. A show choir is a viable alternative if public schools wish to create a very visual community representation of their school. Many small towns feature holiday parades,

and a show choir could be a great asset to provide positive attention for the school. A non-auditioned show choir also offers an excellent opportunity to involve all students regardless of skill or financial status. As stated by one of the school's administrators, children who do not have the athletic ability or opportunities to be involved in after-school activities for other reasons may perform in a school group that travels into the community.³³⁰ If the choir is well-trained by a well-prepared and organized director, the ensemble thrives, and the students experience great pride in their school and choir, likely improving their confidence and self-esteem.

Summary

In closing, this study successfully answered the research questions regarding the benefits and challenges of incorporating a curricular show choir in an elementary public school. The survey responses adequately answered the differences between a show choir and a concert choir, the social, emotional, musical, and familial advantages of children participating in a curricular show choir, and the positive connections forged between the local elementary public school and its surrounding community. Ultimately, the community of Ocean City deems the OC Stars a very beloved ensemble by the school, the students, the families, and the surrounding community. The non-auditioned nature of the choir provides equity for students and the community, and the PTA, the county, and a local business provide equipment and uniforms to assure families that all students will receive what they require to perform with the ensemble.

³³⁰ Administrator of Ocean City Elementary School, interview by author, 2023.

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Appendix A: Information Sheet

Title of the Project: The Benefits and Challenges of Incorporating a Curricular Show Choir in an Elementary Public School

Principal Investigator: Anne Binkley, Doctoral Candidate, School of Music, Liberty University

Invitation to be part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be 18 years of age or older and have been affiliated with OC Stars as a member, administrator, director, parent of a member, or a city official of Ocean City during OC Stars performances. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about, and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to examine the many benefits of OC Stars as well as the challenges.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

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

1. Answer survey questions.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. However, benefits to society include making the public aware of more music and performance opportunities for students in an elementary school. Benefits include sharing our own experience with others so they might recognize the unique qualities of an elementary show choir. A show choir experience could lead many more children into singing and performing at a young age.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

Participant responses to the online survey will be anonymous. Any identifiable participant responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.

Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and will be deleted after three years. Any hardcopy records will be shredded.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or withdraw at any time before submitting the survey without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please exit the survey and close your internet browser. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Anne Binkley. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Samantha Miller, at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered, and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers

are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. You can print a copy of the document for your records. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

Appendix B: IRB Exemption Letter

October 20, 2023



Anne Binkley Samantha Miller

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY2023-0001 The Benefits and Challenges of Incorporating a Curricular Children's Show Choir in an Elementary Public School

Dear Anne Binkley, Samantha Miller,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data-safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants' research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(i). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects;

For a PDF of your exemption letter, click on your study number in the My Studies card on your Cayuse dashboard. Next, click the Submissions bar beside the Study Details bar on the Study details page. Finally, click Initial under Submission Type and choose the Letters tab toward the bottom of the Submission Details page. Your information sheet and final versions of your study documents can also be found on the same page under the Attachments tab.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, PhD, CIP

Administrative Chair, Research Ethics Office

Appendix C: Recruitment Letter

Dear Recipient (Administrators of OCES, Former Members of OC Stars, Parents of Former OC Stars, or City Officials),

As a doctoral candidate in the school of music at Liberty University and a music teacher at Ocean City Elementary School, I am conducting research on the OC Stars of Ocean City Elementary School as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Music Education degree. My research aims to perform a case study on the unique qualities of our curricular show choir and establish the benefits and challenges of incorporating this ensemble at Ocean City Elementary School. I am writing to invite you to join my study.

Participants must have been a member of OC Stars for at least one year. Participants will be asked to answer survey questions using Google Forms to maintain anonymity. It should take approximately one hour to complete the procedure listed. Participation will be anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

Because participation is anonymous, you do not need to sign and return the consent document unless you would prefer to do so. After you have read the consent form, please click the link to proceed to the survey/complete and return the survey. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the study.

To participate, please click [Survey Form](#) to complete the study survey.

Sincerely,

Anne Binkley
Ocean City Elementary School



Appendix D: City Officials Questions

How has the OC Stars contributed to building a community connection between the school (OCES) and the city?

City Official 1: As an ocean resort community with a tourism based economy, many of our residents work through-out the year hosting our visitors with little time to enjoy all the attractions and event s for themselves. Having the OC Stars perform at our festivals gives our families a chance to take a time out and participate in our events in a unique way. At the same time, our visitors get to see that Ocean City is more than just a giant amusement park; we have families we care about and children we are very proud of. In summary, the OC Starts performances at the opening of our festivals is the bridge that links Ocean City as a resort to Ocean City as a community.

City Official 2: The OC Stars have played a positive role on multiple levels when it comes to establishing a relationship between the school and the Town of Ocean City. First and foremost, the skill level of the OC Stars creates a value and experience for spectators that resonates with everyone, including Town officials. They have an established reputation and their inclusion in an event is buzzworthy and unique. Proof of this value is in the partnership with the Choral Director - a partnership that proactively communicates both ways on upcoming opportunities. For the Town, OC Stars represent a family-friendly experience and opportunity for resident minors. When they perform, they are an attraction like no other on the eastern shore.

City Official 3: The OC Stars have performed at numerous city events over the years. Different generations of students and their families have participated at these events and continue to come to see the Stars performances. I think this has developed a real connection between the students, the students' families and the town.

How was the connection initially made to involve the OC Stars in the openings of two major city festivals?

City Official 1: Although I am not 100% certain, I believe that our original Director of Recreation and Parks, who coordinated Sunfest in the early days, had children in OC Stars and, after seeing them perform at a school event, invited them to perform at Sunfest. The performance was so well received by both the families and the event attendees that it quickly became a tradition. When Ocean City added Springfest and Winterfest, including the OC Stars was a given.

City Official 2: The Choral Director was and still is the primary conduit to all opportunities. The Town wanted local group assets to perform at events over the past several decades. Not only does it bring an endearing experience value but doing so also drives local families to the event (families of the choral students and word-of-mouth). Whereas some student body performances have fallen off over the years, the OC Stars have not. Once again, proactive communication and a unique professional student experience continue to drive value even in today's complex world.

City Official 3: I do not really recall the specifics, but we saw an opportunity to get the Stars involved which ultimately helped to get their family and friends involved and to attend some of our events. The OC Stars have become synonymous with Springfest and are part of our annual opening ceremony. They even have a Springfest song! They are also a regular part of our program for the opening of Winterfest of Lights! When we opened the Performing Arts Center, I asked the OC Stars to perform to not only provide them with a big stage experience but to proudly showcase our Ocean City kids to a large audience.

What benefits does an OC Stars performance bring to the city?

City Official 1: One of the goals of the Ocean City strategic plan is to attract more year-round residents to live in our city. The OC Stars performances are a great way to showcase our school system and demonstrate that Ocean City is a great place to live, not just visit.

City Official 2: The OC Stars bring a musical experience that all generations can connect with, and the well-rehearsed professionalism of the choral group means observers will look forward to the experience year after year. Their participation not only brings strong local entertainment and families of the students to the event but also shows a level of "quality of living" that is relatable to our destination resort Town in terms of education, favorable environment to raise a family, safe area, good health and wellness (this is a sizable student choir), and proof of positive recreational activities. It shows strong creative culture, good moral and ethical values or standards of living and some hint of proof of higher income for the area. Finally, it also acts as a conduit to create a sense of connection to the barrier island resort Town from its mainland suburbs. The positive experience the students and their families have at our events through the participation (and access) of the OC Stars performance can help build a sense of loyalty to Ocean City for years to come.

City Official 3: The 3rd and 4th graders bring excitement and energy whenever they perform. I think just seeing this group of local kids performing at our events is something very special for all of us. I know we are all very proud of these students and it just helps to build a real sense of community. Ocean City is about the family experience; nothing speaks more to that than an OC Stars performance.

Appendix E: School Administrator Questions

Why did you decide to continue the OC Stars after the director/founder retired?

Administrator 1: OC Stars is a tradition at our school. Younger students look forward to the time when they can become OC Stars, parents see their children's participation as a milestone, and the community enjoys their annual performances.

Administrator 2: It was an amazing choral program that the community and students look forward to. A tradition that needed to continue.

Administrator 3: The OC Stars program was a deep-seated tradition at OCES for many years. We would keep that tradition the same due to the founder retiring.

Administrator 4: OC Stars was and still is a program that brings everyone together - students, staff, families, and community. Every student who participates in the program loves it, and the program brings out the best in every single student. I loved most; the way community came together. OC Stars has been valued and appreciated and enjoyed by a vast amount of people and continuing the program was most important to me because of that.

What are some key benefits that the show choir has brought to this elementary school?

Administrator 1: OC Stars bring us together as a school community. In addition, the OC Stars are a showcase in the community for our school.

Administrator 2: respect, admiration, work ethic among students, pride

Administrator 3: Parents and community members in the Ocean City area are very aware of the program, which brings everyone a lot of pride. OC Stars is an important piece of our school's history.

Administrator 4: The amount of people it draws into the building is challenging. Trying to fit everyone in where they can see their child is a challenge.

What are some challenges that you have found with continuing the show choir in the elementary school?

Administrator 1: rehearsal time

Administrator 2: Practicing with the number of students that want to participate! It is a good problem to have.

Administrator 3: Many students want to be part of the program, so setting a participation cut-off can be a problem. The scheduling of parades, holiday events and/or invitations to participate in events along with balancing the everyday demands of school can be challenging at times.

Administrator 4: The amount of people it draws into the building is challenging. Trying to fit everyone in where they can see their child is a challenge.

Why did you choose to schedule the show choir during the school day rather than after school?

Administrator 1: Not all our students have access to transportation after school.

Administrator 2: Scheduling was a practice that was already in place. It worked well.

Administrator 3: Many students have obligations after school (sports, church, family, scouts) that may not allow them to participate in OC Stars if rehearsals were held after school hours.

Administrator 4: No response

According to your observations, how has the show choir specifically benefited student participants in the school?

Administrator 1: Students gain confidence in the ability to perform and learn to overcome the nervousness of standing in front of an audience.

Administrator 2: Students have pride being part of OC Stars. It's a memory that adults still have and talk about.

Administrator 3: Students who are OC Stars give 100% to participating in the program. OC Stars have given students who are not athletic an outlet to perform and work together with others. Many students have gone on to BIS and other schools to join that school's choir and band. Students have learned singing skills and choreography beyond what they know in the classroom.

Administrator 4: Students have benefited by being part of a group of their own peers. It has promoted excellence and hard work. Good for kids.

How has the implementation of OC Stars been an asset to the school, students, families, and surrounding communities?

Administrator 1: OC Stars are a wonderful representation of our school in the community.

Administrator 2: OC Stars is known around the community for being a singing group with pride and admiration for the school.

Administrator 3: Yes, 1000%!

Administrator 4: It promotes unity, acceptance, and value.

Appendix F: Former Female *OC Stars* Questions

What is your current age?

Female Student 1: 29

Female Student 2: 28

Female Student 3: 26

Female Student 4: 22

Female Student 5: 27

How likely would you have joined OC Stars if the group met after school, as an extracurricular function, versus meeting twice a week during the school day?

Female Student 1: Very likely

Female Student 2: No response

Female Student 3: I don't recall how I felt about it being during the school day versus potentially after school - however, as a teacher now, I see the benefits of recess and how important that is for a child that I could see OC Stars benefitting as an after-school group rather than not having recess.

Female Student 4: I still would have joined. As a child, I was used to doing activities after school, so OC Stars would have just been another extracurricular.

Female Student 5: As a child, I played sports after school, so I was most likely not as willing to do choir.

How did participating with the OC Stars contribute to your social development?

Female Student 1: As a participant in OC Stars, it provided the perfect opportunity to create new friendships and a sense of purpose for myself and my peers. This was especially apparent when we, as children, took it upon ourselves to practice the songs and dances we learned in class when we were at Recess and would even teach them to our peers who were not in the chorus.

Female Student 2: It taught me teamwork- supporting peers and working hard.

Female Student 3: It helped to build confidence, especially with having to "try out" in front of other students.

Female Student 4: Participating in OC Stars allowed you to develop friendships outside of the class you were in, and this led to me being more open and capable of making friends in the future.

Female Student 5: A lot of my friends from class were in OC Stars with me, so it was nice to have an extra activity to participate in with them.

How did participating with OC Stars contribute to your emotional development?

Female Student 1: I would say that participating in a large chorus taught me important lessons such as patience, especially when the instructor is addressing different sections of singers who may have varying notes or choreography. Additionally, the friendships that you make in such groups always come with lessons in compassion, empathy, and kindness.

Female Student 2: Being a part of a group helped teach me how to get along with peers and work together well. In turn, this helped me greatly with my emotional development because I felt a sense of unity with my classmates, and it made me feel like I was a helpful part of the group.

Female Student 3: Again, confidence but also gave me pride in knowing I was part of a group that was able to travel around Ocean City and perform after hard work.

Female Student 4: Having the responsibility of being in a group and going to the practices, I believe, matured me emotionally by giving me responsibility at the ages of 8, 9, and 10.

Female Student 5: I definitely got nervous before performances because I didn't find singing natural, but I always enjoyed the events, so it was worth it to overcome the stage fright.

How did participating with OC Stars contribute to your musical development?

Female Student 1: After OC Stars, I continued to take every music class available to me through High School (and studied privately with a voice teacher in addition to public school courses). From there, I majored in Vocal Performance and, earned a Bachelor of Music from Towson University, and continued my studies at The Juilliard School, where I earned my Graduate Diploma. I have since been working as a professional musician with some of the most prestigious opera houses, symphonies, and venues in the United States, including The Metropolitan Opera, Washington National Opera, and Carnegie Hall. I attribute much of my success as a musician to those early days as an OC Star because this group gave me a chance to learn various repertoire that was enjoyable and sufficiently challenging for my age group while also providing so many opportunities to sing on stage in front of an audience and express myself.

Female Student 2: I learned a lot about the basic elements of music and was able to reinforce what I learned during music class in OC Stars while practicing and performing. I now have a strong love for music although I am not a part of any choir, band, etc.

Female Student 3: It encouraged me to continue in music courses after elementary school when musical courses were not mandatory.

Female Student 4: I only took the required music classes in school following being a part of OC Stars, so it did not do musically advance me that much. However, I had not planned on taking a music class once I started high school.

Female Student 5: I did not participate in choir or any other musical endeavors after OC Stars.

What music courses did you take following elementary school?

Female Student 1: Show Choir, Strings, Chamber Choir, Music Theory, Private Voice Lessons, Private Piano Lessons, Choral Conducting

Female Student 2: I took chorus in intermediate school and in middle school.

Female Student 3: Band and Concert Choir

Female Student 4: I was in the band from 5th to 8th grade.

Female Student 5: Band at BIS

Have you been a member of both types of choirs, traditional and show choir?

Female Student 1: Yes.

Female Student 2: No, just traditional choir.

Female Student 3: No, just traditionally concert choir in high school. OC Stars was my only form of show choir.

Female Student 4: No

Female Student 5: No

If you have been a member of both a show choir and a traditional choir, which type of choir did you enjoy more? Why?

Female Student 1: While I loved show choir, which, in my experience, focused more on pop tunes and dance, I eventually preferred the structure and musical complexity in the repertoire of the traditional choir.

Female Student 2: n/a

Female Student 3: I only did concert choir and felt more confident doing that due to my lack of rhythm in dancing/moving with a group.

Female Student 4: I have not been a member of the choir.

Female Student 5: n/a

If you have been a member of both types of choirs, how was the singing different?

Female Student 1: I personally find that traditional choir allows one to truly focus solely on technique, and therefore, one is more likely to produce a better, relatively even sound without having to factor in choreography. In show choir, there is usually an additional emphasis on movement/dancing, which (for a time) may impact vocal production; however, being able to dance and produce a healthy, even sound is a wonderful skill obtained with practice and professional guidance.

Female Student 2: n/a

Female Student 3: n/a

Female Student 4: n/a

Female Student 5: n/a

What did you dislike about OC Stars?

Female Student 1: There was nothing I disliked about OC Stars. It was an incredible experience that shaped the musician I am today.

Female Student 2: I remember missing recess, but we were so excited to go practice and be a part of a group that it was not something I overall disliked.

Female Student 3: I don't recall anything that I disliked about OC Stars.

Female Student 4: I liked everything involved with OC Stars. It was always fun, and I liked the songs we got to sing at all the events.

Female Student 5: I have to wear khaki, but other than that, nothing!

Appendix G: Former Male OC Stars Questions

What is your current age?

Male Student 1: 24

Male Student 2: 24

Male Student 3: 27

Male Student 4: 30

Male Student 5: 30

How likely would you have joined OC Stars if the group met after school, as an extracurricular function, versus meeting twice a week during the school day?

Male Student 1: Somewhat likely

Male Student 2: Likely

Male Student 3: Very likely, although transportation could've been an issue.

Male Student 4: Not likely due to sports

Male Student 5: Not likely

How did participating with the OC Stars contribute to your social development?

Male Student 1: Helped somewhat. It got you out of your comfort zone and performed in front of a large crowd.

Male Student 2: I made friends with some that I usually maybe wouldn't have, and because of them, they made me like OC Stars.

Male Student 3: It grew my social skills by becoming friends with kids I might not have talked to in school.

Male Student 4: I made lifelong friends who also participated in OC Stars.

Male Student 5: Greatly

How did participating with OC Stars contribute to your emotional development?

Male Student 1: Not so much

Male Student 2: No response

Male Student 3: No response

Male Student 4: It helped me experience different environments that I would not have previously.

Male Student 5: Singing makes me happy, so it was such a pleasure to be able to do it at school.

How did participating with OC Stars contribute to your musical development?

Male Student 1: Not so much

Male Student 2: OC Stars for 3rd, 4th, and 7th grade music. Stopped after 7th grade.

Male Student 3: It made me appreciate all types of music and listen to songs I might not have listened to

Male Student 4: It helped me find a new hobby to enjoy.

Male Student 5: It made me the singer and entertainer that I am today.

What music courses did you take following elementary school?

Male Student 1: Band up until 9th grade.

Male Student 2: 7th grade music

Male Student 3: show choir, theater

Male Student 4: guitar and trumpet

Male Student 5: middle school band

Have you been a member of both types of choirs, traditional and show choir?

Male Student 1: No

Male Student 2: No

Male Student 3: Yes

Male Student 4: No

Male Student 5: No

If you have been a member of both types of choirs, which type of choir did you enjoy more?

Male Student 1: No response

Male Student 2: No response

Male Student 3: They both were fun.

Male Student 4: No response

Male Student 5: No response

If you have been a member of both types of choirs, how was the singing different?

Male Student 1: No response

Male Student 2: n/a

Male Student 3: One was more upbeat, and the other was more of a performance.

Male Student 4: No response

Male Student 5: No response

What did you dislike about OC Stars?

Male Student 1: The time that you had to practice, as I didn't want to miss recess. I think it should have been included in class time and not have to have students miss out on outside recess.

Male Student 2: No complaints about OC Stars. I really enjoyed it.

Male Student 3: Took some recess time away.

Male Student 4: Nothing. I loved it.

Male Student 5: Nothing, such a fun group to participate in. I still remember the songs to this day.

Appendix H: Female Parents of Former OC Stars Questions

How likely would your child have joined OC Stars if the group met after school as an extracurricular function?

Female Parent 1: Likely

Female Parent 2: Likely

Female Parent 3: Still the same as held during school.

Female Parent 4: Less likely due to sports conflicts.

Female Parent 5: Participated

How did participating with OC Stars contribute to your child's social development?

Female Parent 1: Made a strong bond with classmates.

Female Parent 2: It allowed her to be with classmates outside of school even though it was a school function.

Female Parent 3: OC Stars was a cohesive group that enjoyed each other. They enjoyed performing together and became better friends outside of their group activities.

Female Parent 4: They enjoyed it in part because almost all of their friends were also members.

Female Parent 5: They both loved it.

How did participating with OC Stars contribute to your child's emotional development?

Female Parent 1: Built confidence.

Female Parent 2: It helped build self-esteem.

Female Parent 3: Instilled more confidence in herself.

Female Parent 4: Being a member made them step outside their comfort zone, especially my son.

Female Parent 5: Loved it.

How did participating with OC Stars contribute to your child's musical development?

Female Parent 1: Developed a love for music.

Female Parent 2: It allowed her to experiment with singing and dancing to see if this was a route she wanted to pursue.

Female Parent 3: She played an instrument and has always enjoyed music.

Female Parent 4: Both of my children went on to play a musical instrument at BIS, and my daughter was a member of the drama club in middle school.

Female Parent 5: Confidence.

What music courses did your child take following elementary school?

Female Parent 1: Music classes through intermediate school, then nothing more.

Female Parent 2: She played in the band at Intermediate school.

Female Parent 3: Music class at the intermediate school.

Female Parent 4: Band in the intermediate school.

Female Parent 5: Trumpet.

Appendix I: Male Parents of Former OC Stars Questions

How likely would your child or children have joined OC Stars if the group met after school, as an extracurricular function, versus meeting twice a week during the school day?

Male Parent 1: I have no idea.

Male Parent 2: Probably not likely. Too many other activities after school.

Male Parent 3: Unlikely

Male Parent 4: Less likely

How did participating with OC Stars contribute to your child's social development?

Male Parent 1: No response

Male Parent 2: No response

Male Parent 3: No response

Male Parent 4: in a positive way

How did participating with OC Stars contribute to your child's or children's emotional development?

Male Parent 1: Built confidence.

Male Parent 2: We made him see through his commitment even though he didn't want to continue part of the way through.

Male Parent 3: He enjoyed the group atmosphere.

Male Parent 4: No effect

How did participating with OC Stars contribute to your child's or children's musical development?

Male Parent 1: Developed a love for music and performing.

Male Parent 2: Played an instrument at the intermediate school but was not involved in any other musical activities.

Male Parent 3: He became more aware of music.

Male Parent 4: Big time, increased confidence in singing in front of people and performing.

What music courses did your child or children take following elementary school?

Male Parent 1: Chorus in intermediate school.

Male Parent 2: 5th and 6th-grade band.

Male Parent 3: Music

Male Parent 4: Participated in intermediate school and middle school band and also had private instrument lessons for saxophone, drums, and guitar. He started a band with three other members in high school, played original music and cover tunes, and performed in Ocean City. He currently plays in an original trio band.