Liberty University

School of Music

Primary General Music: Trauma-Informed Instruction in Title I Schools in Post-Pandemic Georgia

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Contents

Abstract

Despite growing evidence of the need for trauma-informed teaching practices in schools, most music educators have limited training or knowledge of trauma-informed teaching strategies. The need for trauma-informed teaching has grown due to many students and teachers having lived through the collective trauma experience of social isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Inherently social in nature, music classes are an ideal setting to address the unique needs of students who have experienced trauma. Children living in low socio-economic settings are especially vulnerable due to the already increased likelihood of experiencing adverse events that may cause trauma such as child abuse, neglect, incarceration of parental figures, and the presence of domestic violence in the home. This qualitative study examined the benefits of trauma-informed instruction in Title I school primary music programs in Georgia, particularly those that would be useful in meeting the needs exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic of primary-level music students. Findings of this study may help music educators at varying levels and concentrations as well as educators in other specialty areas gain a deeper understanding of trauma and trauma-informed instruction and implement teaching techniques that will address the needs of their own students.

Chapter One - Introduction

Introduction

In the educational community, trauma-informed teaching stands out as both a growing and necessary movement.[1] This pedagogical movement stems from the need to address the "hidden epidemic" of childhood trauma affecting children of all ages in the United States.[2] The description of childhood trauma as epidemic in proportion indicates a need for intervention and support. In an academic setting, this includes specialized instructional methods to address needs and behaviors associated with trauma that fall outside of the scope of traditional strategies. Music educators are in a unique position to incorporate strategies of trauma-informed teaching. This distinctive opportunity exists because music educators usually teach more students than general classroom educators and often for consecutive or multiple years.[3] Additionally, students may feel more comfortable in music classes due to music's unique emotional attributes.[4] These attributes may create a familiar and comfortable environment for students in which to develop their coping skills. Acknowledging the growing need for trauma-informed teaching and the increased presence of opportunity for such intervention in music, music educators can impact the lives of many children positively using trauma-informed teaching strategies.

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[1] Peyton Barsel and Jen Curt, "Trauma-Informed Schools," accessed June 10, 2023, https://www.ctipp.org/post/report-trauma-informed-schools.

[2] Bessel Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015), 151.

[3] Tiger Robison and Joshua Russell, "Factors Impacting Elementary General Music Teachers' Career Decisions: Systemic Issues of Student Race, Teacher Support, and Family," *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 69 no. 4 (2022): 425.

[4] Lauren Ryals, "A Case Study of One Trauma-Informed Music Education Program," PhD diss., Temple University, 2022. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, https://go.openathens.net/redirector/liberty.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertatio ns-theses/case-study-one-trauma-informed-music-education/docview/2667740377/se-2.

Background of Topic

An understanding of Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACEs, is necessary to understand the roots of childhood trauma. Identified in a study by Vincent Felitti et al., common ACEs include domestic violence in the home, substance abuse in the home, parental separation or divorce, presence of mental illness in the home, death of a caregiver or close family member, parental or familial incarceration, emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, and emotional or physical neglect.[5] Other traumatizing experiences have since been identified and include events such as natural disasters, chronic or terminal illness of family, military deployment of caregivers, exposure to war, homelessness, and bullying.[6] It is important to note that poverty is not considered an ACE, although it does increase the likelihood of ACE exposure.[7] The number of ACEs that a child is exposed to over time has more of an impact than the severity of the traumatic event.[8] These experiences build over time to cause what is known as complex trauma.[9]

Jennifer Bashant writes that "trauma is defined as an event or situation that exceeds one's ability to cope."[10] Young children are more vulnerable to trauma because they do not yet possess adequate coping skills for adverse experiences. Without the ability to cope, exposure to ACEs turns into trauma which leads to significant effects on children's well-being emotionally,

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[5] Vincent Felitti, Robert Anda, Dale Nordenberg, Williamson, David, Alison Spitz, Valerie Edwards, Mary Koss, and James Marks, "The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study: Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults," *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 14, no. 4 (1998): 250.

[6] Kristin Souers and Peter Hall, *Fostering Resilient Learners: Strategies for Creating a Trauma-Sensitive Classroom* (Alexandria, Virginia: ASCD, 2016), 17.

[7] Ibid., 18.

[8] Ibid., 20.

[9] Erdman, Colker, and Winter, *Trauma & Young Children*, 17.

[10] Bashant, *Building a Trauma-Informed, Compassionate Classroom,* 3.

physically, and academically. According to Sarah Erdman, Laura Colker, and Elizabeth Winter, "early trauma may lead to documented social and emotional difficulties, such as feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, low self-concept, poor social skills, anxiety, depression, and pessimism. Physically, trauma may interfere with present growth and development and predispose children to lifelong health challenges."[11] Higher ACE scores are linked to health problems such as frequent childhood illness, obesity, asthma, and speech impairments in children.[12] Additionally, childhood trauma has a noticeable impact on children's learning, as it has been established that "ACEs have a powerful negative effect on students' readiness to learn, leading to the "triple whammy" of school troubles in attendance, behavior, and coursework (the ABCs)."[13]

Trauma adversely affects behavior through what is known as maladaptive, or nonadaptive, self-regulation strategies. When students do not have the coping skills to self-regulate their emotions, they may inadvertently turn to nonadaptive strategies which are behaviors that have a negative impact on the individual's self, others, or both.[14] Some examples of nonadaptive strategies include smoking, drinking, and using drugs.[15] These are, however, unlikely to be the types of nonadaptive behavior young students are exhibiting in a music classroom. Instead, nonadaptive behaviors of young children may include running out of the

[11] Erdman, Colker, and Winter, *Trauma & Young Children*, 44.

[12] Souers and Hall, *Fostering Resilient Learners*, 21.

[13] Ibid., 20.

[14] Bashant, *Building a Trauma-Informed, Compassionate Classroom*, 4.

[15] Ibid.

classroom, defiant behavior, arguing, cursing, physical aggression, avoiding schoolwork, shutting down, or even daydreaming.[16]

In place of nonadaptive strategies, which do not serve a student or those around them well, are adaptive strategies. Common adaptive self-regulation strategies include meditation, exercise, or reading before bed.[17] For younger children, adaptive strategies may look like taking deep breaths, listening to calm music, going for a walk, or speaking with an adult they trust.[18] While students may not be able to stop music instruction and begin exercising or reading a book in the middle of class, this study seeks to find ways to incorporate teaching and utilizing adaptive strategies during music instruction that fit within the music curriculum to effectively address student needs in a manner unique to music teaching and learning.

The trauma-informed teaching movement grew out of trauma-informed care, a practice in the medical field, and developed as part of a response to research in the field of trauma which began with the prevalence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among military veterans.[19] A significant turning point for individuals suffering from trauma occurred in the 1980s when Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder was officially recognized as a clinical diagnosis by the American Psychiatric Association.[20] As more research was conducted, the prevalence of childhood trauma was realized, and Congress approved the development of the National Child Traumatic Stress

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[16] Bashant, *Building a Trauma-Informed, Compassionate Classroom,* 5.

[17] Ibid., 4.

[18] Ibid., 5.

[19] Barnard College, "Trauma-Informed Pedagogy," accessed June 24, 2023, https://barnard.edu/trauma-informed-pedagogy.

[20] Shelley Thomas, Shantel Crosby, and Judi Vanderhaar, "Trauma-Informed Practices in Schools Across Two Decades: An Interdisciplinary Review of Research," *Review of Research in Education* 43 no. 1 (2019): 423.

Network, or NCTSN, in 2000.[21] A federally funded organization, the NCTSN is a "child mental health service initiative designed to raise the standard of care and increase access to services for traumatized children and their families across the U.S."[22] Since then, advancements in trauma-informed care and attention to childhood traumatic experiences have increased and led to the emerging development of trauma-informed teaching practices.[23]

The use of trauma-informed approaches in education has already seen positive results. In 2017, a struggling Texas school district discovered that 76% of its students reported traumatic experiences and subsequently implemented a district-wide trauma-informed training initiative for all staff.[24] As a result, in the same school year, "suspensions decreased from an average of 445 a year to just nineteen, the school passed its state exams for the first time, teacher retention dramatically increased, and the school culture became calmer."[25] The success of the Texas school district is not an isolated case. Other schools and districts have reported similar results. A school district in Hawaii initiated a five-year plan to incorporate trauma-informed strategies.[26] In five years, the area schools reported a reduction of behavioral incidences from 2,260 to a single occurrence and reduced out-of-school suspension rates from 2,277 to zero.[27] While bullying decreased, graduation rates and early college enrollment increased, and there was also a fifty

[21] The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, "Trauma-Informed Schools for Children in K-12: A System Framework," accessed June 24, 2024, https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/trauma_informed_schools_for_children_in_k-12_a_systems_framework.pdf.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Thomas, Crosby, and Vanderhaar, "Trauma-Informed Practices," 422.

[24] Barsel and Curt, "Trauma-Informed Schools."

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

percent decrease in teacher vacancies.[28] Examples such as these show that trauma-informed teaching practices have the potential to create meaningful positive change within classrooms and educational communities.

Trauma-informed teaching is particularly important for young children living in poverty. The children most at risk for suffering lasting effects of trauma are those living in low socio-economic circumstances.[29] This includes children attending Title I schools which serve high percentages of students living in poverty.[30] Because of the higher-than-average percentage of student poverty present in Title I schools, trauma-informed teaching has the potential to make a significant, lasting impact on the well-being of students suffering from trauma. Consisting of kindergarten through second-grade students, Title I primary schools serve some of the youngest public-school students living in low socio-economic backgrounds. Young students are particularly vulnerable to the effects of trauma on education because their entire schooling is based on the groundwork and knowledge acquired at the primary level. To complicate the situation further, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the issue of childhood trauma by causing "additional stress, trauma, loss, and adversity, and compound[ing] the impact of certain traumatic experiences."[31] Already at higher risk, young children living in poverty are more susceptible to the post-pandemic effect of compounded traumatic experiences and are likely to have an increased need for strategies to address these issues in the classroom.

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[28] Barsel and Curt, "Trauma-Informed Schools."

[29] Sarah Erdman, Laura Colker, and Elizabeth Winter, *Trauma & Young Children: Teaching Strategies to Support & Empower* (Washington: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2020), 23.

[30] U.S. Department of Education, "Program Description," accessed June 25, 2023. https://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/index.html.

[31] The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, "The Traumatic Impact of COVID-19 on Children and Families: Current Perspectives from the NCTSN," Accessed June 1, 2023, https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/special-resource/traumatic-impact-covid-childrenfamilies.pdf.

Significance of the Problem

In 2022, the state of Georgia ranked thirty-eighth for overall child well-being in the United States.[32] Across the state, there were 9,843 confirmed cases of child abuse and neglect.[33] Abuse and neglect are only two of many Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACEs, known to cause trauma in children. ACEs can severely affect the lives of children into adulthood, including issues with "poor mental and physical health, lower academic achievements, and substance abuse."[34] Approximately three in five adults in Georgia confirm experiencing at least one ACE during their childhood, including experiences such as incarceration of a caregiver or family member, physical or sexual abuse, domestic violence, emotional abuse, mental illness present in the home, and divorce.[35]

Experiences that may lead to childhood trauma increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. In a 2021 study of high school students in the United States, three of four students reported experiencing at least one ACE during the pandemic.[36] The National Childhood Traumatic Network describes how the COVID-19 pandemic "disrupt[ed] feelings of safety and protection for many children and families, leading to elevated stress responses and potentially compounding the impact of other stressors."[37] With staggering numbers of students subjected to

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[32] Prevent Child Abuse Georgia, "Georgia Child Abuse & Neglect Statistics," accessed June 1, 2023, https://abuse.publichealth.gsu.edu/files/2023/04/Stat-fact-sheet-2023.pdf.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Voices for Georgia's Children, "ACEs and Childhood Stress," accessed June 1, 2023, https://georgiavoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/ACEs-and-Childhood-Stress.pdf.

[36] Kayla Anderson et al., "Adverse Childhood Experiences During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Associations with Poor Mental Health and Suicidal Behaviors Among High School Students — Adolescent Behaviors and Experiences Survey," *Weekly* 71 no. 41 (2021): 1301.

[37] National Child Traumatic Stress Network, "The Traumatic Impact of COVID-19."

ACEs and at risk of the effects of trauma, trauma-informed teaching practices have become a necessary skill for Georgia music educators and their students.

Trauma causes negative effects on students' physical health, emotional well-being, and academic progress because of the changes that occur in the brain due to toxic stress. The part of the brain that controls emotions physically grows larger when subjected to toxic amounts of stress:

> When a student experiences toxic stress, the amygdala actually grows in size and becomes more and more ready to jump in and take over. You may have had a student who seems to explode or become aggressive for no apparent reason, but what is actually happening is the student, in a constant state of hyperarousal, is triggered very easily. Anything can be a trigger, and because the student already has a high level of cortisol and a larger amygdala ready and waiting to take over, the challenging behavior occurs very quickly and very intensely.[38]

These seemingly impulsive behaviors may seem inappropriate or unprompted to individuals observing from the outside, but they can be traced back to the lack of coping skills children have in which to deal with trauma. According to Jessica Minahan, "One way to understand these reactions is to think of the student as a soda can, and events that may trigger their trauma stress as shaking that can. We can't tell by looking if the can was recently shaken, but if it was, opening the can results in an unexpected explosive, messy reaction."[39] This can come across to the observer as "aggression, avoidance, shutting down, or other off-putting behaviors" that often result in "misunderstandings, ineffective interventions, and missed learning time."[40]

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[38] Jennifer Bashant, *Building a Trauma-Informed, Compassionate Classroom: Strategies and Activities to Reduce Challenging Behavior, Improve Learning Outcomes, and Increase Student Engagement* (Eau Claire, WI: PESI, 2020), 12.

[39] Jessica Minahan, "Trauma-Informed Teaching Strategies," *Educational Leadership* 77, no. 2 (2019): 31.

[40] Ibid., 31.

While many adults and caregivers believe that younger children are more resilient and less prone to trauma, this is simply not the case. In contrast, "young children experience trauma more often, and are more vulnerable to its harmful effects, than older children."[41] Exposure to traumatic events "can prevent a child from focusing attention, sequencing thought, and solving problems" which leaves our youngest learners at significant risk of falling behind in school.[42] In addition to academic problems due to impaired cognitive functioning, student academics are affected by behavioral challenges deriving from traumatic experiences. Young students are often unable to articulate the reasons behind challenging behaviors and have little to no coping skills for dealing with heightened emotional responses resulting in elevated levels of expulsion even at the pre-kindergarten level.[43] High levels of school suspensions among young learners suggest limited effectiveness in traditional classroom management strategies. Popular methods such as "Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) and Classroom Dojo, [use] extrinsic rewards and punishments in order to encourage or discourage particular behaviors. However, extrinsically motivating a student to be compliant will only have a short-term, temporary impact, if it has any at all."[44] Considering the limitations of current methods, it appears that new strategies are necessary to address the unique behavioral issues caused by trauma.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to identify the potential benefits of trauma-informed general music instruction while also determining which trauma-informed approaches may benefit

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[41] Bartlett, "Trauma-Informed Practices in Early Childhood Education," 24.

[42] Erdman, Colker, and Winter, *Trauma & Young Children*, 61.

[43] Ibid, 61.

[44] Bashant, *Building a Trauma-Informed, Compassionate Classroom,* 18.

primary-level music students. The study examined the needs of rural Title I primary school music programs in Georgia. The researcher utilized a qualitative phenomenological method for the study. Qualitative designs are useful for answering open-ended questions.[45] Qualitative research also examines "the essential character or nature of something, not necessarily the quantity."[46] A phenomenological approach was the best approach for answering the research questions because this approach "is a design of inquiry coming from philosophy and psychology in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants. This description culminates in the essence of the experiences of several individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon."[47] In the case of this study, participants described the impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on music education students by focusing on changes observed in student needs and behaviors in primary music classrooms in low-socioeconomic schools in Georgia.

Phenomenological research typically utilizes interviews, so the researcher collected data through open-ended interviews.[48] The questions were thoughtfully crafted to address the research questions. Before the interviews were conducted, an application was made to the Internal Review Board (IRB). [49] The Internal Review Board approved the study and found it to

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[45] John Creswell and J. David Creswell. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th Ed., (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE, 2018), 4.

[46] Carol Roberts and Laura Hyatt, *The Dissertation Journey: A Practical and Comprehensive Guide to Planning, Writing, and Defending Your Dissertation* (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2018), 142.

[47]Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 13.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Roberts and Hyatt, *The Dissertation Journey*, 14.

be exempt from further IRB review. The interviews were conducted at a time that was convenient to respondents to increase the likelihood of response rate."[50]

The researcher purposefully selected the population sample utilizing a convenience sample. Non-probability, or convenience, sampling is common in qualitative studies.[51] The researcher used a convenience sample because "in qualitative research . . . emphasis [is] placed on details of the setting and/or situation, the participants, and rich descriptions of the participant's experiences."[52] To best answer the research question, only Title I primary school teachers who worked before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic were chosen to participate in the interview. The researcher did not interview teachers who did not work during the pandemic in order to obtain the most relevant data. There are fifty-seven Title I primary schools in the state of Georgia.[53] Qualitative studies typically use smaller sample sizes than quantitative studies.[54] For this reason, the researcher narrowed the selection down to a convenience sampling of five music educators at primary schools in central, rural Georgia in the counties surrounding the researcher.

The researcher identified potential participants as music educators at the neighboring county schools through the corresponding school websites. Participants were recruited through e-mail communication, and all participants agreed to voluntary participation. A consent form was not necessary due to IRB exemption. Qualifications of participants included teaching general

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[50] Roberts and Hyatt, *The Dissertation Journey*, 152.

[51] Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 150.

[52] Roberts and Hyatt, *The Dissertation Journey*, 147.

[53] Georgia Department of Education, "2022 List of Georgia Title I Schools," accessed June 11, 2023, https://www.gadoe.org/School-Improvement/Federal-Programs/Documents/Title%20I%2C%20Part%20A/Other%20Resources%20FY22/FY22%20Title%20I%20Schools%20-%20SWP%20and%20TA%2010-7-21.pdf

[54] Roberts and Hyatt, *The Dissertation Journey*, 14.

music at a primary school, teaching in the selected geographic area, and teaching primary music before, during, and after the pandemic. Additional qualifications included being a highly qualified music educator with a valid, unexpired Georgia educator certificate in music. The researcher verified certification of all music educators through the Georgia Professional Standards Commission website.

The first step in the research plan was to conduct a thorough review of the literature pertaining to trauma-informed music teaching. Through this review, the researcher discovered a gap in the literature. While there are many sources on trauma-informed teaching in the general education setting, there is little research available on trauma-informed teaching in the music education setting. The gap discovered was in trauma-informed teaching at the primary school level for general music classes in Title I schools. Next, the research questions, hypothesis, and methodology were determined. The researcher collected the data for the study through telephone interviews utilizing open-ended questions.

After the researcher collected all the data from the interviews, it was prepared for analysis. Five steps were used in the analysis process. John and David Creswell recommend analyzing qualitative data in the following order: organize and prepare the data for analysis, read or look at all the data, start coding all of the data, generate a description and themes, and represent the description and themes.[55] The data was then interpreted by "summarizing the overall findings, comparing the findings to the literature, discussing a personal view of the findings, and stating limitations and future research."[56] Limitations of the study as well as

[55] Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 193-194.

[56] Ibid., 198.

validity, reliability, and suggestions for future research were considered.[57] Finally, the researcher wrote a qualitative report to summarize the study and its findings. The report outlined themes and findings from the data in a comprehensive narrative which utilized detailed descriptions provided by the interview responses.[58]

Research Questions

The collective traumatic event of the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the impact of ACEs on children.[59] The subsequent impulsive and reactive behaviors have been unresponsive to traditional methods and may be better served through trauma-informed approaches.[60] The gap in the literature indicated a need for more research from a music education perspective in the area of trauma-informed teaching. Based on the resulting behavioral needs brought on by the pandemic and the lack of information available and relevant to the specialty area of music education, the study sought to find the answers to the following questions:

Research Question 1: What are the benefits of trauma-informed instruction in Title I school music programs in rural Georgia for kindergarten through second-grade students?

Research Question 2: What trauma-informed teaching approaches would be useful in meeting the needs exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic of primary music students?

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[57] Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design,* 198.

[58] Ibid., 202.

[59] The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, "The Traumatic Impact of COVID-19 on Children and Families: Current Perspectives from the NCTSN," Accessed June 1, 2023, https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/special-resource/traumatic-impact-covid-childrenfamilies.pdf.

[60] Bashant, *Building a Trauma-Informed, Compassionate Classroom,* 18.

Theoretical Framework

To properly frame the study, it was appropriate to examine the tenets of trauma-informed care, trauma-informed pedagogy, and trauma-informed music education. Trauma-informed care is "a term used to describe a broad range of practices and policies for promoting the well-being of children, adolescents, and adults who have experienced trauma."[61] A healing and strengths-based approach, the goal of trauma-informed care is for individuals to heal from trauma and thrive.[62] Simply seeking solutions to problematic behaviors is not enough, but caring for children as whole individuals to promote emotional healing is key.[63] Trauma-informed care is characterized by responses that include four facets: realize, recognize, respond, and seek. Individuals utilizing a trauma-informed response should realize the widespread impact, recognize signs and symptoms, respond with appropriate trauma-informed practices, and seek to avoid re-traumatization.[64] Additionally, there are six general principles of trauma-informed care, including safety; trustworthiness and transparency; peer support; collaboration and mutuality; empowerment; voice and choice; and cultural, historical, and gender issues.[65]

Trauma-informed pedagogy utilizes the principles of trauma-informed care within a classroom or academic setting. Trauma-informed teaching utilizes "social and emotional supports to help children learn to self-calm, regulate their emotions, and focus on learning. It is

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[61] Jessica Bartlett, "Trauma-Informed Practices in Early Childhood Education," *Zero to Three* 41, no. 3 (2021): 27.

[62] Erdman, Colker, and Winter, *Trauma & Young Children*, 15.

[63] Ibid., 14.

[64] Barnard College, "Trauma-Informed Pedagogy."

[65] Erdman, Colker, and Winter, *Trauma & Young Children*, 132-133.

rooted in relationships and trust and emphasizes safety, predictability, and consistency."[66] General practices for teachers include being mindful of power dynamics, empathic, flexible, and seeking ways to promote safety and trust in the classroom.[67] Trauma-informed teaching is more appropriately utilized as strategies planned in advance to anticipate teaching children with trauma rather than subsequent accommodations.[68] It would be unreasonable to assume that educators always have detailed knowledge of each student's home life and personal experiences. Planning ahead to utilize trauma-informed teaching strategies with all students ensures that student needs are consistently being met in the classroom regardless of the educator's knowledge of personal circumstances or experiences in a child's life.

Lastly, it was also relevant to consider a case study conducted by Lauren Ryals on Trauma-Informed Music Instruction, or TIME. The case study investigated an independent, urban Title I school middle school music program in the Northeastern United States.[69] Through interviews, observations, artifacts, and relevant literature on trauma and trauma-informed practices, Ryals developed an operational definition of TIME consisting of three qualifications:

> (a) Music teachers who develop an affirmative and proactive perspective on student growth through individualized instruction and foster a positive student-teacher relationship, (b) classroom experiences that balance students' self-selected activities and that pose encouraging and empowering challenges to students, and (c) curriculum design emphasizing students' preferences and lived experiences, incorporating opportunities for students to connect with each other in a safe learning environment.[70]

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[66] Erdman, Colker, and Winter, *Trauma & Young Children*, 50.

[67] Barnard College, "Trauma-Informed Pedagogy."

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ryals, "A Case Study of One Trauma-Informed Music Education Program," iii.

[70] Ibid., 112.

In addition to the principles of trauma-informed care and trauma-informed pedagogy, the elements described in the operational definition of TIME by Ryals contribute to the overall theoretical framework of this study.

Significance of the Study

The study benefited the literature theoretically, empirically, and in practical application. Theoretically, the study expanded the current understanding of trauma-informed teaching by exploring new applications and possibilities through the lens of primary general music. Empirically, the study helped address the gap in the literature by examining solutions to the hurdles associated with childhood trauma that may hinder or limit growth of music learning. The study sought to provide practical use in the primary general music classroom by gaining a more thorough understanding of the challenges music educators are facing and determining tools educators may use to provide support for student needs and address escalating behavior issues in the classroom.

While this study focused on the benefits of trauma-informed teaching in primary general music classes, its value could be extended to music educators of all levels and specialties. This study may also be relevant to other educators and those serving children in schools, such as school administrators. Because it deals with children, students and their families may also be interested in learning techniques to help deal with the impact and challenges of childhood trauma.

Definition of Terms

Throughout the dissertation, the following definitions of terms will be used.

Adaptive Strategies: Adaptive strategies are strategies for self-regulation that have either a neutral or positive effect on an individual and/or those around them.[71]

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE): Adverse Childhood Experiences are events occurring in childhood that are potentially traumatic.[72]

Compassion Fatigue: A type of secondary trauma that may occur in adults who work closely with children who have suffered trauma, such as social workers and teachers.[73]

Complex Trauma: Complex trauma refers to the exposure to multiple traumatic events that cause long-term effects as a result of the exposure.[74]

Nonadaptive Strategies: Nonadaptive strategies are strategies for self-regulation that have a negative effect on an individual and/or those around them.[75]

Secondary Trauma: Secondary trauma is trauma that occurs from hearing about another individual's trauma.[76]

Trauma: Trauma is an "event or situation that exceeds one's ability to cope."[77]

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[71] Bashant, *Building a Trauma-Informed, Compassionate Classroom*, 4.

[72] Erdman, Colker, and Winter, *Trauma & Young Children*, 19.

[73] Ibid., 18.

[74] The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, "Complex Trauma," accessed June 21, 2023. https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types/complex-trauma.

[75] Bashant, *Building a Trauma-Informed, Compassionate Classroom*, 4.

[76] The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, "Secondary Traumatic Stress," accessed June 21, 2023. https://www.nctsn.org/trauma-informed-care/secondary-traumatic-stress#:~:text=Secondary%20traumatic%20stress%20is%20the,disasters%2C%20and%20other%20adverse%20events.

[77] Bashant, *Building a Trauma-Informed, Compassionate Classroom*, 3.

Trauma-Informed Teaching: Trauma-informed teaching is a pedagogical practice that encompasses elements of trauma-informed care. Educators "recognize and respond to the impact of traumatic stress" within their classroom.[78]

Chapter Summary

The experience of living through a pandemic resulted in adverse outcomes regarding the emotional well-being of many children. The compounding effect of the pandemic, in addition to already present ACEs, led to an increase in the number of children suffering the effects of trauma. The statistics regarding childhood abuse, neglect, and overall poor well-being of children in Georgia indicated a need for intervention. The lack of coping skills to deal with trauma among young students brought about an increase in nonadaptive self-regulation strategies. This resulted in challenging behaviors in the classroom that did not respond to conventional classroom management and discipline which further demonstrated the need for trauma-informed teaching.

Music educators need practical strategies to manage the growing emotional and behavioral needs of students. There was little information in the literature regarding the utilization of trauma-informed teaching in a music education setting. This qualitative phenomenological study utilized open-ended interviews to address the gap in the literature. The study examined the needs of low socio-economic primary school music programs in rural Georgia, identified potential benefits of trauma-informed teaching in music, and recommended approaches for practical use. The results added new applications to existing literature and have practical applications for post-pandemic music instruction.

[78] The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, "Trauma Informed Organizational Assessment," accessed June 21, 2023. https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types/complex-trauma.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

A comprehensive review of the literature is essential for designing a study that will contribute to the literature and increases the probability that a study will elicit notable results.[79] Examining and analyzing the literature ideally occurs in early stages of study development.[80] The literature review for this study will begin with a broader scope and then narrow into resources most closely related to the topic. On a large scale, trauma-informed teaching will be examined as well as relevant literature on social-emotional learning. From there, the focus will narrow into specific implications of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in relation to the topic and culminate in literature centering distinctly in the field of music education.

Trauma-Informed Teaching

Trauma-informed teaching prioritizes a "conversation over consequence" approach in place of "just suspend mentality."[81] A trauma-informed classroom may include supports such as brain breaks, available snacks, naps, flexible seating, safe spaces, mindfulness, outdoor walks, deep breathing, dimming lights, background music, and using quiet voices.[82] Utilizing these techniques creates a warm and safe environment for students where they are able to feel part of a classroom community in which they can connect with their peers and their teachers.[83] When triggers occur, teacher responses to student dysregulation include remaining calm, keeping

[79] Roberts and Hyatt, *The Dissertation Journey*, 113.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Carrie Wall, "Relationship Over Reproach: Fostering Resilience by Embracing a Trauma-Informed Approach to Elementary Education," *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma* 30 no. 1, (2021): 130.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Courtney Wiest-Stevenson and Cindy Lee, "Trauma-Informed Schools," *Journal of Evidence-Informed Social Work* 13 no. 5 (2016): 501.

doorways clear, and providing additional physical space between themselves and a child who is experiencing escalating emotions.[84] Schools may also consider implementing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, or PBIS, along with coping skills and relaxation or stress management techniques.[85]

Trauma-informed educational frameworks can be easily implemented in schools by reframing systems that are already in place such as PBIS.[86] PBIS, or Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support, is a three-tiered framework utilizing positive and proactive disciplinary practices to improve classroom management and student behavior.[87] PBIS improves school climate by reducing challenging behaviors and suspensions by identifying and defining behavioral expectations, modeling and providing positive feedback on expectations, and recognizing students who meet those expectations.[88] Unfortunately, "PBIS does not address the root cause of negative classroom behavior or the impact of complex trauma on the developing brain. . . . Instead, a trauma-sensitive school is needed to address the underlying causes of inappropriate classroom behavior."[89] Components of PBIS that are already present in schools can be modified into a trauma-informed framework.[90] For example, PBIS school leadership teams

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[84] Wall, "Relationship Over Reproach," 131.

[85] Wiest-Stevenson and Lee, "Trauma-Informed Schools," 500.

[86] Jacqui Plumb, Kelly Bush, and Sonia Kersevich, "Trauma-Sensitive Schools: An Evidence-Based Approach," *School Social Work Journal* 40, no. 2 (2016): 47.

[87] Anthony James et al., "Longitudinal Disciplinary and Achievement Outcomes Associated with School-wide PBIS Implementation Level," *Psychology in the Schools 56*, no. 9 (2019): 1512.

[88] Ibid., 1513.

[89] Plumb, Bush, and Kersevich, "Trauma-Sensitive Schools: An Evidence-Based Approach," 54.

[90] Ibid., 47.

can become the school "trauma champions."[91] Trauma champions ensure that school PBIS efforts are both trauma-informed and evidence-based.[92] While PBIS does address some of the disruptive classroom behaviors, trauma-informed approaches "break the intergenerational cycle of trauma by providing positive coping skills and adequate support to students and teachers."[93]

To create a trauma-sensitive school culture, schools must assess current school culture and evaluate discipline policies.[94] Discipline policies should be logical and respective.[95] Schools should avoid punitive consequences, humiliation, and physical measures and work on building healing relationships with students.[96] Next, schools should identify and implement a Social-Emotional Learning curriculum and create a school crisis plan.[97] Schools should provide learning for staff to become trauma-informed and learn how to maximize "caregiver capacity."[98] Maximizing caregiver capacity means encouraging teachers to practice self-care through activities such as proper nutrition, physical fitness, spending time with friends, and engaging in activities they find relaxing to manage the stress of working with traumatized children.[99] Additionally, schools can support educators by providing trauma tool kits for classroom safe

[91] Plumb, Bush, and Kersevich, "Trauma-Sensitive Schools: An Evidence-Based Approach," 47.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Ibid., 54.

[94] Ibid., 49.

[95] Ibid., 51.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Ibid., 52.

[99] Ibid.

spaces to address hypo and hyper-arousal in students through activating or calming sensory activities.[100]

In a qualitative study, Carrie Wall examined a school in which trauma-informed approaches were used to support students and foster resilience.[101] Through questionnaires and interviews, teachers at the school indicated observing that "trauma impedes holistic development, resulting in difficulties with emotional regulation and academic functioning."[102] The school in the study began using a trauma-informed approach to meet student needs which "emphasize[d] cultivating relationships, sharing control, addressing issues promptly, providing social-emotional instruction, and embracing a growth mind-set."[103] As part of the trauma-informed plan, the school also prioritized fostering social-emotional learning and a growth mindset.[104] Programs teaching skills such as conflict resolution, problem-solving skills, decision-making, and pro-social skills were utilized.[105] The school-wide trauma-informed approach led to an increase in test scores, a decrease in emotional dysregulation, and improvements in confidence, self-advocacy, and relationships.[106]

Healthy Environments and Response to Trauma in School (HEARTS) Program is a three-tier, school-wide program developed by the University of California to support traumatized

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[100] Plumb, Bush, and Kersevich, "Trauma-Sensitive Schools: An Evidence-Based Approach," 52.

[101] Wall, "Relationship Over Reproach," 118.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Ibid., 132.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Ibid., 118.

students.[107] The mission of HEARTS is to "collaborate with schools and school districts to promote school success for trauma-impacted children and youth by creating more trauma-informed, safe and supportive environments that foster resilience and wellness for all (children/youth and adults alike) in the school community."[108] Tier 1 facilitates safe and supportive changes to the school climate.[109] Tier 2 works on developing staff's ability to support student needs, and Tier 3 includes dedicated interventions for traumatized students.[110] The goals of the program include increasing student wellness and school success, increasing staff use and knowledge of trauma-informed strategies, promoting staff wellness, and reducing racial disparities in disciplinary practices.[111]

The quantitative study covered four schools and utilized surveys to collect data.[112] Respondents reported increases in knowledge of trauma-informed practices, increase in use of trauma-informed practices, academic benefits to students, and improvements in student attendance.[113] Researchers concluded that the three-tiered, trauma-informed approach of HEARTS was effective in mitigating the effects of trauma in school settings.[114] The HEARTS

[107] Joyce Dorado et al., "Healthy Environments and Response to Trauma in Schools (HEARTS): A Whole-School, Multi-level, Prevention and Intervention Program for Creating Trauma-Informed, Safe and Supportive Schools," *School Mental Health* 8, no. 1 (2016):163.

[108] Ibid., 165

[109] Ibid., 163.

[110] Ibid.

[111] Ibid., 165.

[112] Ibid. 167.

[113] Ibid.

[114] Ibid.

study also indicated that student behavior improved due to trauma-informed practices and reported a significant decrease in physical altercations, office referrals, and suspensions.[115]

Trauma-Informed Elementary Schools, or TIES, is another trauma-informed program aimed at providing support for children suffering from trauma and chronic stress.[116] TIES is based on the ARC (Attachment, Self-Regulation, and Competency) trauma-focused intervention framework.[117] The ARC framework consists of building blocks related to the three core domains. The building blocks of competency consist of "executive functions" and "self-development and identity."[118] Self-Regulation consists of "affect identification," "modulation," and "affect expression."[119] Lastly, the building blocks of Attachment are "caregiver affect management," "attunement," "consistent response," and "routines and rituals."[120] The TIES program begins with teacher training on ACEs and the ARC framework, and all classrooms are a TIES resource liaison for support.[121] The TIES program training "help[s] teachers learn to manage their own reactions; create the sense of safety children need; and help children build the skills needed to understand, manage, and express their own feelings. The training also prepares teachers to identify the characteristics of a traumatically stressed child (for example, hypervigilance, withdrawing, or acting-out behavior) and refer the child for appropriate services."[122] TIES also

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[115] Dorado et al., "Healthy Environments and Response to Trauma in Schools (HEARTS)," 167.

[116] Carrie Rishel et al., "Trauma-Informed Elementary Schools: Evaluation of School-Based Early Intervention for Young Children," *Children & Schools* 41, no. 4 (2019): 239.

[117] Ibid., 241.

[118] Ibid., 242.

[119] Ibid.

[120] Ibid.

[121] Ibid.

[122] Ibid., 242.

provides support to families and caregivers by "validating and normalizing the parental experience, providing psycho-education about trauma and development, emphasizing the importance of the parent-child relationship, and assisting families with accessing further resources."[123] In a quantitative study conducted in West Virginia, 39 classes in 11 schools participated in the TIES program over the course of two school years while 12 classrooms not participating in the program were used as a control group.[124] Compared to baseline tests, students in the classes involved in the TIES program showed significant improvement in emotional support (classroom climate, teacher sensitivity, and regard for student perspectives) and classroom organization (behavior management, productivity, and student-centered instructional learning formats) while the control group declined in both areas.[125]

Jessica Koslouski examined the effect of trauma-informed training on teaching practices in a mixed-methods study at a Northeastern suburban elementary school in the United States.[126] Educators spent three after-school sessions learning about trauma-informed teaching practices, and a small subset of teachers received additional coaching.[127] Trauma-informed professional development focused on "building educators' social and emotional competencies with which to recognize, interpret, and respond to student trauma responses."[128] Data on the intervention was collected through semi-structured interviews and a survey which included both qualitative and

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[123] Rishel et al., "Trauma-Informed Elementary Schools ," 243.

[124] Ibid., 244.

[125] Ibid., 245.

[126] Jessica Koslouski, "Developing Empathy and Support for Students with the "Most Challenging Behaviors: Mixed-methods Outcomes of Professional Development in Trauma-informed Teaching Practices," *Frontiers in Education 7*, no. 1 (2022): 1.

[127] Ibid.

[128] Ibid., 3.

quantitative questions.[129] Six themes emerged from the data analysis, including an increased understanding of the impact of trauma, increased empathy, use of proactive strategies, reassessing teacher interactions with students, increased collaboration among colleagues, and use of self-care strategies.[130] Participants reported increasing their use of proactive strategies such as intentional grouping, providing choices in learning, and increasing attention to building relationships with students.[131]

Due to the professional development educators received on trauma-informed strategies and the increased use of proactive strategies, the researcher also found that there was a decrease in the rate of student suspensions by half.[132] Building meaningful relationships with students, as shown in this study, is imperative. In her book, *Building a Trauma-Informed, Compassionate Classroom: Strategies and Activities to Reduce Challenging Behavior, Improve Learning Outcomes, and Increase Student Engagement,* Jennifer Bashant agrees by stating, "a meaningful connection to just one adult in school has the power to protect a child from many of the negative effects of trauma."[133] The importance of teacher-student and teacher-peer relationships on the success of trauma-informed practices was also one of the key findings in a study by Laurel Puchner and Linda Markowitz.[134]

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[129] Koslouski, "Developing Empathy and Support for Students," 5.

[130] Ibid., 8.

[131] Ibid., 11.

[132] Ibid., 10.

[133] Bashant, *Building a Trauma-Informed, Compassionate Classroom,* ix.

[134] Laurel Puchner, and Linda Markowitz, "Elementary Teachers' Experiences with Trauma-Informed Practice," *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education* 15, no. 4 (2023): 329.

In addition to the importance of building relationships, Puchner and Markowitz found that educators generally support trauma-informed approaches in elementary schools.[135] The qualitative study, conducted in a Midwestern U.S. elementary school, included a team of twelve educators and one intervention specialist who used trauma-informed practices from a program known as Advance.[136] Elements of the program included "trauma-sensitive language, use of comfort corners, understanding each student's triggers, daily check-in and check-out, daily classroom meetings, flexible seating, and restorative practice discipline."[137] Results from interviews conducted after implementing the program resulted in five common themes: majority support for the implementation of trauma-informed practices, the value of trauma-informed communication and collaboration among educators, some resistance to trauma-informed practices among staff, and the role of the pandemic in implementing trauma-informed practices.[138] Letting go of punitive measures to punish students for misbehaving was the primary reason for resistance from a minority of educators who had difficulty accepting the new trauma-informed program in the school.[139]

Teacher preparation and perspective are important considerations for dealing with childhood trauma within an academic setting. Unfortunately, "teacher training programs do not adequately prepare teachers for the demanding job of meeting the social and emotional needs of all students in their classrooms, yet there are students in every classroom who require a high

[135] Puchner and Markowitz, "Elementary Teachers' Experiences with Trauma-Informed Practice," 321.

[136] Ibid., 323.

[137] Ibid.

[138] Ibid., 325-328.

[139] Ibid., 330.

level of behavioral support, and for whom 'traditional approaches to discipline' do not work."[140] Lack of adequate teacher preparation indicates a necessity in education for educators to acquire skills to deal with students' needs that fall outside of the range of traditional approaches. Understanding teacher perspectives on this issue sheds light on areas of both strength and weakness in regard to training and use of trauma-informed strategies.

In a qualitative study by Eva Alisic, semi-structured interviews were utilized to explore teacher perspectives regarding daily support for elementary-aged students after experiencing traumatic events.[141] Twenty-one purposefully selected teachers from thirteen schools indicated in the interviews that their students had experienced a wide range of traumatic events such as loss of a parent, domestic violence, war, fire, and burglary.[142] Participants reported observing challenging behaviors with students who had experienced traumatic events, including withdrawal and "acting out."[143] Four distinct themes emerged from the interviews: "the role of a teacher, finding a balance in answering different needs, a need for more professional knowledge and know-how, and the emotional burden of working with children after trauma."[144] While some educators embraced the role of supporting students' emotional needs, others preferred for school professionals not to stray from their designated specialties (i.e., educators instruct academically while school counselors and psychologists address emotional needs).[145] In general, participants

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[140] Bashant, *Building a Trauma-Informed, Compassionate Classroom,* vii.

[141] Eva Alisic, "Teachers' Perspectives on Providing Support to Children after Trauma: A Qualitative Study," *School Psychology Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (2012): 52.

[142] Ibid., 54.

[143] Ibid.

[144] Ibid.

[145] Ibid., 54.

agreed that it was challenging to balance the needs of the traumatized student while teaching the rest of the class, and most agreed that there was a need for more professional training regarding childhood trauma.[146]

Emily Berger, Katelyn O'Donohue, Chinh La, Gloria Quinones, and Melissa Barnes also conducted a study on educator perspectives. The Australian qualitative study used an ecological trauma-informed care approach to investigate educator's roles in supporting students who experienced trauma.[147] Fourteen early childhood educators in Victoria, Australia participated in semi-structured interviews.[148] Participants described being concerned for both the safety of the child who experienced trauma as well as the children around them and balancing the needs of all students.[149] Compared to the Alisic study, participants described experiencing adverse effects on their own emotional well-being such as emotional exhaustion and burnout.[150] Another finding that mirrored the Alisic study was that participants expressed the need for more information and training on trauma-informed practices to manage challenging behaviors.[151]

In a qualitative study by Kyle Miller, Karen Flint Stipp, and Shamaine Bazemore-Bertrand, researchers conducted a qualitative study concerning pre-service educators' experiences and perceptions of childhood trauma and classroom management in their clinical

[146] Alisic, "Teachers' Perspectives," 55.

[147] Emily Berger, Katelyn O'Donohue, Chinh La, Gloria Quinones, and Melissa Barnes. "Early Childhood Professionals' Perspectives on Dealing with Trauma of Children," *School Mental Health* 15, no. 1 (2023): 302.

[148] Ibid.

[149] Ibid., 305.

[150] Ibid., 306.

[151] Ibid., 307.

placements using a grounded theory methodological approach.[152] Participants included twenty-five pre-service teachers in an elementary education course located in an urban setting in the United States.[153] The findings of the study reflected the findings of the Koslouski study by highlighting the importance of building relationships with students.[154] Miller, Stipp, and Bazemore-Bertrand also noted the importance of trauma-specific professional development as did the study by Alisic and the Berger et al. study.[155]

The theme of self-care also emerged from the Miller, Stipp, and Bazemore-Bertrand study. This included addressing issues related to the emotional burden experienced by teachers in caring for students suffering from trauma.[156] Kristin Souers and Peter Hall also advocated for the importance self-care in their book *Fostering Resilient Learners*. Souers and Hall encourage educators to engage in a self-care routine by caring for their health, engaging in activities they love, building their competence, and practicing gratitude.[157] Compassion fatigue was also a noted concern for educators supporting traumatized students in the Wall study.[158] A supportive network is needed to reduce feelings of isolation and increase feelings of community to promote educator resilience.[159]

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[152] Kyle Miller, Karen Flint Stipp, and Shamaine Bazemore-Bertrand, "Student Trauma, Trauma-informed Teaching, and Self-care in Preservice Teachers' Clinical Experiences," *Teacher Development* 27, no. 1 (2023): 59.

[153] Ibid., 59.

[154] Ibid., 62

[155] Ibid.

[156] Ibid., 69.

[157] Souers and Hall, *Fostering Resilient Learners*, 20.

[158] Wall, "Relationship Over Reproach," 135

[159] Ibid.

Social-Emotional Learning

On the subject of trauma, Jennifer Bashant writes that "there is a gap in the literature in taking clinical knowledge and applying it to the classroom in a very practical way."[160] Social-emotional learning encourages growth in student skills that may help bridge this gap and provide practical classroom application. In addition to exhibiting more challenging behaviors than their peers, children who have experienced trauma often have less developed social and emotional skills.[161] Lack of social-emotional skills makes regulating emotional reactions more difficult and reduces successful social interactions not only with peers but also with adults.[162] Social-emotional needs must be met first in order for children who have experienced trauma before classroom learning can occur.[163] Social-emotional programs rooted in mindfulness provide teachers with tools to build trauma-informed environments in their classrooms."[164] Social-emotional skills are essential to students because "when our emotions are regulated, we feel safe, calm, and content."[165] When students feel calm and safe, they are in an ideal mindset for learning.

In a mixed methods study on educator perceptions, Elizabeth Steed, Dorothy Shapland, and Nancy Leech analyzed educator perceptions of the effectiveness of social-emotional learning

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[160] Bashant, *Building a Trauma-Informed, Compassionate Classroom,* viii.

[161] Erdman, Colker, and Winter, *Trauma & Young Children*, 14.

[162] Ibid., 14.

[163] Bashant, *Building a Trauma-Informed, Compassionate Classroom,* 3.

[164] Sue Kim, Claire Crooks, Karen Bax, and Mostafa Shokoohi, "Impact of Trauma-Informed Training and Mindfulness-Based Social–Emotional Learning Program on Teacher Attitudes and Burnout: A Mixed-Methods Study," *School Mental Health* 13, no. 1 (2021): 55.

[165] Bashant, *Building a Trauma-Informed, Compassionate Classroom,* 4.

programs in elementary schools located in the western United States.[166] Participants included 1154 pre-kindergarten through second-grade educators from both public and private schools.[167] Researchers collected data by e-mailing a link for an online survey that included both qualitative and quantitative questions.[168] The majority of participants indicated that they believed their school and classroom implementation of social-emotional learning was effective.[169] Analysis of the qualitative questions indicated eight themes of effectiveness: the SEL program itself, the SEL staff members, the SEL team as whole, SEL instruction implementation, SEL training or professional development, clear expectations and discipline, family partnerships, and support from administration.[170]

In addition to addressing students' needs in the classroom, implementing mindful social-emotional learning programs through a trauma-informed framework may "prevent an adverse learning environment and alleviate teacher burden."[171] Sue Kim, Claire Crooks, Karen Bax, and Mostafa Shokoohi conducted a mixed methods research study in a southwestern Ontario school district to examine the effect of social-emotional learning programs on educators.[172] Twenty-six educators from eight schools participated in training related to trauma-informed teaching as well

[166] Elizabeth Steed, Dorothy Shapland, and Nancy Leech, "Early Childhood Teachers' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Their Elementary School's Approach to Social Emotional Learning: A Mixed Methods Study," *Early Childhood Education Journal* 50, no. 7 (2022): 1122.

[167] Ibid.

[168] Ibid.

[169] Ibid., 1124.

[170] Ibid.

[171] Kim, Crooks, Bax, and Shokoohi, "Impact of Trauma-Informed Training," 56.

[172] Ibid.

as the mindfulness, social-emotional learning program MindUP.[173] Educators implemented strategies from the MindUP program in their classrooms over the course of two school years.[174] Forty-five additional educators were recruited during the second year for the same training and single-year implementation, and 41 educators who did not receive any training or implement any social-emotional learning were recruited as the comparison or control group.[175] Results indicated that educators who participated in the trauma-informed training and implemented mindful social-emotional learning in their classrooms experienced less stressed, increased confidence in teaching, more empathy, and an increased interest in personal well-being compared to the control group.[176]

In consideration of the rate of teacher burnout, technology and game-based social-emotional learning programs may lower the burden of implementation on teachers by requiring less intensive professional learning and less change in instructional practices.[177] Linlin Li, Kylie Flynn, Melissa DeRosier, and Gary Weiser examined such a program, *Adventures Aboard the S.S. GRIN*, through a randomized experimental design with third-grade students in California.[178] The study began before the COVID-19 pandemic and shifted to distance learning with 35 of the 37 original classes continuing to use the program during stay-at-home orders.[179] Due to

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[173] Kim, Crooks, Bax, and Shokoohi, "Impact of Trauma-Informed Training," 56.

[174] Ibid.

[175] Ibid., 57.

[176] Ibid., 64-66.

[177] Linlin Li, Kylie Flynn, Melissa DeRosier, and Gary Weiser, "Social-Emotional Learning Amidst COVID-19 School Closures: Positive Findings from an Efficacy Study of Adventures Aboard the S.S. GRIN Program," *Frontiers in Education 6*, (2021): 2.

[178] Ibid., 3.

[179] Ibid., 4.

inconsistencies in student participation in the remaining classes related to learning at home such as lack of devices or internet connection, 66% of the original student population continued with the program throughout the duration of the study.[180] Researchers utilized a combination of rating scales, teacher interviews, and surveys to collect data on the efficacy of the program.[181] Results indicated that students who used the games and videos from the *Adventures* program scored higher than the control group for social-emotional skills in both direct student assessments and ratings reported by their teachers.[182]

In another study conducted by Michael Haslip, Ayana Allen-Handy, and Leona Donaldson, researchers conducted a phenomenological collaborative inquiry study using inferential statistics to study the effect of a twelve-week social-emotional learning course on the use of positive guidance principles.[183] Twenty-four pre-school educators from a large, northeastern city in the United States participated in the twelve-week social-emotional learning course.[184] Results indicated that the educators showed an increase in value for the positive guidance principles, reported more proficiency at the end of the course, utilized the principles more frequently, and improved student-teacher relationships.[185] Educators also reported that

[180] Li, Flynn, DeRosier, and Weiser, "Social-Emotional Learning Amidst COVID-19 School Closures," 9.

[181] Ibid., 4-6.

[182] Ibid., 7.

[183] Michael Haslip, Ayana Allen-Handy, and Leona Donaldson, "How Urban Early Childhood Educators Used Positive Guidance Principles and Improved Teacher-child Relationships: A Social-emotional Learning Intervention Study," *Early Child Development and Care* 190, no. 7 (2020): 971.

[184] Ibid., 975.

[185] Ibid., 978 - 981.

situations in which guidance principles were most useful included conflict resolution, clean-up, redirection of disruptive behavior, and transitions.[186]

In a quasi-experimental study, Melissa Sollom examined the efficacy of the social-emotional learning program Top 20.[187] Social-emotional skills of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, personal responsibility, decision-making, optimistic thinking, and goal-directed behavior were considered in the study.[188] 359 sixth-grade students from a public Minnesota school were divided into an experimental and control group, and data was collected through pre and post-rating scales completed by the homeroom teachers.[189] Educators participated in professional development through computerized training on the Top 20 program, the eight social-emotional competencies included in the program, and how to use the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment for rating observed student behaviors.[190] Students in the experimental group scored significantly higher on the post-rating scale for all eight measured social-emotional skills which indicates efficacy of the Top 20 program.[191] Additionally, Sollom writes that "the results support the need for a school-based primary prevention program that helps children and adolescents develop SEL skills within the schools."[192]

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[186] Haslip, Allen-Handy, and Donaldson, "How Urban Early Childhood Educators," 979.

[187] Melissa Sollom, "A Quasi-Experimental Study on Social Emotional Learning and Primary Prevention," *Journal of Educational and Developmental Psychology* 11, no. 2 (2021): 1.

[188] Ibid..

[189] Ibid.

[190] Ibid., 5.

[191] Ibid., 8.

[192] Ibid., 11.

Implications from COVID-19 Pandemic

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increased need for trauma-informed teaching. The pandemic placed extensive stress on families through disrupted work and school, creating uncertainty about finances, household seclusion, social isolation, and feelings of anxiety regarding the health of loved ones.[193] According to Carrie Wall, "the COVID-19 global health crises ignited unprecedented trauma and loss across the globe. Students and families worldwide were pushed to the breaking point as they experienced economic hardship, fear of infection, death of loved ones, disrupted learning, social isolation, and loss of normalcy."[194] Post-pandemic students need trauma-informed care more than ever before.

A 2021 study on teenage students in the United States indicated an increase in the number of students with ACEs, mental health problems, and suicidal behaviors.[195] In this study, Anderson et al. found that "ACEs were common among U.S. adolescents during the pandemic and often resulted in acute consequences for mental health and suicidal behaviors."[196] Students who experienced ACEs were four times more likely to suffer mental health problems and twenty-five percent more likely to attempt suicide than their peers who did not report experiencing any ACEs.[197] This research has implications for younger students because early intervention is critical. Researchers noted that "primary prevention and intervention strategies for ACEs and their acute and long-term impacts, including early identification and trauma-informed

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[193] Mark Feinberg et al., "Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Parent, Child, and Family Functioning," Family Process 61, no. 1 (2022): 363.

[194] Carrie Wall, "What Hurt and What Helped: How One School's Trauma-Informed Approach Provided Support During the Pandemic." *Journal of Loss and Trauma* 27, no. 3 (2022): 257.

[195] Anderson et al., "Adverse Childhood Experiences During the COVID-19 Pandemic," 1305.

[196] Ibid.

[197] Ibid.

mental health service and support provision, could help address the U.S. child and adolescent mental health and suicide crisis.[198]

Feinberg et al. found significant deteriorations in family mental due to the pandemic compared to ratings before the pandemic which included children internalizing and externalizing problems and parental depression.[199] In the quantitative U.S. study, researchers stated that the significance of the detrimental change indicated that the possibility of continued mental health issues after the pandemic.[200] Experiencing trauma, such as that caused by the pandemic, can cause children to "have difficulty processing emotional and social responses, sustaining attention, and utilizing memory effectively. [201] In young children, this can be observed through "irritability, crying, regression of skills, clinging behavior, bed-wetting, somatic complaints, withdrawal, and nightmares."[202] Marlena Minkos and Nicholas Gelbar write that it is "integral for schools and districts to provide staff with trauma-focused training so that they may recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma and respond in ways that avoid re-traumatization."[203] Additionally, developing and building student resilience through explicitly taught social-emotional learning curriculum with a focus on mindfulness is essential to implementing a successful trauma-informed approach in schools.[204]

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[198] Anderson et al., "Adverse Childhood Experiences During the COVID-19 Pandemic," 1305.

[199] Feinberg et al., "Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic," 362.

[200] Ibid.

[201] Marlena Minkos and Nicholas Gelbar, "Considerations for Educators in Supporting Student Learning in the Midst of COVID-19," *Psychology in the Schools 58*, no. 2 (2021): 418.

[202] Ibid.

[203] Ibid., 419.

[204] Ibid., 422.

The need for schools to address post-pandemic trauma among students was echoed in a study by Jeffrey Ashby, Kenneth Rice, Ibrahim Kira, and Jaleh Davari. In a country-wide study involving forty-nine states in the United States, the researchers found a significant link between COVID traumatic stress, cumulative trauma, and PTSD risk with the first two being "moderately to strongly predictive of current PTSD risk."[205] Researchers concluded that with the implication of the pandemic being considered an experience of trauma, schools should adopt trauma-informed practices.[206]

A qualitative study involving a Title I school in California investigated the effects of the pandemic on students and the response of the school to meet those needs.[207] Researchers found that students faced physical, academic, and social-emotional challenges during the pandemic, many of which increased their risk of trauma.[208] Existing needs and insecurities concerning food, medical needs, and housing for students were exacerbated by the pandemic.[209] Additionally, although the school supplied each student with a device for distance learning, student academic needs remained unmet due to issues such as lack of Wi-Fi or insufficient knowledge to work the device.[210] When students were able to log in, conditions in their environment were often not conducive to learning.[211] Seventy-nine percent of interview participants indicated that the pandemic was detrimental to student socialization and relationship building due to mask

[205] Jeffrey Ashby et al., "The Relationship of COVID-19 Traumatic Stress, Cumulative Trauma, and Race to Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Symptoms," *Journal of Community Psychology 50*, no. 6 (2022): 2607.

[206] Ibid.

[207] Wall, "What Hurt and What Helped," 261.

[208] Ibid.

[209] Ibid.

[210] Ibid.

[211] Ibid., 262.

wearing, social distancing, and restrictions on personal interactions.[212] Eighty-six percent stated that students experienced behavioral manifestations of emotional distress.[213] This was observed by "students crying on Zoom, having trouble labeling emotions, and giving up easily" and behavior that was "aggressive and angry or listless and disengaged."[214]

To combat the adverse effects of the pandemic, the school utilized trauma-informed approaches to meet student needs. This included focusing on maintaining connections and relationships, providing structure and stability through predictable routines, sharing control and self-regulation, and providing social-emotional learning opportunities.[215] The school utilized the *7 Habits of Happy Kids* by Sean Covey which include: "(1) be proactive, (2) begin with the end in mind, (3) work first, then play, (4) think win-win,(5) listen before you talk, (6) creatively cooperate to problem solve, and (7) 'sharpen the saw' by cultivating life balance."[216] Final thoughts from the researcher include, "Though the worst of the pandemic may be over, the work of educators is only beginning as they seek to address unfinished learning, reactivate student engagement, cultivate community, and promote recovery."

In a separate Southern California study, researchers collected data from surveys and semi-structured interviews about SEL learning to address trauma during the pandemic. [217] SEL

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[212] Wall, "What Hurt and What Helped," 263.

[213] Ibid., 264.

[214] Ibid., 264.

[215] Ibid., 266.

[216] Ibid., 267.

[217] Rebecca Levine, Rebecca Lim, and Amy Vatne Bintliff, "Social and Emotional Learning During Pandemic-Related Remote and Hybrid Instruction: Teacher Strategies in Response to Trauma," *Education Sciences* 13, no. 4 (2023): 1.

instruction was conducted during remote and hybrid learning.[218] Educators reported feeling that SEL learning was even more relevant and necessary during the pandemic which was described as "a time of heightened distress and trauma."[219] Signs of trauma were evident in students as they appeared to be disengaged, expressed feelings of isolation, slept during instructional time, and were disconnected from making new friends.[220] Students and their families, especially those from low-income backgrounds, suffered challenges due to the pandemic such as unemployment, homelessness, familial death, lack of proper access to education, and being socially isolated.[221] The themes about SEL that emerged include the importance of relationships, routines, creating a safe emotional space, movement, mindfulness, play, cultural affirmation, student choice, and family engagement.[222] Games, including those involving music and dance, were reported as incredibly important by creating joy and connection through playfulness and creativity.[223] Mindfulness was also reported as a valuable tool to refocus and engage students in learning.[224] Educators reported challenges to teaching SEL online such as burnout, feelings of disconnectedness due to the nature of online teaching, and concerns about parties not associated with the class listening in on conversations. Overall, educators reported a preference for in-

[218] Levine, Lim, and Bintliff, "Social and Emotional Learning During Pandemic-Related Remote and Hybrid Instruction ," 1.

[219] Ibid., 1-7.

[220] Ibid., 6.

[221] Ibid.

[222] Ibid.

[223] Ibid., 9.

[224] Ibid., 13.

person SEL instruction and cited concerns about difficulties in building relationships with students in online classroom environments.[225]

Trauma-Informed Music Education

Resources regarding trauma-informed music education were limited, but basic guiding principles were found in the literature. According to Lauren Ryals, trauma-informed music education is not necessarily a specific model of instruction but rather the incorporation of both social-emotional and student-centered learning within the music curriculum.[226] Brandon Bailey states that trauma-informed music education "requires educators to show that they care; create a safe learning environment; offer students time and space to process; allow cooperative learning and opportunities for students to participate in their educational journey; utilize SEL strategies; and keep clear, honest and consistent communication."[227] Similarly, Karen Salvador and Mara Culp suggest the following guidelines: know and value individual students, build relationships, honor students by providing choices, offer music-specific examples, establish healthy boundaries, and reshape the curriculum.[228] These qualities are exemplified in a qualitative case study by Ryals in which students reported enjoying music technology projects, playing instruments, and connections in learning opportunities that were interdisciplinary because they

[225] Levine, Lim, and Bintliff, "Social and Emotional Learning During Pandemic-Related Remote and Hybrid Instruction ," 11.

[226] Ryals, "A Case Study of One Trauma-Informed Music Education Program," 112.

[227] Brandon Bailey, "Trauma-Informed Music Education (TIME): A New Perspective on Care in K-12 Music Education," PhD diss., Trident University International, 2022. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, https://go.openathens.net/redirector/liberty.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/trauma-informed-music-education-time-new/docview/2652177293/se-2, 123.

[228] Karen Salvador and Mara Culp, "Intersections in Music Education: Implications of Universal Design for Learning, Culturally Responsive Education, and Trauma-Informed Education for P–12 Praxis," *Music Educators Journal* 108, no. 3 (2022): 19–29.

provided students with feelings of self-pride, happiness, and familial support.[229] These positive experiences were possible due to the trauma-informed approach utilized by the music teacher which the educator reported was built upon emotional outcomes and individualized experiences.[230] Due to the success of the trauma-informed program in the case study, Ryals suggests that trauma-informed approaches should be standard practice in music education preparation programs, including teaching social-emotional learning tools.[231]

Music and Social-Emotional Learning

Social-Emotional Learning provides students with "soft skills" needed to build competency in social, emotional, and behavioral development so that students can interact appropriately with others and develop healthy social relationships.[232] Students who have social and emotional competency are able to adapt and respond well to a variety of circumstances and regulate their emotions and behavior.[233] General music is a prime opportunity for social-emotional learning because both music education and SEL help students develop self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, positive relationships, and how to make responsible decisions.[234] Students develop self-awareness through the different roles they play in music class such as solo, melody, harmony, or rhythmic support.[235] Social awareness can be nurtured

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[229] Ryals, "A Case Study of One Trauma-Informed Music Education Program," 72.

[230] Ibid., 87.

[231] Ibid., 113

[232] Edward Varner, "General Music Learning Is Also Social and Emotional Learning," *General Music Today* 33 no.2 (2020): 74.

[233] Ibid.

[234] Ibid., 74.

[235] Ibid., 75.

through activities such as circle games and folk songs.[236] Self-management may be taught by exploring emotions through music and practicing breath control, stretching, and movement for emotional and stress management.[237] Engaging in ensemble playing or group singing can foster positive relationships and social bonding, and caring for instruments and other supplies fosters responsible decision-making. [238] Students may learn other SEL skills in music class such as cooperation, dependability, impulse control, and delayed gratification.[239]

The benefits of music education on social-emotional learning are measurable. Researchers in Spain found that adolescents who studied music showed higher social competencies than non-musicians.[240] Survey answers of musicians, both instrumental and choral, were compared to non-musicians from the same educational institution in areas of social and emotional development.[241] Musicians scored higher than non-musicians in all areas, including emotional awareness, emotion regulation, autonomy, social competencies, and well-being.[242] Musicians also scored higher in areas of leadership capacity and greater life satisfaction.[243]

Social-emotional learning can be fostered by creating an environment where students feel safe socially and emotionally by practicing mindfulness, building relationships, and inclusive

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[236] Varner, "General Music Learning Is Also Social and Emotional Learning," 75.

[237] Ibid., 76.

[238] Ibid.

[239] Ibid., 77.

[240] 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 (2019): 536.

[241] Ibid., 539.

[242] Ibid., 543.

[243] Ibid.

teaching practices.[244] Mindfulness may be facilitated through awareness activities where students explore their breathing, feelings, and bodily sensations.[245] In music class, active listening can aid mindful moments by having students describe how the music makes them feel or by using calming music to quiet students' minds and bodies.[246] Affirmation songs can also be used to encourage positive thinking and a growth mindset.[247] Just a few minutes of mindfulness can be effective for positive changes.[248] Relationships can be built with students by building trust, value, and respect through intentional planning of activities.[249] In particular, using folk song games that combine movement, singing, and student choice at the beginning of the school year establishes a sense of community in the music classroom.[250] Asking questions during the singing games such as "How did we work together?" or "How did you feel?" can further reinforce social-emotional learning.[251] Using songs from a wide variety of cultures can help students build empathy and can be combined with children's literature to build self-awareness and awareness of others.[252] Biographical literature on authors can also facilitate social-emotional learning through themes such as leadership, compassion, and perseverance.[253] Social-emotional skills such as

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[244] Taryn Raschdorf, Brittany May, and Amie Searcy, "Integrating Social-Emotional Learning Into Our 'New Normal': Teaching Elementary General Music," *General Music Today.*, *34* no. 2 (2021): 42–43.

[245] Ibid., 45.

[246] Ibid.

[247] Ibid.

[248] Ibid.

[249] Ibid., 46.

[250] Ibid.

[251] Ibid.

[252] Ibid., 47.

[253] Ibid.

collaboration, self-regulation, empathy, critical thinking, and problem-solving can be learned through musical activities such as singing games, culturally diverse music, music history, and movement such as folk dancing, but only if music educators are authentic in their integration and demonstration of these skills.[254]

Another way to incorporate SEL into general music is through cross-curricular bibliotherapy. According to Sarah Watts and Kay Piña, "Bibliotherapy is a technique that invites children to see themselves in the characters of carefully selected children's literature with the intention of making connections, building empathy, developing social skills, processing difficult situations, and more."[255] Bibliotherapy is not just incorporating literature into the music classroom. The selection of literature for bibliotherapy must be intentional and should be aligned with specific social-emotional learning goals.[256] Music educators should engage in developmental bibliotherapy, which involves age-appropriate SEL skills such as resolving conflicts with peers, rather than clinical bibliotherapy, which is used in the medical field to treat mood disorders such as anxiety or depression.[257] Using bibliotherapy in the music classroom requires planning and preparation. Music educators should consider consulting the school counselors about possible triggers as well as consulting the school librarian for selecting literature that is relevant to the topic and developmentally appropriate for students.[258] Musical

[254] Raschdorf, May, and Searcy, "Integrating Social-Emotional Learning Into Our 'New Normal,'" 43.

[255] Sarah Watts and Kay Piña, "Bibliotherapy and Social and Emotional Learning in the Elementary Music Setting," *Journal of General Music Education* 36, no. 3 (2023): 5.

[256] Ibid.

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[257] Ibid.

[258] Watts and Piña, "Bibliotherapy and Social and Emotional Learning," 7.

activities can be used to reinforce key messages in the story.[259] Watts and Piña believe that general music is well suited for this style of social-emotional learning and write that "singing, moving, playing instruments, and creating all invite students into a space where being aware of self and others, making responsible choices, and exercising compassion are integral to making music happen."[260]

Music and Mental Health

Being part of a musical ensemble has numerous emotional and mental health benefits. Making music with others has social benefits such as making friends and creates positive emotional experiences such as feelings of joy, confidence, belonging, and relaxation.[261] Singing is particularly beneficial because it provides physical, mental, emotional, and social engagement for participants and creates experiences that can be described as "energizing, calming, uplifting, enjoyable, sociable and supportive."[262] Weekly group singing improves mental well-being by reducing mental stress.[263]

Janne Damsgaard and Svend Brinkmann conducted a qualitative phenomenological-hermeneutic study on the effects of singing on mental health. [264] Eight participants, including both men and women, answered open-ended interview questions about their participation in

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[259] Ibid.

[260] Ibid., 6.

[261] Stephen Clift, Sharon Manship, and Lizzi Stephens, "Further Evidence That Singing Fosters Mental Health and Wellbeing: The West Kent and Medway Project," *Mental Health and Social Inclusion* 21 no. 1 (2017): 58.

[262] Ibid.

[263] Ibid., 59.

[264] Janne Damsgaard and Svend Brinkmann, "Me and Us: Cultivating Presence and Mental Health through Choir Singing," *Scandinavian Journal of Caring Sciences 36*, no. 4 (2022): 1136.

choral singing.[265] Participants included singers who were receiving mental health services and singers who were professionals such as a social worker and the choir director.[266] Participants described being able to express emotions through singing that were otherwise difficult to face and an increased feeling of being present.[267] The choir was described as a safe environment that allowed individuals to be themselves and remove superficial masks designed to hide emotional and psychological distress or difficulties.[268] Participants reported feeling "set free," and researchers concluded that choral participation "enabled the singers to illustrate and illuminate to other people, for example anger, sorrow, despair or happiness through bodily expressions and through volume and intensity within the voice."[269] Additionally, singers reported finding relief from difficult emotions, comfort in singing, and shared that choral singing provided them with a sense of connectedness, awareness, and meaning in life.[270] Researchers reported that "choir singing is worth implementing as a dialogical activity that allows individuals to extend their current competence to discover new expanded competence. The social-emotional competence is a set of psychological resources, highly relevant for adaptive growth and well-being."[271]

Similar results were found by researchers in Germany who surveyed 847 adult choral members ranging from amateur to professional musicians in a cross-sectional study about

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[265] Ibid.

[266] Ibid.

[267] Ibid., 1137.

[268] Ibid., 1138.

[269] Ibid.

[270] Ibid., 1139.

[271] Damsgaard and Brinkmann, "Me and Us: Cultivating Presence and Mental Health through Choir Singing," 1139.

singing.[272] Survey results indicated that choral singing increases feelings of relaxation and life balance in both men and women.[273] Researchers concluded that "choral singers, regardless of age, gender, and education level, perceive singing as beneficial to their well-being and feel an improvement in their mental health compared to times without singing."[274] Researchers in a qualitative study in Australia also reported comparable results with participants sharing in interviews that "singing helped reduce stress and tension and allowed for relaxation."[275] The twenty-one choral members who participated in the interview questions included both male and female adults with mental illnesses.[276] Three main themes, including personal impact, social impact, and functional outcomes emerged from data analysis.[277] As in the Damsgaard and Brinkmann study, participants reported feelings of connectedness and a sense of well-being associated with the act of singing.[278]

Laura Plumb and Theodore Stickley conducted a qualitative study in the United Kingdom of group choral singing on well-being in relation to mental health.[279] Researchers interviewed members of a choral group who were initially recruited to sing through a local mental health

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[272] Sibylle Robens et al., "Effects of Choir Singing on Mental Health: Results of an Online Cross-Sectional Study," *Journal of Voice* (2022): 2.

[273] Ibid., 8.

[274] Robens, et al., "Effects of Choir Singing on Mental Health," 10.

[275] Genevieve Dingle et al., "'To be Heard': The Social and Mental Health Benefits of Choir Singing for Disadvantaged Adults," *Psychology of Music* 41 no. 4 (2013): 413.

[276] Ibid., 410.

[277] Ibid., 411.

[278] Ibid., 412.

[279] Laura Plumb and Theodore Stickley, "Singing to Promote Mental Health and Well-Being," *Mental Health Practice* 20, no. 8 (2017): 31.

trust.[280] Thematic analysis of the data was organized into five themes which included social benefits, health benefits, accomplishments, personal benefits, and enjoyment.[281] Interviewees reported social benefits such as social engagement, feelings of support and acceptance, a sense of belonging, and emotional safety.[282] These results align with the Damsgaard and Brinkmann study in which social benefits and feelings of safety were also reported. While the interviewers did not ask questions about health, eight of the ten participants reported improvements to their mental health, and two reported improvements in breathing.[283] Improvements in mental health and well-being were also reported by participants of the study in Germany conducted by Sibylle Robens, Alexandra Monstadt, Alexander Hagen, and Thomas Ostermann. Five participants reported personal benefits such as increased confidence, improved mood, and pride, and all reported feelings of joy or enjoyment experienced during group singing.[284] All participants reported singing with the choir as a positive experience and reported no negative effects.[285] Researchers concluded that "given the extremely low cost of running a choir such as this, it makes the potential to set up such an enterprise easily achievable in either statutory health and social care or the voluntary sector."[286]

A qualitative study at a children's psychiatric hospital in Norway found that music has similar mental health benefits for children which are comparable to Damsgaard and Brinkmann's

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[280] Ibid., 31-32.

[281] Ibid., 33.

[282] Ibid.

[283] Ibid., 33-34.

[284] Ibid., 34.

[285] Ibid., 35.

[286] Plumb and Stickley, "Singing to Promote Mental Health and Well-Being," 35.

study with adults. [287] Interprofessional team members, including child psychiatrists and psychologists, teachers, social workers, and music therapists, answered interview questions about children with mental health concerns who received music therapy interventions.[288] Music therapy sessions were conducted in the music room of the hospital school and consisted of instrument playing, singing, dancing, and the use of digital music programs.[289] Team members reported that they felt "freer" and more relaxed during music therapy sessions.[290] Students were motivated to learn music, and the motivation from music therapy carried onto other areas as well.[291] Staff reported that children were more expressive during music therapy and observed the possibility of better emotional regulation of the children through music.[292] Several themes emerged from the interview data, including music therapy as a place to be free; a place for motivation and opportunity; an arena for identity; an arena for feelings and expression; opportunity for relationships; and potential for continued treatment.[293]

[287] Guro Klyvea, Randi Rolvsjord and Irene Elgen, "Polyphonic Perspectives: A Focus Group Study of Interprofessional Staff's Perceptions of Music Therapy at an Inpatient Unit for Children in Mental Health Care," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being* 18, no. 1 (2023): 2-3.

[288] Ibid., 3.

[289] Ibid.

[290] Ibid., 5.

[291] Ibid.

[292] Ibid., 6

[293] Ibid., 5-8.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Overview

Childhood trauma, an already pervasive problem in Georgia, was magnified as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of the effects of this trauma are showing up in classrooms as troublesome and challenging behaviors. These nonadaptive trauma responses are overwhelming students and educators and negatively affecting learning and teaching. The purpose of the study was to identify the benefits of trauma-informed teaching in primary general music and strategies designed to meet these specific and magnified student needs. The methodology chapter will cover the research design of the study, research questions, hypotheses, participants and setting, procedures, and data analysis.

Research Design

The study utilized a qualitative research design. A qualitative method was chosen because "qualitative research can help researchers to access the thoughts and feelings of research participants, which can enable the development of an understanding of the meaning that people ascribe to their experiences."[294] Considering the open-endedness of the research questions, a qualitative method is best suited for the needs of the study.[295] A phenomenological approach was chosen because participants described "lived experiences" of a specific phenomenon.[296] Participants in the study described the phenomenon of the effect the COVID-19 pandemic had on student behavior by describing changes observed in student behavior and needs. In addition,

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[294] Jane Sutton and Zubin Austin, "Qualitative Research: Data Collection, Analysis, and Management," *The Canadian Journal of Hospital Pharmacy* 68, no. 3(2015): 226.

[295] John Creswell and J. David Creswell. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th Ed., (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE, 2018), 4.

[296] Ibid, 13.

participants described their own experience with changing their teaching methods and classroom management due to the increase in challenging student behaviors.

The role of the researcher, bias, and subjectivity were taken into consideration for the research design. According to Jane Sutton and Zubin Austin, "the role of the researcher in qualitative research is to attempt to access the thoughts and feelings of study participants."[297] Active reflection is a necessary action of researchers throughout the qualitative processes.[298] Throughout this reflection process, Sutton and Austin suggest that researchers should not ignore their own bias or subjectivity because they are unavoidable and, when considered reflexively, not necessarily negative.[299] Openly considering bias and subjectivity can be beneficial so that "readers can better understand the filters through which questions were asked, data were gathered and analyzed, and findings were reported."[300] The researcher acknowledges her own bias and subjectivity through her experience as a primary general music educator with experience teaching before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research Questions

The study used the following research questions.

Research Question 1: What are the benefits of trauma-informed instruction in Title I school music programs in rural Georgia for kindergarten through second-grade students?

Research Question 2: What trauma-informed teaching approaches would be useful in meeting the needs exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic of primary music students?

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[297] Sutton and Austin, "Qualitative Research: Data Collection, Analysis, and Management," 227.

[298] Ibid.

[299] Ibid., 226.

[300] Ibid.

Hypotheses

The correlated hypothesis for Research Question 1 is Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 1: Benefits of trauma-informed instruction in Title I school music programs in Georgia may include a decrease in defiant or challenging behavior, an increase in positive classroom participation, and the development of student coping skills and resilience.

The correlated hypothesis for Research Question 2 is Hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 2: Trauma-informed teaching approaches that would be useful in meeting the needs exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic of primary music students may include musical activities that lead to discussions about emotions, using music to facilitate mindful moments, offering student choice when appropriate, and utilizing songs to encourage positive thinking.

Participants and Setting

The researcher purposefully selected participants through a convenience sample. Convenience sampling is used in qualitative research by specifying characteristics of the sample such as setting, situation, and the participants themselves in order to elicit more depth and detail from the participant responses.[301] The researcher recruited Title I primary school teachers who worked before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic in central, rural Georgia for the convenience sample. Out of the fifty-seven Title I primary schools in the state of Georgia, fourteen are located centrally in rural areas.[302] A smaller sample size is common for qualitative studies in comparison to quantitative studies.[303] Phenomenological studies utilize a smaller

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[301] Roberts and Hyatt, *The Dissertation Journey*, 147.

[302] Georgia Department of Education, "2022 List of Georgia Title I Schools," accessed June 11, 2023, https://www.gadoe.org/School-Improvement/Federal-Programs/Documents/Title%20I%2C%20Part%20A/Other%20Resources%20FY22/FY22%20Title%20I%20Schools%20-%20SWP%20and%20TA%2010-7-21.pdf

[303] Roberts and Hyatt, *The Dissertation Journey*, 14.

sample to provide a detailed description of the "essence of the experiences for several individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon."[304] For this reason, the selection was narrowed down to a convenience sampling of five music educators who fit all the characteristics of the convenience sample. Characteristics included having a valid, unexpired Georgia teaching certificate; teaching general music at a Title I primary school; teaching in central, rural Georgia; and teaching primary music before, during, and after the pandemic.

Procedures

The initial step in the procedures for the study was identifying a gap in the literature through a careful review of the literature. Despite ample research on trauma-informed teaching, limited resources pertaining to music were found, especially at the primary general music level. The researcher identified the gap in the literature and then developed the research questions and hypotheses based on the identified gap. In order to address the research questions, the researcher chose a qualitative, phenomenological approach for the methodology of the research design. At this point, the researcher presented the proposal to the Thesis Committee for approval. After the proposal's approval, the researcher made an application for the Institutional Review Board's (IRB) approval of Liberty University. Templates from the Liberty University IRB website page were used for recruitment and information material. The IRB granted approval for the research to be conducted and exemption from further IRB approval. The IRB exemption letter can be found in Appendix A.

The next step was to recruit participants. Title I primary schools in Georgia were determined utilizing the Georgia Department of Education website. The researcher compared these schools to a map of Georgia counties to determine which schools were located in central,

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[304] Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 13.

rural Georgia. The researcher then identified the music educators through the corresponding school websites. There were several instances in which the school websites listed all of the faculty members as "teacher," and the music educator was not identifiable through the faculty contact list. In these instances, the researcher contacted the schools via telephone to ask for the name of the music educator in order to identify the corresponding e-mail address on the faculty list. Contacting the schools did result in the conclusion that two primary schools did not have a music educator currently on staff. Out of seventeen primary schools in the area, fifteen had music educators listed on their school website or confirmed via school telephone contact.

The researcher contacted the fifteen primary music educators to request their participation in the study. The researcher recruited participants through e-mail communication which included an attachment with detailed information about the study. The participant recruitment e-mail may be found in Appendix B, and the information sheet may be found in Appendix C. Eligibility for the study was determined through a three-question Google Forms link provided in the recruitment e-mail. The form prompted participants to enter their e-mail address, and music educators were asked the following eligibility questions: "Are you a highly qualified and fully certified Georgia music educator?", "Do you teach general music at a primary school in central, rural Georgia?", and "Have you taught primary music in Georgia before, during, and after the pandemic?" A copy of the eligibility questions may be found in Appendix D. Five of the fifteen music educators contacted completed the Google Forms eligibility survey. All five were deemed eligible based on their responses and participated in the telephone interview. One music educator responded via e-mail that she did not meet the participation criteria. The educator certification of the five participants was verified through the Georgia Professional Standards Commission website through the Check Certification Status tool. All

participants had a valid Georgia teaching certificate on file with the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. Employment at a qualifying school was pre-verified through the school websites and the use of professional work e-mail for recruitment. The timeline of employment was confirmed verbally by telephone before beginning the formal interview procedures.

The researcher scheduled the interviews through e-mail communication after verifying that the participants met all necessary criteria. The researcher conducted each interview over the phone and recorded each call using the Voice Recorder application on the researcher's computer. The interviews were conducted in a quiet, secure location, free from distractions, to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the participants. The researcher saved and stored all audio files in a password-protected folder. A list of interview questions may be found in Appendix E. The researcher transcribed the audio recordings following each interview, and the resulting transcripts were saved and stored in a separate password-protected folder. Participants were assigned pseudonyms for the study to protect participant identity, and neither the audio recordings nor the transcripts included the participant's names. In a further effort to protect confidentiality, any identifying information present in the audio recordings was redacted from the transcripts.

Data Analysis

The researcher followed the data analysis technique recommended by John and David Cresswell in the book *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Interviews were immediately transcribed from raw audio into written transcripts and organized to prepare the data for analysis. This corresponds with the first step of the Cresswell data analysis plan which suggested that data be organized and prepared prior to

beginning in-depth analysis. [305] While the researcher read all the data while transcribing interviews, the second step of the Cresswell method is to read all of the data, so the data was re-read to ensure comprehensive understanding. [306] The next step was to begin coding all the data.[307] The process of coding data included "the identification of topics, issues, similarities, and differences that are revealed through the participants' narratives and interpreted by the researcher."[308] The researcher used color codes to begin grouping similar ideas among interview data and then placed color codes together in a graphic organizer to help the researcher more clearly identify themes. This aligned with the next steps of the Cresswell method of data analysis which were to discover and represent themes. [309] The researcher then summarized and compared the findings from the data to the theoretical framework and the literature in a qualitative report.[310] This final step of summarizing and comparing may be described as a "synthesis of data."[311] This synthesis had "crucial significance-this is usually where 'the story' of the participants can be distilled, summarized, and told in a manner that is both respectful to those participants and meaningful to readers."[312]

[305] Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 193-194.

[306] Ibid.

[307] Ibid.

[308] Sutton and Austin, "Qualitative Research: Data Collection, Analysis, and Management," 228.

[309] Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 193-194.

[310] Ibid., 198.

[311] Sutton and Austin, "Qualitative Research: Data Collection, Analysis, and Management," 228.

[312] Ibid.

Summary

Childhood trauma is a widespread problem affecting childhood development and education. Trauma-informed teaching addresses these issues within an academic setting. The need for trauma-informed teaching has grown due to the increase in the amount and intensity of nonadaptive behaviors students are exhibiting in the classroom. ACE exposure during the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to increasing percentages of students suffering from trauma. Information on the use of trauma-informed teaching in general music with young students is lacking. The purpose of the study was to address this gap in the literature.

The study focused on the needs of students and educators in central, rural Georgia. Primary music educators were interviewed regarding their teaching experiences before, during, and after the pandemic. After IRB approval, the researcher conducted interviews by telephone, recorded the interviews through the Voice Recorder app on the researcher's laptop, and then transcribed all interviews. The researcher recruited interviewees via e-mail and identified the participants as primary music educators through their school websites. Qualifying schools were identified from the list of Title I schools available on the Georgia Department of Education website. The research methodology ensured confidentiality of participant identity through multiple measures, including redacting identifiable information in transcripts, using pseudonyms, and password protection of both audio recordings and written transcripts. The data derived from this qualitative, phenomenological approach resulted from the detailed descriptions participants shared regarding their own classroom experiences during this specified time frame. The researcher coded the data and organized it into corresponding themes which were developed into a comprehensive qualitative report.

Chapter Four: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to determine any potential effects or benefits of trauma-informed general music instruction and consider which trauma-informed strategies may be helpful in meeting the needs of post-pandemic primary-level music students. This chapter includes a list of the participants, a description of their experience of teaching through the COVID-19 pandemic, and a thematic representation of the data as it relates to the research questions. Concerning the first research question, music educators described how social-emotional learning and trauma-informed teaching are essential to preparing students for musical learning and that learning cannot occur without first addressing the specific emotional needs of their students. In relation to the second research question, the findings from the telephone interview will be described through themes. Five themes emerged from the data analysis: increased need for trauma-informed practices, the importance of building relationships, using songs for social-emotional learning, targeting specific student needs, and creating a safe and positive environment.

Participants

Limited demographic information about the participants was collected through their interview responses and corresponding school websites. All five participants were female. This accurately represented the sample because fourteen of the fifteen music educators e-mailed were female. Four of the five music educators were Caucasian, and one was African American. The average length of teaching experience was approximately seventeen years. The range of teaching experience was twenty-five years. The researcher assigned each music educator a pseudonym to maintain anonymity. The stories of their teaching experiences during the pandemic are shared to

introduce the participants and provide background information relating to the themes derived from the interview data.

Music Educator A was assigned the pseudonym Samantha for the study. Samantha's phone interview was conducted on Friday, November 14, 2023, at 4:30 pm Eastern Standard Time. Samantha reported that she was in her fourteenth year of teaching and had taught primary music (K-2) for thirteen years.[313] After mandatory shutdowns in March of 2020, her school offered in-person instruction beginning in August of 2020 which continued throughout the pandemic.[314] Most families chose to send their children to school, but the school offered digital learning as an optional choice.[315] Due to the small number of families choosing digital learning, the school referred all digital learners to the county cyber academy.[316] At the beginning of their online learning option, teachers were asked to submit activities for students to use in the cyber academy, but this was not an ongoing responsibility throughout the pandemic.[317] According to Samantha, "It really wasn't much, and I don't know that anybody ever used it because it wasn't a good process for the online learners."[318]

Samantha described a very negative experience of teaching through the pandemic. "COVID was horrible. I'm sure many people could say that or everybody probably. Teaching through the pandemic was frustrating because as a professional, I watched music education and

[313] Music Educator A, telephone interview by author, November 14, 2023.

[314] Ibid.

[315] Ibid.

[316] Ibid.

[317] Ibid.

[318] Ibid.

other exploratory classes get pushed to the side."[319] The pandemic was also challenging for her on a personal level. She stated, "I was dealing with my own fears and struggles during the pandemic, so coming up with creative ways to reach out to students at home seemed like an impossible task."[320] She also shared, "There was this sense of un-knowing that was absolutely terrifying to me."[321] Balancing work and home responsibilities in the midst of a pandemic was an overwhelming task. Samantha stated, "It was a lot for everybody. I do realize that. But trying to find new ways to teach at the moment with our–I can't think of another way to say it, but basically the lizard brain–it just seemed like a ridiculous thing to ask. . . . I felt like that was absolutely horrible."[322]

Music Educator B was assigned the pseudonym Jennifer. Jennifer's phone interview was conducted on Wednesday, December 6, 2023, at 3:45 pm Eastern Standard Time. Jennifer stated that she had been teaching for seventeen years.[323] Her first nine years were at various elementary-level groupings (2-3, 4-5, and K-5).[324] The past eight years have been strictly primary music (K-2).[325] Jennifer described her pandemic teaching experience as "miserable."[326] She shared, "We couldn't do everything that we were used to doing. We couldn't touch

[319] Music Educator A, telephone interview by author, November 14, 2023.

[320] Ibid.

[321] Ibid.

[322] Ibid.

[323] Music Educator B, telephone interview by author, December 6, 2023.

[324] Ibid.

[325] Ibid.

[326] Ibid.

everything that everyone else was touching. It was just kind of a nightmare."[327] Jennifer's school also went back to in-person learning in the 2020-2021 school year after the March 2020 shutdown.[328] In her interview, Jennifer recounted the difficulties of maintaining social distancing in her classroom:

> In the fall, they had all the mask mandates and the six-foot thing which my room is not big enough for. I don't have a regular music room. I have a regular classroom, and it's not huge. It's pretty small. So, I put dots on my floor and tried to space them out. I don't think I could make the six feet thing work in my room, so I think they were three feet apart. I tried to avoid using anything that I could not clean, sanitize, or spray down. So, there were a lot of things that I had to not do. And then with singing, it's really hard to teach singing with a mask on. So, I tried the visor, and it was a little better. But then, it would make me dizzy, so I went back to the mask.[329]

Like Samantha, Jennifer's school also provided a digital option, but most children came to school.[330] Jennifer was responsible for teaching a few asynchronous classes online, with limited participation in the self-paced assignments.[331] Jennifer stated, "In kindergarten, hardly anybody participated in those things.[332] In first grade, I had maybe four or five students in each of those classes participate in the stuff that I sent. . . . In second grade, I think I had probably half the classes that were doing it."[333] Her school used Google Classroom to facilitate distance

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[327] Music Educator B, telephone interview by author, December 6, 2023.

[328] Ibid.

[329] Ibid.

[330] Ibid.

[331] Ibid.

[332] Ibid.

[333] Ibid.

learning.[334] Jennifer stated, "It was just confusing. I had never taught like that. It was a learning process for them and for me."[335]

The pseudonym Vicky was assigned to Music Educator C. Vicky's phone interview was conducted on Monday, December 11, 2023, at 6:15 pm Eastern Standard Time. Vicky shared that she was in her twenty-third year of teaching.[336] The past eight years were strictly primary students (K-2), while the rest were traditional elementary (K-5).[337] After the March 2020 shutdown, her school offered strictly digital learning for an extended amount of time during the 2020-2021 school year.[338] At first, Vicky was apprehensive about distance learning. She said, "When I first started teaching through the pandemic, I did not know how I was going to teach music. How do you teach someone to keep a steady beat over a computer screen?"[339] Vicky addressed this issue by creating YouTube videos to share with her students.[340]

During their time of strictly distance learning, the teachers came to work to film their lessons while students stayed home.[341] This became a family involvement project for Vicky and her family. She stated, "I basically took my lessons, and I filmed myself teaching. . . . My husband would come in, and he'd be my partner. Then, my kids would come into my classroom and do the circle dances and things like that. I would tell the people at home to go get your

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[334] Music Educator B, telephone interview by author, December 6, 2023.

[335] Ibid.

[336] Music Educator C, telephone interview by author, Monday, December 11, 2023.

[337] Ibid.

[338] Ibid.

[339] Ibid.

[340] Ibid.

[341] Ibid.

momma, brother, sister, aunt, [and] grandma to do this with you. I got a lot of positive responses from it at first. I don't really get those anymore, but when everybody was online, I would get a lot of feedback saying that they really enjoyed it."[342] Vicky said, "I told my kids I'm a YouTube star. I made over a hundred different videos over different things."[343] Despite her success in adapting to teaching digitally, Vicky shared that teaching through the pandemic was "crazy" and that everyone was "scrambling trying to figure out things."[344]

Returning to in-person learning during the latter half of the pandemic was also challenging. When they finally did return to the school building, Vicky's school offered a hybrid approach.[345] "We went back to school four days a week, and one day was the digital day. So, Mondays were digital days, and the rest of the week, we had people coming into school. We offered a hybrid. We offered all digital, and then we offered both digital and in-class learning. That was hard."[346] Vicky also stated that "even when we went back into the classroom, there'd be days where I'd have like five or six kids, and the rest of them would be out."[347] Vicky expressed that teaching through this schedule was "hard."[348]

Ann Marie was the pseudonym selected for Music Educator D. Ann Marie's phone interview was conducted on Friday, December 15, 2023, at 11:30 am Easter Standard Time. Ann Marie shared that she was in her twenty-eighth year of teaching, and all her teaching experience

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[342] Music Educator C, telephone interview by author, Monday, December 11, 2023.

[343] Ibid.

[344] Ibid.

[345] Ibid.

[346] Ibid.

[347] Ibid.

[348] Ibid.

was in the same primary school.[349] Ann Marie described her experience of teaching through the pandemic as so challenging she tried to block out the memory completely:

> I've tried to block that out because that was literally one of the hardest years I've ever had in my twenty-eight years of teaching. We came back, and we did this crazy schedule where you had A and B students. A students would come in on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and B students would come back on Tuesdays and Thursdays. And then, you had C students who were totally virtual, and then you had other students who came every day. So, it was a mass confusion of everything, and so it was crazy. I had forgotten that. I really had forgotten that until you just asked that question, but it was just such chaos…. I don't blame anybody for it because we were in uncharted waters…. We did have a lot of kids whose grandparents or parents died from COVID. And so, obviously the fear was there, and they didn't know what the best thing was. Nobody knew.[350]

During the shutdowns in March of 2020, Ann Marie's school went digital and used Google Classroom.[351] Her school system was not prepared for the task of going online. She stated, "I posted in Google Classroom–lots of activities such as that. Didn't really work…. At that time, we were not prepared."[352] When the school reopened for the 2020-2021 school year, her administration implemented complex scheduling options for students, and strict pandemic policies were put into place.[353] Ann Marie recalled the new experience of teaching from a cart to minimize exposure in the school hallway and a ban on singing:

> There was a while that we didn't even sing because we didn't want to spread germs. I was going from room to room for a while and not having them come to my room. I was on a cart and going from room to room, so they wouldn't be switching in and out and getting in the halls and being around kids. So, that was hard. That was a new experience for me. I had never had to teach from a cart before.[354]

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[349] Music Educator D, telephone interview by author, Friday, December 15, 2023.

[350] Ibid.

[351] Ibid.

[352] Ibid.

[353] Ibid.

[354] Ibid.

Ann Marie emphasized the adversities of teaching through the pandemic. "It was just mass chaos back then. It really was. I can't believe that was only, what, two years ago? Three years ago? I blocked it out from my mind because it was so bad. It was horrible. It really was. Like I said, it was one of the worst years that I have had in twenty-eight years because it was just – it was bad. It really was."[355]

Music Educator E was given the pseudonym Tina. Tina's phone interview was conducted on Wednesday, January 3, 2024, at 11:00 am Eastern Standard Time. Although she reported on the Google Forms eligibility survey that she had been teaching before the pandemic, Tina stated in the interview that she had only been teaching primary school music for three years.[356] She did, however, have experience teaching primary school students through her music education courses and student teaching experience before and during the pandemic in the same district as her current teaching position.[357] The researcher determined that this qualified her to answer the interview questions.

Tina described teaching through the pandemic as "tense" and "challenging."[358] Her school district offered in-person and virtual learning in the 2020-2021 school year.[359] Tina described social distancing at her school as "bubbles" for students. Tina's used "bubbles" to facilitate social distancing in her music classroom by providing each student with their own chair

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[355] Music Educator D, telephone interview by author, Friday, December 15, 2023.

[356] Music Educator E, telephone interview by author, Wednesday, January 3, 2024.

[357] Ibid.

[358] Ibid.

[359] Ibid.

to mark their "bubble" space.[360] Tine said, "Kids had their own little bubbles. It was a struggle because I had chairs in the room. So, I had to have chairs for each kid, and some of the classes at that time were about thirty to thirty-five kids. I had to make sure I had enough chairs for the kids. And I also had to make sure there was room for the kids to move . . . around in the room because they're little, so they like to move."[361]

Research Questions

Research Question 1: What are the benefits of trauma-informed instruction in Title I school music programs in rural Georgia for kindergarten through second-grade students?

Research Question 2: What trauma-informed teaching approaches would be useful in meeting the needs exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic of primary music students?

Results

Linking Social-Emotional Learning and Trauma-Informed Teaching

To answer Research Question 1, the researcher asked participants, "Can you describe how social-emotional learning and trauma-informed teaching affect or benefit learning for primary-level (K-2nd) music students?" It was necessary to link social-emotional learning to trauma-informed teaching to provide music educators with context on the subject. Three of the five participants remarked either through e-mail communication or during their interviews that they had limited background knowledge about trauma-informed teaching (or with the specific label of "trauma-informed") prior to receiving their recruitment e-mail. Samantha confessed that

[360] Music Educator E, telephone interview by author, Wednesday, January 3, 2024.

[361] Ibid.

she searched the phrase trauma-informed teaching before participating in her interview.[362] From this search, she realized she did have some experience in the area, which provided her insight and perspective in her interview responses. She stated that in the past year or two, "we've had specific professional learning that is geared towards this. It's usually just a one-session, once-a-year type thing. It's not as much as what it needs to be is what I'm saying, but it was enough to teach me and to remind me that when a student is facing trauma that they simply can't take in new information."[363] Ann Marie was the most comfortable with terminology related to the study because of the school-wide trauma-informed initiatives that were recently put into place in her school.

In contrast, Jennifer was the only participant who remarked she had not previously heard of either social-emotional learning or trauma-informed teacher prior to the interview. She stated, "I don't touch on that at all, but I'm sure the homeroom teachers do. I wouldn't know. When we do PLCs, they just tell us what we need to know, and if it's something we don't need to do, they don't really tell us about it. I would say that I don't know a whole lot about that."[364] She also shared, "I don't know what it is. Maybe I'm using it already and don't know it? I don't know what that is… We don't talk about that sort of thing in my room."[365] Jennifer did mention that homeroom teachers did "mental health check-ins" during the pandemic, but she was unsure if this had continued post-pandemic.[366] Based on her responses to other questions throughout her interview, although she was not familiar with the specific terminology, it appeared that Jennifer

[362] Music Educator A, telephone interview by author, November 14, 2023.

[363] Ibid.

[364] Music Educator D, telephone interview by author, Friday, December 15, 2023.

[365] Music Educator B, telephone interview by author, December 6, 2023.

[366] Ibid.

was facilitating social-emotional learning in her classroom as well as implementing some aspects of trauma-informed teaching.

Effects and Benefits

Despite limited experience with the terminology, participants generally felt that social-emotional learning and trauma-informed instruction were beneficial or even essential to learning. Samantha stated, "Some of the benefits are that students hopefully learn to relate to each other better. They get help with their feelings, and in the past few years, I've gotten to an understanding that I cannot teach music, and I don't think that an academic teacher would be able to teach the rest of their academics if they are not also teaching social-emotional skills."[367] Vicky reported that, "when they're settled, and they're calm, that makes the teaching in the classroom and all that much better."[368] Referencing the tools she utilizes for social-emotional learning, Tina stated, "It's a kind of comfort for them. . . . For so many of these kids here, it really motivates them to learn music, and it helps them to learn in class in general too."[369]

In some cases, not addressing the social-emotional issues students are dealing with made teaching nearly impossible. One of the benefits for Vicky in addressing the emotional needs of her students was that it allowed her to teach.[370] Vicky believed trauma-informed practices and teaching social-emotional skills are essential for student learning. She said, "It greatly affects them because if there is one student who has anxiety issues or is having a meltdown and is

[367] Music Educator A, telephone interview by author, November 14, 2023.

[368] Music Educator C, telephone interview by author, Monday, December 11, 2023.

[369] Music Educator E, telephone interview by author, Wednesday, January 3, 2024.

[370] Music Educator C, telephone interview by author, Monday, December 11, 2023.

screaming the whole time, and they're screaming for like fifteen or twenty minutes consistently, you can't really get a lot of teaching done in those fifteen or twenty minutes."[371]

Ann Marie's school put multiple measures into place to address student needs, including professional development for all educators.[372] Utilizing trauma-informed practices has been a beneficial experience for Ann Marie and her students. Ann Marie shared, "It gives them ways to cope with certain things, and therefore, they can focus more in the classroom. I know we work a lot on strategies for these kids to deal with these social-emotional and trauma issues, and so as they're learning those strategies, when they're faced with something in the classroom, they can go back to those strategies. And therefore, they can obviously learn better, learn more if they are able to cope with what is going on in their life."[373] Ann Marie also shared about the therapeutic and healing effect of music itself:

> Well, you and I know as music teachers, how music can kind of just touch people in ways. It can serve to ease their minds. It can be therapy for them. It can take them somewhere else that they're not used to being. Just simply singing a song sometimes makes kids feel better. If you gear music–I guess it'd be more like music therapy–but if you gear music more towards that, so those kids that have had trauma and you're aware of that, it could definitely help them…. Music is just good for people who have been through trauma. It can just touch them.[374]

Despite the growing need for emotional and behavior support in the classroom, not all the effects were considered positive. Teaching social-emotional skills to address the issues students are dealing with takes time away from instruction. Samantha shared, "It seems kind of shallow, but it takes away time from music. That's just stating the obvious and the truth, but I feel like it

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[371] Music Educator C, telephone interview by author, Monday, December 11, 2023.

[372] Music Educator D, telephone interview by author, Friday, December 15, 2023.

[373] Ibid.

[374] Ibid.

should be stated because it takes away from our curriculum."[375] Student behavior has become increasingly disruptive and even physical at Samantha's school.[376] Attending to students' emotional needs sometimes leaves her unable to teach to teach her lessons. "It's frustrating to me because we lose a day of music lesson, but I felt like it was enough that we needed to completely stop and have an entire lesson on how to exist with each other, how to live with each other, how to treat each other, so that we feel safe."[377]

Identifying Student Needs

In order answer Research Question 2 more accurately, it was necessary to identify the current needs of students in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. The researcher asked the participants, "How would you describe student needs, behaviors, and behavior management in your classroom pre-pandemic, mid-pandemic, and post-pandemic?" Most music educators described a noticeable change in student behavior and needs after the pandemic.

Samantha stated about her teaching experience before the pandemic, "Being Title I… I feel like we have always had significant issues, and we will continue to have those issues. So, pre-pandemic, they were there. There're huge student needs."[378] Later in the interview, Samantha expanded upon those thoughts. "If [a student is] not incredibly motivated, they're just going to do the bare basics of what they need, and that's completely understandable. You know, they're living in their own traumatic situation. So, that's something that was there and hasn't gone away.

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[375] Music Educator A, telephone interview by author, November 14, 2023.

[376] Ibid.

[377] Ibid.

[378] Ibid.

In fact, I think it was amplified because of the pandemic."[379] Vicky shared that, "Pre-pandemic, my kids retained things better, we could do harder songs, those types of things. We could perform bigger skits and things like that."[380] Ann Marie commented, "We did more as far as listening, as far as singing."[381] She also shared, "I could put on a piece of music, and they would sit and listen or lay down and listen without talking to their neighbor, without rolling all over the floor. I guess their attention span was longer. I guess I should say that. Their attention span was longer, pre-pandemic."[382]

While most music educators didn't notice major changes in student needs and behavior during the pandemic, Jennifer shared that mask wearing caused behavior issues in her classroom. "When we had to wear masks during the pandemic, it was harder to tell who was playing who was talking, and who was disruptive. So, I would say that is the only time that behavior issues arose …. It was just a way for them to get away with it because I couldn't tell where it was coming from if they were talking or disrupting or playing."[383]

In contrast, the other music educators did not see increased behavior needs until after the pandemic. Samantha stated, "The violence, those behaviors, I didn't see them [during the pandemic]."[384] Vicky's sentiments were similar to Samantha's in regard to changes in her students' behavior. "I really didn't notice that during the pandemic at all. Kids were just happy to

[379] Music Educator A, telephone interview by author, November 14, 2023.

[380] Music Educator C, telephone interview by author, Monday, December 11, 2023.

[381] Music Educator D, telephone interview by author, Friday, December 15, 2023.

[382] Ibid.

[383] Music Educator B, telephone interview by author, December 6, 2023.

[384] Music Educator A, telephone interview by author, November 14, 2023.

be at school and not be at home."[385] Ann Marie felt as if the changes she observed in student behavior were pre-pandemic and post-pandemic as well. She did not observe any changes in student behavior during the pandemic. "It was an immediate switch. I'm not sure that there was a mid-pandemic thing."[386] Tina did not report any major behavioral issues during the pandemic but did notice the beginnings of social-emotional issues with her students. She said, "During [the pandemic] most of the kids, they were not really talkative. Probably because they were separated from other people."[387]

When describing post-pandemic teaching, Samantha reported that her students had begun exhibiting more physically violent behaviors. "We have a group of kindergarteners now who are, they're just different…. Many of them are more violent than I've ever seen."[388] Vicky recalled a specific incidence of violence at her school. "One day a second-grade class came to me after . . . lunch. They had seen one of their classmates get choked. It was a bad experience for them–very traumatic."[389]

Ann Marie has also encountered new, maladaptive behaviors with students in her class as well. She shared an example of students throwing instruments and becoming defiant when not given their way:

> I've had kids throw the [rhythm] sticks across the room because they want to play a drum. I've had them just sit there and not play instruments because they wanted another instrument. It's just little things that like. They just can't handle things. They can't cope. Not all of them are like that, but a lot of them are like that. They

[385] Music Educator C, telephone interview by author, Monday, December 11, 2023.

[386] Music Educator D, telephone interview by author, Friday, December 15, 2023.

[387] Music Educator E, telephone interview by author, Wednesday, January 3, 2024.

[388] Music Educator A, telephone interview by author, November 14, 2023.

[389] Music Educator C, telephone interview by author, Monday, December 11, 2023.

> cannot cope with everyday situations. They want everything to be their way, and they are not used to being told no.[390]

Ann Marie also commented on the current 2023-2024 kindergarten students. "As far as kids… we've touched on how they are post-pandemic. It's just different. Different."[391] Ann Marie spoke about the difference in student ability to cope or function during basic daily activities in detail:

> This kindergarten class that we've got–we've had this discussion with both this school and a private school here. I've got friends that teach there, and we're seeing it across the board with this kindergarten class. They were the babies during COVID, and so they were at home with moms that were working, or dads that were working, and trying to take care of older siblings. They were probably put in front of the TV, or put on a device, and so they don't–it goes back again to these programs that we're having. I mean literally, they don't know how to sit and watch. They don't know how to–because you think about. They didn't go to grocery stores. They didn't go to church. They didn't go to performances because there were none. . . . They weren't going anywhere or doing anything, and then all of the sudden, bam. We've opened back up, and we're doing things. But yet, they don't know how to function in those things or at those things.[392]

In addition to students acting out physically, participants reported emotional problems such as anxiety. Samantha described a feeling of being "easily overwhelmed."[393] "K-2 is not usually a time when you would expect students to get incredibly overwhelmed with anxiety and just all the things going on, but they are."[394] Vicky reported a similar experience. "They're more needy. They're more touchy-feely. They want hugs. Kids will come into the room and just cry, and they want a hug. . . . I've seen more anxiety."[395] Vicky also stated, "I can tell you that since

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[390] Music Educator D, telephone interview by author, Friday, December 15, 2023.

[391] Ibid.

[392] Ibid.

[393] Music Educator A, telephone interview by author, November 14, 2023.

[394] Ibid.

[395] Music Educator C, telephone interview by author, Monday, December 11, 2023.

COVID, I have felt like it was going downhill a little. There're more kids that have more behavior issues. There seems to be a lot more neediness of the students."[396] Tina also noticed a change in this area with her students. Tina stated, "I just feel like the kids are more needy now than they were during the pandemic."[397]

Students also seemed to be less independent and more immature. Vicky compared the maturity of her current kindergarten class to that of toddlers. She said, "Most of the kindergarten kids are very immature. I would say like three [years old]."[398] She also stated, "Students are more immature than they used to be. They have less of an attention span."[399] Ann Marie said, "They can't tie their shoes. They can't put on their coats. If there's a piece of paper on the floor, they're just going to leave it. Walk right by it. They're just different." In reference to all of the changes she had noticed in student behavior since the pandemic, Ann Marie explained, "I don't know that all of it can be blamed on the pandemic, but I think a lot of it can be."[400] Vicky shared a nickname for the new behaviors students were exhibiting. "We call it the 'COVID slide' within education because everybody went backwards. It doesn't matter what county you worked in; all the kids went backwards."[401] Tina shared that many of her students are struggling with being creative independently. She said, "I've noticed they're not as creative. I have to teach them how to be creative and think outside of the box."[402]

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[396] Music Educator C, telephone interview by author, Monday, December 11, 2023.

[397] Music Educator E, telephone interview by author, Wednesday, January 3, 2024.

[398] Music Educator C, telephone interview by author, Monday, December 11, 2023.

[399] Ibid.

[400] Music Educator D, telephone interview by author, Friday, December 15, 2023.

[401] Music Educator C, telephone interview by author, Monday, December 11, 2023.

[402] Music Educator E, telephone interview by author, Wednesday, January 3, 2024.

In addition to describing the changing needs of students, music educators described how they were addressing these needs in their classrooms with their students. From their stories, five themes emerged that relate to the second research question. These themes included the increased need for trauma-informed practices, the importance of building relationships, using songs for social-emotional learning, targeting specific student needs, and creating a safe and positive environment.

Increased Need for Trauma-Informed Practices

Most educators reported an increased need for trauma-informed practices, specifically in the focus area of social-emotional learning. Ann Marie shared, "We have, since COVID, we have obviously seen social-emotional issues skyrocket, and we've had to implement some new things."[403] Her school adopted a trauma-informed approach by introducing school-wide accommodations for student emotional support, including hiring an additional counselor, creating an ABS (Autism, Behavior, and Sensory) room where students have the opportunity to calm down without fear of disciplinary intervention, and implementing a social-emotional learning program called Suite 360.[404] The social-emotional support was crucial for her students. Ann Marie said, "We've just seen such a difference in the kids. Many, many, many more social-emotional issues."[405]

Samantha's school also put trauma-informed measures into place, including implementing a special exploratory class for social-emotional learning, but Samantha felt

[403] Music Educator D, telephone interview by author, Friday, December 15, 2023.

[404] Ibid.

[405] Ibid.

students needed more support than a singular class.[406] "At my school, they actually created this exploratory class that was just for social-emotional learning. So, that just kind of shows how they felt they could compartmentalize it in just a class."[407] Samantha also commented that while there is a greater need now for trauma-informed practices, her students have always been at increased risk from exposure to ACEs due to their socio-economic situations:

> I feel they have faced trauma the entire time that I've been here. I know that it's not all, but it's the fact that we are Title I says that it's enough. They are facing struggles that the average learner wouldn't face. I feel like that there has always been some aspect of it in my time as a teacher. At least in . . . County because of our Title I position. Then, as we have had lockdowns become part of our routine and mass shootings, these are other experiences where all of these things combined have led to more use of SEL and other [trauma-informed] teaching strategies.[408]

Due to the needs of her students, Samantha was well-versed in teaching social-emotional skills. She shared that she frequently used songs to facilitate social-emotional skills.[409] She observed an increased need for trauma-informed teaching practices for her students and shared that she used them now more than ever before.[410] She stated, "Post-COVID, there's been a much greater need for those lessons, for those songs, for a greater understanding of it."[411]

Vicky also agreed that students were dealing with more trauma in their lives and that there was an increased need for trauma-informed practices. She shared the details about handling a specific incident in her school:

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[406] Music Educator A, telephone interview by author, November 14, 2023.

[407] Ibid.

[408] Ibid.

[409] Ibid.

[410] Ibid.

[411] Ibid.

> One day a second-grade class came to me after – right straight from lunch. They had seen one of their classmates get choked. It was a bad experience for them – very traumatic. They don't teach you how to handle that in college. That was the first time I ever had to deal with that. I'm a believer in the Lord, and so, I was like, "God, how do I handle this?" The kids ended up making a song for that child, and it kind of eased off, and after thirty minutes, we could have class. That was an example of a traumatic moment.[412]

Tina has also noticed an increased need to deal with social-emotional issues with her students and stated, "The kids are not really social. Their social skills are low. . . . It's been a challenge dealing with the kids, trying to get their social skills up."[413] Her students are having trouble communicating their emotions and being around other people. Tina said, "Some kids, they don't say not even a word. It's hard for them to communicate how they are feeling. . . . Most of them don't communicate how they are feeling. I guess it may be a trust thing too. There might be something else going on. . . . They stay where they are, and they stay in their own little area."[414]

The Importance of Building Relationships

A common theme among participants was the importance of building relationships with students. Samantha emphasized the importance of building solid relationships with her students and stated, "I'm building a relationship that will carry through, and being a teacher that teaches K, 1, and 2, that relationship is really important because we're going to have them for three

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[412] Music Educator C, telephone interview by author, Monday, December 11, 2023.

[413] Music Educator E, telephone interview by author, Wednesday, January 3, 2024.

[414] Ibid.

years."[415] She believed that "without the relationship, you're just throwing information out into the wind."[416]

Jennifer took time during her small groups to communicate with students one-on-one. "We have several moments in my class where we do things as a whole group, and then they do things on their own. And then, we come back together. So, that's the time where I would check in with the child and see what's going on. It would just be a one-on-one conversation."[417] She did this when she sees a student who she described as "struggling." She stated, "If someone is having a hard time, I try to talk to them one-on-one while the other kids are working about what's going on with them."[418] Jennifer made a special effort to build relationships with students by getting to know their names, their parents, and working together with the school counselor and classroom teachers to learn how to communicate more effectively with individual students:

> I try to make it a point to know all their names, and I try to know all their parents at car riders because I have car riders every day and talk to them. If something is going on, I do inquire with our counselor. I'll [ask], "Ok, what's going on with so-and-so," or "Why are they acting this way? Is something going on?" And I report what I see from their behaviors to the counselor or the teacher. I feel like if you don't know what a child's situation is, and they're acting out, there is a reason for it. So, if someone is acting in a way that I need to know more about the situation to know how to handle them when I'm talking to them or how to approach them so that it's not going to make them shut down, then I do try to inquire about those things.[419]

The other participants also shared examples of building relationships with students. Vicky shared, "I've been working this one [student]–I actually see him tomorrow. . . . So

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[415] Music Educator A, telephone interview by author, November 14, 2023.

[416] Ibid.

[417] Music Educator B, telephone interview by author, December 6, 2023.

[418] Ibid.

[419] Ibid.

tomorrow, I know when I see him, I'm going to give him a really good hug."[420] Ann Marie described how she tried to make meaningful connections and build relationships with her students:

> Sometimes, the music teachers are not necessarily aware of things that go on. So, I try to really build relationships with my kids, so that I know and that I'm aware of all that's going on in their life. Just so that, if it is a song we're singing, maybe pulling out a certain part of the song and make the class aware of it. Then that student knows I'm aware of that situation, her situation or his situation, and that I care about them.[421]

Tina commented that it can be hard as a music specialist to make time for individual students with such large class loads, but she still tries to find time to connect with each child.[422] Tina stated, "I do the best I can with the students. I have an average of about twenty to thirty kids in the classroom. It is a lot to manage each kid, but when I do have time to individually work with each kid, I do what I can to make sure that they're working hard and in a nice positive environment."[423] Part of the way Tina built relationships was by speaking positively with students and being actively engaged during her lessons. "I try to help build their confidence . . . and encourage them."[424] She also frequently reminded her students that she is there for them when and if they need her. She told her students, "You can always come to me if you need a hug. It doesn't matter what time or day. If you want to give me a hug, or you want to give me a high five, or talk–you can always come to talk to me."[425]

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[420] Music Educator C, telephone interview by author, Monday, December 11, 2023.

[421] Music Educator D, telephone interview by author, Friday, December 15, 2023.

[422] Music Educator E, telephone interview by author, Wednesday, January 3, 2024.

[423] Ibid.

[424] Ibid.

[425] Ibid.

Using Songs for Social-Emotional Learning

The use of songs to encourage social-emotional growth and learning was another common theme among interviewees. Four of the five music educators interviewed reported using songs to facilitate building social-emotional skills for their students. Samantha works on social-emotional skills every time she sees her students, and she does this primarily through the use of songs that teach or encourage social-emotional skills. In reference to social-emotional learning, Samantha stated, "I do it regularly with the SEL songs. There's usually one a day that we do that encourages different areas of growth or self-concept."[426] She used songs like "You-Nique" from the digital *Quaver's Marvelous World of Music* curriculum. "It really works on self-concept and self-image."[427] In fact, the song "You-Nique" became a sort of SEL anthem for her students. She shared, "'You-Ninque' has become like a theme song for our school. There are teachers that have grabbed hold of it. They had no idea it came from the music curriculum. They just knew that our kids needed it. . . . It's been really neat to see how that has really helped."[428] Samantha regularly used songs like "You-Nique" from the *Quaver Music* curriculum SEL playlist which is available without a subscription through the *Quaver Ed* channel on YouTube.

Tina also used *Quaver Music* SEL songs with her students during music class. Like Samantha, her students particularly enjoy the song "You-Nique." Tina said in her interview, "We have a song. It's kind of our theme song here. I use *Quaver Music*, and the song they love so much is 'You-Nique.' I play it every week at the end for each class. Just so that it reminds them to be unique, and be yourself, and that you don't have to be anybody else. Being you is just

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[426] Music Educator A, telephone interview by author, November 14, 2023.

[427] Ibid.

[428] Ibid.

fine."[429] Even when they are not in music class, the importance and meaning of the song stays with her students. Tina shared, "I remember one day I was [walking] down the hallway, and this kid was singing the song. They stopped me in the hallway and [said], "Oh, Ms. [Tina], I was singing this song!"[430]

Vicky and Ann Marie also used character-building songs to teach the students how to get along with others. Vicky stated, "There's this man, he has a character CD, and he talks about if you want to have a friend, first you must be one. . . . I'll play that song for them. That was one of the class routines I did with this one class every week last year was that song. Every week. Every week when I saw them because they needed to hear that."[431] Ann Marie chose songs that coincide with her school's counseling program's character word of the month. "I'll find songs to go with the word of the month, and sometimes those songs do coincide with some social-emotional issues."[432]

Music educators pulled these songs from a variety of sources, including both free and purchased resources. As seen in Figure One below, two of the five music educators reported using *Quaver Music* for songs to address the social-emotional needs of students. These songs are available through the paid curriculum subscription, but many of the songs are also available free of charge on YouTube. Two of the five reported using YouTube to find social-emotional learning songs, and one reported using physical CDs. Music educators seemed to prefer digital resources over physical resources.

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[429] Music Educator E, telephone interview by author, Wednesday, January 3, 2024.

[430] Ibid.

[431] Music Educator C, telephone interview by author, Monday, December 11, 2023.

[432] Music Educator D, telephone interview by author, Friday, December 15, 2023.

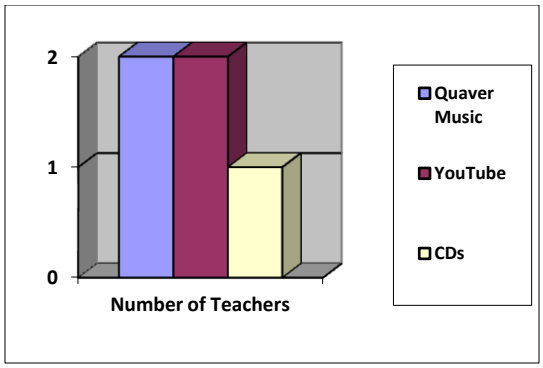

Figure One. Resources used to find songs for social-emotional learning.

Targeting Specific Student Needs

Outside of using specific social-emotional learning songs, music educators reported using various resources and techniques to manage needs specific to their students. This included using supportive videos, modeling, student partnering, additional spacing between students, and comfort items. Students' social-emotional needs varied from school to school. Needs ranged from using kind words to learning how to be active listeners.

Vicky reported that she played encouraging videos for her students and used them in what she calls "mini-lessons" before music instruction started.[433] Vicky's students struggled with speaking kindly to one another, and she worked with them to use kind and uplifting language. She stated that her students are "talking bad with each other. They're calling each other names, and you can't just go get the counselor. You've got to deal with it. So, we'll have mini-lessons before we start the music lesson just on the power of our words."[434] Vicky shared a specific story about a video commercial she used to teach students the power of their words:

> Ikea has a really good commercial on YouTube where there's a plant that is being bullied, and there's a plant that's being spoken well of. And you can tell the

[433] Music Educator C, telephone interview by author, Monday, December 11, 2023.

[434] Ibid.

> difference in one week. You can see a difference between the plant that's being bullied and the plant that's being well-spoken to. The plant that's being bullied dies, and the plant that's being spoken to is flourishing. I'll show that video, and then we'll talk about, 'Just imagine, if this plant has died because of the words we've spoken to it, what does that do to us as humans? How does that affect us?' And so, we'll talk about the power of words and how we are supposed to speak life over each other.[435]

Tina's students also struggled with speaking kindly to one another. Tina used modeling to address this issue. She stated, "We go over . . . being nice and kind. We have kids who say stuff that shouldn't be said, or it's not nice. When I correct them, I always try to give them an example."[436] She described how she built empathy with her students by asking questions such as, "How would you feel if someone said those words to you?"[437] Tina also used student partnering to help students gain confidence and leadership skills. She shared, "Once they help them, they gain a little confidence and start doing it on their own. That's why I try to help build their confidence and try to talk to their classmates and encourage them. Another way is, I have a kid who assists me in the class. It might be one. It might be two, and they go around and help the kids."[438] She shared a specific example of a student who struggled with using the *Quaver Music* website on her laptop:

> She came up to me when we had laptops and said, "Hey, can I have somebody help me?" She doesn't speak that much either in the class, so I was shocked that she came up and asked me for help. I had a student who helped her with the laptop, and she has a lot more confidence in working with the laptop now when we are on Quaver. I always try to make sure the kids learn some leadership skills to help those that are low with social skills or anything else.[439]

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[435] Music Educator C, telephone interview by author, Monday, December 11, 2023

[436] Music Educator E, telephone interview by author, Wednesday, January 3, 2024.

[437] Ibid.

[438] Ibid.

[439] Ibid.

Samantha reported that her students had difficulty respecting physical boundaries between each other and had also become more physically violent with each other.[440] To help students learn personal space and to keep their hands to themselves, she kept a modified version of social distance spacing between students in her classroom. She shared, "I had to create ways in my classroom to get the students to have their own personal space, and that actually became one of the best behavior management tools that I've ever had. . . . That space gives them that room to move, and to play [instruments], and just be. And they're not bothering each other. It helps a lot."[441]

Ann Marie built social-emotional learning directly into her lessons and allowed students who experienced emotional needs such as anxiety to use comfort items in her classroom. She shared, "Really and truly, social-emotional learning, I just kind of incorporate all of that into my lessons. If there's a child that's in the classroom, and you know that they have social-emotional issues, you just kind of teach them the same way you do all of them. You may give them a little more grace, or you may let them move to the back of the room if they need a minute to calm down. You may give them a stuffed animal to hold while they're in here. Just different things like that."[442] Vicky also allows her students to utilize comfort items. She said, "We have one child whose parent came from Ukraine, and so she brings something with her every class period, something that comforts her. Whether it's a handkerchief, whether it's a note, or whether it's something [else] that's comforting to her."[443]

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[440] Music Educator A, telephone interview by author, November 14, 2023.

[441] Ibid.

[442] Music Educator D, telephone interview by author, Friday, December 15, 2023.

[443] Music Educator C, telephone interview by author, Monday, December 11, 2023.

Ann Marie's students struggled with skills such as listening and following directions. She stated, "This year my learning goal . . . is actually teaching kids to listen more because they are so–I've just noticed that they are so busy. They can't sit still even to watch a short video, and so for my learning goal we are listening every day to music. I'm teaching them how to be an awesome audience–how to sit and focus and pay attention because that has definitely gone away since the pandemic."[444] To address this issue, Ann Marie began to gamify listening. She found games from sources such as Teachers Pay Teachers.[445] She described a listening game "where you roll the dice, and then you talk about what you heard: dynamics, tempo, and different stuff like that. They like doing that. You get to roll the dice, find that number, and answer that question today. They enjoy that."[446] Ann Marie's use of games to address student needs also ties into the next theme: creating a safe and positive environment.

Creating a Safe and Positive Environment

Creating a safe and positive classroom environment was also a common theme among participant responses. For Samantha, an integral part of trauma-informed teaching was creating a safe space for her students. She said, "It's just to remind them that they are safe, that they are cared for, [and] that they are loved."[447] To do this, Samantha used "calming activities" to "bring them back to a place of normalcy."[448] When asked what she meant by calming activities, Samantha answered, "YouTube videos that have brain breaks, focused breathing, and calm

[444] Music Educator D, telephone interview by author, Friday, December 15, 2023.

[445] Ibid.

[446] Ibid.

[447] Music Educator A, telephone interview by author, November 14, 2023.

[448] Ibid.

songs. Anything that just kind of hits my mind that I know would be calming instead of exciting–something to bring the room back to a safe place."[449]

Tina described an example of de-escalating problematic behavior to make sure all students feel safe in her class:

> I did have a student recently who just came here to our school. I'd heard that behavior-wise, he has a lot going on. So, he came in my room, and I have a little stage. He would just jump on and off the stage, which is not safe for him and the other kids because he could hurt them. So, what I would do is, I would play an interactive video for the kids to work with while I try to work with him and try to de-escalate because he does get upset when things do not go his way. I try to problem solve like, "Hey, ok. What can I do to make this better?" or "What can we do?" and so on. I try my best to de-escalate, and so far, it's been getting better with him in the classroom. He comes in now and goes to his spot. He doesn't jump on the stage like he usually does. I try to de-escalate it as much as I can, and then, if I cannot, I try to get [administration] to help with that. Like I said, I've got so many kids, and it's hard to try to get the one kid to calm down. I try to make sure that I accommodate not only to him but to everybody else in the classroom as well. So, it's not just focused on just pleasing him or making sure he doesn't go off. It's just for everybody.[450]

Tina also shared that she had calming corners in her room. Tina said, "I do have some corners in my room where I say, 'Hey, why don't you go sit in the corner and take a break.' And I do have some puzzles too to help them have a little space and calm down a little bit. If they're calm for about a good ten minutes . . . I give them a positive incentive."[451] The corners helped students become emotionally regulated, so that they could continue learning and rejoin the group when ready. Tina said, "I always try to reassure them like, 'Hey, I want you to keep up this behavior.' And I just want them to feel like this is a safe place for them to just be calm and feel safe."[452] Jennifer also used space away from the group to help students calm down. She did this

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[449] Music Educator A, telephone interview by author, November 14, 2023.

[450] Music Educator E, telephone interview by author, Wednesday, January 3, 2024.

[451] Ibid.

[452] Ibid.

if students were having a disagreement with each other. “I have three chairs in my room that are really spread out in the back of the room. . . . Sometimes, they just need to cool down and get away from that person.”[453]

Creating a safe and positive environment was also a top priority for Tina. She was a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) team member at her school. She stated, “I am part of the PBIS program. I am a part of that team since I am in specials, and I work with most of the students [in the school] in my classroom. . . .We have our expectations, and I make sure that students know the expectations when they come in my classroom.”[454] Tina had many positive supports in place for her students that motivated them to try their best and work hard in music class. In her interview, she shared a new PBIS support she put in place this school year. “A new thing that I started this year is called star musicians. It’s for kids who go over expectations just for music, and they get their name written on their own star. . . . I have them put a little autograph on it to make it look like a little famous thing. That really motivates the kids to work hard in the classroom. They also get to get in the treasure box and pick one little toy that they want for working hard in the classroom.”[455] Everything Tina did with her students worked towards building a safe and positive environment for them. “I always feel like for being a teacher it’s important to have that positive environment because that sets the expectation of what it’s going to feel like when they come in my room. . . . I’ve had some cases where the kids coming here was just their place of calming down and just de-escalate and enjoy school and music. I really do like working with the students and making sure they’re in a positive environment.”[456]

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[453] Music Educator B, telephone interview by author, December 6, 2023

[454] Music Educator E, telephone interview by author, Wednesday, January 3, 2024.

[455] Ibid.

[456] Ibid.

Jennifer's school also used a PBIS approach. The students could earn paper dollars when they met certain expectations to shop at their PBIS character store. Jennifer stated, "We give a lot of PBIS rewards, and that's what I give them in my class. I used to do candy and try all kinds of different things, and nothing ever worked. I don't know what it is about these little fake dollars that we give them, but they will do whatever I say to get that dollar. It's just a paper dollar, but they can go to our store and buy things with it. I don't know what's in there, but obviously they want that dollar."[457] Vicky also used positive supports for students in her classroom management plan. She described how her classroom management techniques went digital during the pandemic. She said, "I used magnets in my classroom and numbers. And I have the kids sit in color-coded spots, and each team gets moved up. I focus more on the positive than I do the negative. So, I do that now digitally. Same kind of concept, but I do it digitally instead of having a magnetic board."[458]

Jennifer believed a positive environment included having fun with her students. She said, "I have fun. I want them to love me and my class. Not to the point where I'm going to put up with anything, but I try so hard to keep everybody engaged. And they love my class, so that's great."[459] Jennifer also liked to be silly with her students. She shared, "The best thing I find that works is to make a joke out of their behavior somehow. Make something funny out of it. Not like making fun of them, but if you draw attention to their bad behavior in a way that is hysterical, they stop because they're laughing. They're not mad anymore. I find humor works the best.

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[457] Music Educator B, telephone interview by author, December 6, 2023.

[458] Music Educator C, telephone interview by author, Monday, December 11, 2023.

[459] Music Educator B, telephone interview by author, December 6, 2023.

Making a silly face at them works. Sometimes, that's all it takes. . . . I'm just silly. I find silliness is the best deterrent."[460]

Summary

Interview responses of the participants indicated that primary music educators had noticed an increase in the emotional and behavioral needs of students since the COVID-19 pandemic. Veteran teachers who had many years of experience teaching primary music were experiencing challenges in their teaching that they had not encountered before. Music educators may not have been very familiar with terms such as "trauma-informed" teaching, but many were using trauma-informed techniques to meet the increased emotional and behavioral needs of their students. As Samantha said, "Knowing it as that term, I honestly didn't even realize this was a term until your study. I started looking it up, and I [realized] these are things that we do [and] that we have talked about." Participants reported that students seemed to be suffering more from anxiety, had shorter attention spans, and exhibited more physical and aggressive behavioral problems than before the pandemic.

Music educators commonly used social-emotional learning to help manage students' emotional, and subsequently behavioral, needs. Primary music educators were tailoring social-emotional learning to meet the specific needs of their students. One common method was using songs to teach the social-emotional skills their students needed. Other methods included using supportive videos, modeling, student partnering, additional spacing between students, and comfort items.

Participants described teaching through the pandemic as "chaos," "horrible," "scary," and "a nightmare." Since then, music educators observed an increase in problematic behaviors

[460] Music Educator B, telephone interview by author, December 6, 2023.

affecting classroom learning and changing how they teach. In particular, educators described the 2023-2024 kindergarten class who were babies and toddlers during the pandemic as "different." Ann Marie stated, "There's just been a lot that's happened in the last several years since that pandemic. You kind of sometimes wish it would go back to pre-pandemic ways. It's just a lot. A lot."[461]

[461] Music Educator D, telephone interview by author, Friday, December 15, 2023.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Overview

This chapter provides a summary of the data and interpretations of the findings in reference to both the theoretical framework and the literature review. Data from interviews indicated perceived benefits of trauma-informed music education with primary-level music students. The themes found in the data included the increased need for trauma-informed practices, the importance of building relationships, using songs for social-emotional learning, targeting specific student needs, and creating a safe and positive environment. The study provided findings significant to the literature theoretically, empirically, and for practical use. The geographic location and participant quantity limited the study. The researcher recommends further action in research involving trauma-informed music education.

Summary

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the study was built around the tenets of trauma-informed care, trauma-informed pedagogy, and trauma-informed music education. The four facets of trauma-informed care are realizing the widespread impact of trauma, recognizing the signs and symptoms, responding with appropriate trauma-informed practices, and seeking to avoid re-traumatization.[462] The six principles include trustworthiness and transparency; peer support; collaboration and mutuality; empowerment; voice and choice; and cultural, historical, and gender issues.[463] Trauma-informed teaching provides strategies for students to practice emotional self-

[462] Barnard College, "Trauma-Informed Pedagogy."

[463] Erdman, Colker, and Winter, *Trauma & Young Children*, 132-133.

regulation, so they can return their focus to learning. This is done by building strong relationships that create an environment that provides trust, safety, and consistency.[464] These strategies require advance planning and practice.[465] Trauma-informed music education fosters student growth through individualized instruction and positive relationships with students; balances encouraging, empowering, and self-selected activities; and provides a safe learning space that allows for student preference and connection to others.[466] The themes found in the study correspond to the theoretical framework and literature review.

Benefits and Effects

The benefits and effects described by participants helped to answer the first research question: What are the benefits of trauma-informed instruction in Title I school music programs in rural Georgia for kindergarten through second-grade students? Four of the five participants expressed that aspects of trauma-informed teaching, such as social-emotional learning, were necessary for teaching and learning in primary music instruction. Participants expressed that learning could not happen until the emotional needs of students were met. Trauma-informed teaching practices that were being used improved student behavior, allowing teaching and learning to occur. Some of the benefits educators described included the perception of increases in students' emotional comfort, motivation, ability to cope, focus, and capacity for better and more learning. The only participant who did not share this opinion had not heard of social-emotional learning or trauma-informed teaching but described in detail the effective utilization of

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[464] Erdman, Colker, and Winter, *Trauma & Young Children*, 50.

[465] Ibid.

[466] Ryals, "A Case Study of One Trauma-Informed Music Education Program," 112.

several trauma-informed strategies that managed her students' needs. The only perceived negative effect was time taken away from music curriculum instruction to deal with the social-emotional issues of students.

The Increased Need for Trauma-Informed Practices

Data from the interviews indicated an increased need for trauma-informed practices. Participants in the study described a significant increase in observed nonadaptive behaviors of students. Additionally, participants made direct statements regarding the specific need to increase the use of these practices. Interviewees described post-pandemic students as needy, anxious, overwhelmed, immature, and violent, with nonadaptive behaviors such as screaming, crying, shutting down, throwing instruments, and physical altercations. Additionally, participants stated that students seemed to have difficulty paying attention, listening, and following directions. Music educators made several comments about students simply being "different" after the pandemic, concurrent with other post-pandemic descriptions of students' emotional states found in the literature.

In a nationwide study by Jeffrey Ashby, Kenneth Rice, Ibrahim Kira, and Jaleh Davari, researchers recommended that schools adopt trauma-informed practices due to the impact traumatic stress related to the pandemic would have on families.[467] Family stress has significant implications for children's emotional well-being. When comparing family mental health before and after the pandemic, Feinberg et al. found a significant decline in family mental health and linked parental depression to the manifestation of internal and external emotional problems in children.[468] Carrie Wall found behaviors such as crying, physical aggression, and lack of

[467] Ashby et al., "The Relationship of COVID-19 Traumatic Stress," 2607.

[468] Feinberg et al., "Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic," 362.

motivation to be behavioral manifestations of student emotional distress related to the detrimental effects of the pandemic on children's social skills and ability to build relationships.[469] Additionally, the observations of student behavior that music educators described in their interviews align with trauma expert Bessel van der Kolk's profile of traumatized children, who showed:

> (1) a pervasive pattern of dysregulation, (2) problems with attention and concentration, and (3) difficulties getting along with themselves and others. These children's moods and feelings rapidly shifted from one extreme to another–from temper tantrums and panic to detachment, flatness, and dissociation. When they got upset (which was much of the time), they could neither calm themselves down nor describe what they were feeling. Having a biological system that keeps pumping out stress hormones to deal with real or imagined threats leads to physical problems: sleep disturbances, headaches, unexplained pain, oversensitivity to touch or sound. Being so agitated or shut down keeps them from being able to focus their attention and concentration.[470]

The Importance of Building Relationships

All five music educators commented on the importance of building relationships with students. Building relationships forms the foundation of both trauma-informed teaching and trauma-informed music education as described in the theoretical framework. This can be challenging for primary music educators who often teach all students in multiple grade levels. Kristin Souers and Pete Hall write, "No one said relationship is easy. In fact, creating and sustaining a relationship with someone is one of the hardest things [educators] can do. It takes effort, patience, and, most important, grace."[471] Creating special bonds with every single music student may not be practical or even possible. In fact, "attempting to build dozens, hundreds, or

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[469] Wall, "What Hurt and What Helped," 261-264.

[470] Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 160.

[471] Souers and Hall, *Fostering Resilient Learners*, 93.

even thousands of such relationships is not a realistic expectation for any [educator]."[472] More reasonably, music educators should strive to meet the goal of being "safe enough and healthy enough" for each of their students.[473] Music educators can do this by providing "consistency, positivity, and integrity" in all of their interactions with students.[474]

The importance of building relationships with students was found throughout the literature. In a study regarding trauma-informed approaches in schools, Carrie Wall found building relationships was a vital part of the successful implementation of school-wide trauma-informed initiatives as observed by increased academic performance and behavior of students.[475] Puchner and Markowitz also found relationships to be a key component of successful trauma-informed teaching during their study as did Miller, Stipp, and Bazemore-Bertrand.[476] Erdman, Colker, and Winter state that trauma-informed teaching is "rooted in relationships."[477] According to the case study by Ryals, "positive student-teacher relationships" are essential for trauma-informed music classrooms.[478] Jacqui Plumb, Kelly Bush, and Sonia Kersevich described these relationships built in trauma-informed classrooms as "healing relationships."[479]

Building relationships with students is vital in the post-pandemic music room. Educators may "underestimate the power of connection and the value it can add to education," but this is

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[472] Souers and Hall, *Fostering Resilient Learners*, 96.

[473] Ibid.

[474] Ibid.

[475] Wall, "Relationship Over Reproach," 132.

[476] Puchner and Markowitz, "Elementary Teachers' Experiences with Trauma-Informed Practice," 329; Miller, Stipp, and Bazemore-Bertrand, "Student Trauma, Trauma-informed Teaching, and Self-care," 62

[477] Erdman, Colker, and Winter, *Trauma & Young Children*, 132-133.

[478] Ryals, "A Case Study of One Trauma-Informed Music Education Program," 112.

[479] Plumb, Bush, and Kersevich, "Trauma-Sensitive Schools: An Evidence-Based Approach," 51.

not the case.[480] Instead, educators should consider that "providing connection and safety does not require us to become best friends with our students or minimize academics; it requires us to commit to providing a healthy, supportive environment where students feel cared about and empowered to learn."[481] Students who have experienced trauma need strong relationships with adults in their lives to heal and strong relationships with teachers at school to learn. Moreover, all students benefit from healthy and safe relationships with teachers.

Creating a Safe and Positive Environment

Like building relationships, creating a safe and positive environment also aligns with the tenants of trauma-informed teaching and trauma-informed music education. All five music educators described their classroom management and environments with details relating to the emotional and physical safety of students and feelings of positivity. Participants of the study used the word "safe" in reference to both emotional and physical safety nine times during interviews and "positive" in reference to their classroom environment or behavior management style eight times. Other words participants used that related to a creating a positive environment included "fun," "hysterical," "silly," "nice," and "encourage."

A study about the Healthy Environments and Response to Trauma in School (HEARTS) program found student behavior improved by providing "trauma-informed, safe and supportive environments that foster resilience and wellness for all."[482] In another study about the effects of singing on mental health, participants described the importance of the music ensemble as an

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[480] Kristin Souers and Peter Hall, *Relationship, Responsibility, and Regulation: Trauma-Invested Practices for Fostering Resilient Learners*," 77.

[481] Ibid.

[482] Dorado et al., "Healthy Environments and Response to Trauma in Schools (HEARTS)," 165-167.

emotionally safe environment that allowed for emotional vulnerability and expression.[483] For classroom environments to be trauma-sensitive, students need a "trustworthy environment with safe, trustworthy adults caring for them."[484] Positive classroom environments are places in which "adults create safe spaces where students can learn, struggle, fail, persevere, and eventually succeed. Staff embolden and encourage students to tackle any task they desire. Staff partner with students and empower them to want to do better. Staff work hard to help improve students' sense of self-worth and belief in themselves."[485] Additionally, student dysregulation often causes "frustration, loss of instructional time, and overall class disruption. That's a pretty compelling argument for creating a positive learning environment."[486]

The use of Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) was described by interview participants as a common strategy to create a positive classroom environment. Music educators described using incentives, rewards, and behavior trackers such as Class Dojo in their PBIS implementation. PBIS is an effective classroom management system that has been found to improve student behavior by clearly defining behavioral expectations, modeling appropriate classroom behavior, and providing positive feedback to students when expectations are met.[487] PBIS initiatives, however, do not address the "root cause" of behaviors stemming from trauma.[488] PBIS may be utilized as a trauma-informed strategy, but a thorough trauma-informed classroom requires additional strategies such as providing additional support to students through

[483] Damsgaard and Brinkmann, "Me and Us: Cultivating Presence and Mental Health through Choir Singing," 1137-1138.

[484] Souers and Hall, *Fostering Resilient Learners*, 35.

[485] Souers and Hall, *Relationship, Responsibility, and Regulation*, 25.

[486] Ibid., 49-50.

[487] James et al., "Longitudinal Disciplinary and Achievement," 1513.

[488] Plumb, Bush, and Kersevich, "Trauma-Sensitive Schools: An Evidence-Based Approach," 54.

the explicit teaching of positive coping skills.[489] This can be done through the incorporation of social-emotional learning.

Using Songs for Social-Emotional Learning

The trauma-informed practice that was most commonly reported by study participants was social-emotional learning. This was likely influenced by music educators' familiarity with social-emotional learning through professional learning on the subject. Music educators described the need for increases in social-emotional learning for their students during music class. Music educators reported that large deficits in social-emotional skills among their students negatively impacted learning, and teaching social-emotional skills allowed more curricular learning to occur. Data from the interviews indicated that the most commonly reported resource used for implementing social-emotional learning in primary music classrooms was the purposeful selection of songs that featured social-emotional skills. Music educators intentionally selected songs that directly related to the areas of most needed social-emotional growth for their students.

Supporting the growth of social-emotional skills in the classroom is essential for students who have experienced trauma because classroom learning cannot occur before social-emotional needs are met.[490] Songs that facilitate social-emotional learning, such as affirmation songs, encourage students to think positively and develop a growth mindset.[491] Culturally diverse songs help students build empathy, self-awareness, and awareness of others.[492] Students can describe

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[489] Plumb, Bush, and Kersevich, "Trauma-Sensitive Schools: An Evidence-Based Approach," 54.

[490] Bashant, *Building a Trauma-Informed, Compassionate Classroom,* 3.

[491] Raschdorf, May, and Searcy, "Integrating Social-Emotional Learning Into Our 'New Normal,'" 45.

[492] Ibid., 47.

their emotions through active listening which can promote mindful moments and social-emotional learning.[493] Additionally, activities such as listening and singing songs about social-emotional skills develop students' self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and responsibility.[494]

Targeting Specific Student Needs

Music educators in this study also reported using a variety of other resources to teach social-emotional skills and meet students' emotional needs such as videos, modeling, student partnering, and comfort items. Participants in the study purposefully selected and utilized resources to address the specific and unique needs of the students. The use of diverse resources or activities to meet students' needs is common in trauma-informed teaching. According to Carrie Wall, trauma-informed approaches may include supporting student needs through activities such as providing students with brain breaks, flexible seating, safe spaces, mindfulness activities, breathing exercises, dimmed lighting, and calming background music.[495] Music educators cannot prevent students from experiencing trauma, but they can provide students with the skills necessary to manage trauma-related stress and associated dysregulation by adopting relevant trauma-informed teaching strategies.[496]

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[493] Raschdorf, May, and Searcy, "Integrating Social-Emotional Learning Into Our 'New Normal,'" 47.

[494] Varner, "General Music Learning Is Also Social and Emotional Learning," 74.

[495] Wall, "Relationship Over Reproach," 130.

[496] Souers and Hall, *Relationship, Responsibility, and Regulation*, 155.

Trauma-Informed Teaching: A Comprehensive Approach

Despite the many benefits of PBIS and social-emotional learning, music students need additional support for their emotional and behavioral needs. Trauma-informed teaching provides more comprehensive support for students by addressing both external maladaptive behaviors and internal emotional dysregulation. Addressing students' internal emotional dysregulation and providing students with coping skills to deal with dysregulation constructively in the classroom differentiates trauma-informed teaching from other approaches such as PBIS and social emotional learning. This is evident in the interview data through the additional strategies music educators are already using above and beyond PBIS and social-emotional learning such as calming music, brain breaks, and allowing the use of comfort items. Trauma-informed strategies such as the ones music educators reported using in the study aid students in regulating their emotions. Often, "students who struggle with regulation are the ones who cause adults the most angst, as they often contribute to the disruption of the learning environment," but all students benefit from practicing self-regulation skills.[497]

The study showed that music educators can meet the increased emotional needs of primary music students with a trauma-informed approach to music education. Utilizing existing tools from known best practices such as PBIS and social-emotional learning can help lessen the burden of implementation. Music educators should consider incorporating trauma-informed regulation strategies that will not compromise their own emotional regulation. [498] It is not

[497] Souers and Hall, *Relationship, Responsibility, and Regulation*, 157.

[498] Ibid., 159.

possible for students to regulate their own emotions if their teachers are in a state of dysregulation.[499]

Based on interview responses, the pieces of trauma-informed teaching that primary music educators reported using had positive effects in beginning to mitigate the negative effects of trauma in the music classroom. Despite promising effects, participants still reported feeling overwhelmed. Addressing the gaps within implementation of trauma-informed strategies based on the theoretical framework may alleviate some of the stress educators' experience when teaching traumatized students by making trauma-informed teaching more effective and lessening the emotional burden.

To further improve the use of trauma-informed teaching in primary music classrooms, music educators need formal training in the area to address aspects of trauma-informed teaching that are missing or need growth. While participants reported responding to student behavior with appropriate trauma-informed strategies, responding is only one of the four facets of trauma-informed care listed in the theoretical framework. Professional learning in this area would help address the other three facets of realizing how widespread the impact of trauma is, how to best recognize the signs of trauma triggers, and best practices to avoid re-traumatization.

Data from the interview responses indicated that music educators were very effective in the area of social-emotional learning. With professional training, this strength could be adapted to include teaching explicit coping skills for self-regulation which would strengthen overall trauma-informed pedagogical application. Music educators who participated in the study were also very effective in building relationships with their students and providing a positive and safe environment for student learning. To further develop skills in trauma-informed music education,

[499] Souers and Hall, *Relationship, Responsibility, and Regulation*, 159.

music educators may consider incorporating opportunities for self-selected activities and increase individualized instruction when possible.

Significance

The significance of the study was seen through the theoretical and empirical benefits to the literature and through the practical applications for primary music educators. The study expanded the literature theoretically by considering trauma-informed teaching through the experiences and observations of in-service primary music educators. Trauma-informed teaching has a place in the primary music education classroom. In rural Georgia, music educators are already using many trauma-informed techniques despite insufficient access to professional learning and training. Additionally, the study addressed the gap in the literature and provided empirical benefits by considering the ways in which trauma-related social-emotional issues affected children's ability to learn music in a general music education setting.

Lack of trauma-informed approaches makes learning in the primary music class difficult. Students need special support from music educators to meet their unique emotional needs before musical learning can occur. Most importantly, the study found trauma-informed approaches for practical use in the primary general music classroom. Music educators can build strong relationships with students as the cornerstone to the successful implementation of trauma-informed teaching practices. Consistent expectations and creating a safe and positive classroom environment are also essential. Music educators can accomplish this through classroom management plans that follow or emulate PBIS techniques. Additionally, primary music educators can incorporate SEL songs to promote social-emotional learning and growth for students. To be most effective, songs or other strategies used for social-emotional learning should target the specific needs of students. Lastly, music educators can utilize strategies that

address student regulation such as comfort items or brain breaks and explicitly teach coping skills to promote students' self-regulation.

Limitations

The study was limited by participant size and geographic location. While phenomenological studies do not require a large sample of participants, a larger sample may have included participants with more knowledge or experience in the area of trauma-informed music education. The specificity of the geographic location may have also limited the number of eligible participants. While including urban areas or other rural areas of Georgia may have increased the potential participant base, it would have altered the basis of the phenomenology of the study.

Recommendations

In the future, researchers may consider increasing the sample size of participants. Additionally, researchers may consider screening participants based on their experience with trauma-informed teaching. As trauma-informed teaching becomes more mainstream in schools, future studies using quantitative results to show the efficacy of trauma-informed practices will be possible.

Another recommendation for future research is for researchers to consider how trauma-informed teaching can support the mental health of educators themselves. The sense of overwhelm described by participants in their interviews and descriptions of teaching both through and after the pandemic indicate that educators are at risk of burnout. Future researchers should consider solutions for educators dealing with compassion fatigue or secondary trauma related to the stress of caring for traumatized children.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify possible benefits of trauma-informed general music instruction and practical trauma-informed approaches music educators could use to benefit learning for primary-level music students. A qualitative phenomenological methodology was chosen. The theoretical framework that guided the research was based on trauma-informed care, trauma-informed pedagogy, and trauma-informed music education. The purposeful sampling included five highly qualified primary music educators from central, rural Georgia. The researcher used open-ended interview questions to obtain a detailed narrative from participants. The study was significant through the examination of trauma-informed teaching from a new perspective that was previously absent from the literature.

Results of the interviews indicated that the benefits of trauma-informed practices in primary music included emotional comfort, motivation, ability to cope, focus, and increased capacity for learning. The themes that emerged from the research were the increased need for trauma-informed practices, the importance of building relationships, using songs for social-emotional learning, targeting specific student needs, and creating a safe and positive environment. The study was limited by population size, location, and prior knowledge of terminology related to trauma-informed teaching practices. The researcher recommends a larger population size and more specific screening criteria for knowledge of trauma-informed teaching practice for future studies.

With all the benefits of best practices such as social-emotional learning and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support, trauma-informed teaching provides a more comprehensive approach to support the increased emotional and behavioral needs of students that music educators have observed since the COVID-19 pandemic. For better support of students and

teachers, dedicated professional learning and implementation of trauma-informed teaching practices are needed for primary music educators.

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Appendices

Appendix A: IRB Approval Form

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

November 14, 2023

Sarah Higgins
Karen Kuehmann

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY23-24-612 Primary General Music: Trauma-Informed Instruction in Title I Schools in Post-Pandemic Georgia

Dear Sarah Higgins, Karen Kuehmann,

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.(ii). 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:
Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation; or

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 B: Recruitment E-mail

Dear music educator,

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Music at Liberty University, I am conducting research on trauma-informed teaching in primary general music as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Music Education degree. The purpose of my research is to examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on kindergarten through second-grade music students and identify trauma-informed approaches that may benefit primary-level music students, and I am writing to invite you to join my study.

Participants must be highly qualified and fully certified Georgia music educators, teach general music at a primary school, teach in central, rural Georgia, and have taught primary music before, during, and after the pandemic. Participants will be asked to take part in a one-on-one, audio-recorded, phone interview. It should take approximately 30 minutes to complete the procedure listed. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but participant identities will not be disclosed.

To participate, please click here https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeGfDAb5Bk-zo9Ib5WpQp-aCF1p61xhAyVH_KUTntb6VAcI1g/viewform?usp=sf_link to complete the screening survey. If you meet my participant criteria, I will work with you to schedule a time for an interview.

An information sheet is attached to this e-mail. The information sheet contains additional information about my research.

Participants will receive a $10 Starbucks gift card.

Sincerely,

Sarah Higgins
Music Specialist
[redacted]

Appendix C: Information Sheet

Information Sheet

Title of the Project: Primary General Music: Trauma-Informed Instruction in Title I Schools in Post-Pandemic Georgia

Principal Investigator: Sarah-Ann Higgins, 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 a highly qualified and fully certified Georgia music educator, teach general music at a primary school, teach in central, rural Georgia, and have taught primary music before, during, and after the pandemic. 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 impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on kindergarten through second-grade music students and identify trauma-informed approaches that may benefit primary-level music students.

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. Participate in a one-on-one, audio-recorded, phone interview. It should take approximately 30 minutes to complete the procedure listed.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include strategies or tools for practical use in the primary general music classroom to address escalating post-pandemic behavioral issues.

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.

I am a mandatory reporter. During this study, if I receive information about child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others, I will be required to report it to the appropriate authorities.

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 will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then deleted. The researcher will have access to these recordings.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. At the conclusion of the interview, participants will receive a $10 Starbucks gift card.

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 to not answer any question or withdraw at any time 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 contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

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

The researcher conducting this study is Sarah-Ann Higgins. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [redacted] or [redacted]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Karen Kuehmann, 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.

Appendix D: Screening Survey

Screening Survey

Trauma-Informed Music Teaching Study - Sarah Higgins

* Indicates required question

Email*

Your email

Are you a highly qualified and fully certified Georgia music educator?*

Yes

No

Do you teach general music at a primary school in central, rural Georgia?*

Yes

No

Have you taught primary music in Georgia before, during, and after the pandemic?*

Yes

No

Submit

Clear form

Appendix E: Interview Questions

1. Can you describe your experience with social-emotional learning and trauma-informed teaching?

2. Can you describe how social-emotional learning and trauma-informed teaching affect or benefit learning for primary-level (K-2nd) music students?

3. In what situations would you use trauma-informed teaching practices within your music room?

4. Can you tell me about your experience of teaching through the pandemic and how it has affected your teaching and student learning?

5. How would you describe student needs, behaviors, and behavior management in your classroom pre-pandemic, mid-pandemic, and post-pandemic?

6. How does trauma-informed teaching meet the needs of post-pandemic primary music students?

Appendix F: Interview Music Educator A

Interviewer: Hey, how are you doing today?

Music Educator A: I'm doing good. How are you?

Interviewer: I'm doing alright. It's been a long week.

Music Educator A: Yes, it has.

Interviewer: So, you teach in . . . County?

Music Educator A: I do.

Interviewer: Ok. How long have you been teaching?

Music Educator A: Fourteen and a half years.

Interviewer: Ok. We're kind of close. I'm on year 14 too, so we're right together. How long have you been teaching primary?

Music Educator A: Thirteen and a half years. I did K-5 until our system switched to K-2/ 3-5 system. There was one year I taught middle school after I took a year off when I had my daughter but thirteen and half years in primary.

Interviewer: That's the same for me too. I taught a year of middle school my first year, and I didn't go back. Do you have any questions for me before we get started?

Music Educator A: Honestly, I'm just curious as to how you came to this topic. I'm not in higher ed anymore, but I am intrigued by your study. I know that good things could come out of it, so I was just wondering how you came about it.

Interviewer: Well, honestly, out of my classroom. Not really out of anything I was studying before in my doctorate. For me, this big changed happened after COVID. Not the kids who were in school throughout because we had in person learning the whole time basically. We had the option for digital, but most of the kids came. But it's these kids who are here now. I was feeling so overwhelmed. I didn't know what to do. All of the normal things that I was doing, they weren't working, and so that's kind of how I got into researching trauma-informed teaching and getting more into the social-emotional learning since they're really closely connected. Anything else?

Music Educator A: No, I think that's all right now.

Interviewer: Ok. I think I want to, if it's ok, split the first question in half and start with the social-emotional learning. Can you describe your experience with social-emotional learning?

Music Educator A: Sure. I think in the past ten years there's been a high rise of understanding that there is a need for it. Before COVID, there was an understanding that the kids just weren't– they didn't have the emotional capacity, the training and what not that they needed, and so at my school–and this might have been a post-COVID what I'm about to describe–at my school, they actually created this exploratory class that was just for social-emotional learning. So, that just

kind of shows how they felt they could compartmentalize it in just a class. My personal experience with it in my classroom is using songs sometimes stories that engage the students to identify with the character. That's been about it. Post-COVID, there's been a much greater need for those lessons, for those songs, for a great understanding of it. Let me say this, one thing that I feel is that the county that I teach in is a Title I county. I don't know if this is true for all Title I, but this is the only county I've ever taught in. It's what I know. Most of these students are incredibly poor, and I feel they have faced trauma the entire time that I've been here. I know that it's not all, but it's the fact that we are Title I says that it's enough. They are facing struggles that the average learner wouldn't face. I feel like that there has always been some aspect of it in my time as a teacher. At least in . . . County because of our Title I position. Then, as we have had lockdowns become part of our routine and mass shootings, these are other experiences where all of these things combined have led to more use of SEL and other teaching strategies.

Interviewer: Right. What kind of songs are you using when you doing the SEL? YouTube or is it in your curriculum?

Music Educator A: So, we use Quaver. Are you familiar?

Interviewer: Yes! Me too.

Music Educator: Awesome! You're in . . . County right? I saw that on your e-mail. I had a feeling y'all were using Quaver. So, we don't have their SEL licensed curriculums, but you know the song "You-Nique?"

Interviewer: Yes.

Music Educator: And then some of their other songs that they've allowed freely on YouTube. "You-Nique" has become like a theme song for our school. There are teachers that have grabbed hold of it. They had no idea it came from the music curriculum. They just knew that our kids needed it, and there's several teachers that are just so adamant about letting their kids hear it, encouraging their kids with it, and all of these things. It's been really neat to see how that has really helped. I can't remember when that came out, but it would be really neat to see when Quaver released "You-Nique" in their SEL program in comparison to COVID and all the transitions that we've had.

Interviewer: Yeah, my kids love that song too. I remember when it came out. It was within the past couple of years. I couldn't tell you when, but I remember as soon as it came out my kids just loved it.

Music Educator A: I just couldn't remember if it was right before COVID or if it was after. When we were shut down during COVID, I don't think it happened then. I feel like it was before or after.

Interviewer: Well, what about your experience with trauma-informed teaching?

Music Educator A: Ok. So, knowing it as that term, I honestly didn't even realize this was a term until your study. I started looking it up, and I [realized] these are things that we do [and] that we have talked about. My experience with it as far as professional learning goes, we, in the past year, maybe two years, we've had specific professional learning that is geared towards this. It's

usually just a one-session, once-a-year type thing. It's not as much as what it needs to be is what I'm saying, but it was enough to teach me and to remind me that when a student is facing trauma that they simply can't take in new information. It's not going to work. So, as a school, we have worked on just creating a safe environment, one that we can, I don't know, I guess feel confident in knowing that the children are safe and well watched after–that they know that they are ok. In my classroom, I feel like I do this fairly often, much more now, and honestly, I don't think that I realized that I did it because of COVID. I think a lot of my response has been towards the mass shootings as such. I think that's when I first started to feel the effects of trauma in school, and I guess therefore trauma-informed teaching. It's just to remind them that they are safe, that they are cared for, that they are loved. And then, we do activities, calming activities, things to bring them back to a place of normalcy. And then, depending on the situation–I feel like I usually do a pretty good job of being able to feel out what the kids need, but sometimes it's just a distraction from whatever is going on, and we do that just to keep life going.

Interviewer: Right. So, when you say calming activities, what kinds of things do you use?

Music Educator A: YouTube videos that have brain breaks, focused breathing, and calm songs. Anything that just kind of hits my mind that I know would be calming instead of exciting–something to bring the room back to a safe place.

Interviewer: Great. Ok. Can you describe how social-emotional learning and trauma-informed teaching affect or benefit learning for our primary music students?

Music Educator A: Ok. My first thought in this question is, and it seems kind of shallow, but it takes away time from music. That's just stating the obvious and the truth, but I feel like it should be stated because it takes away from our curriculum. Especially at the K-2 level but probably the 3-5 as well. We don't see them as often. I know that I see them twenty times a school year for forty-give minutes each time, each session, and that's assuming that we don't miss a Monday, or we don't have a canceled school day or something like that. But that's the one side effect. Honestly, I've gotten to where I just, I don't try to shove my whole curriculum into it anymore. I just let it be what it is. But then, there are benefits, and some of the benefits are that students hopefully learn to relate to each other better. They get help with their feelings, and in the past few years, I've gotten to an understanding that I cannot teach music, and I don't think that an academic teacher would be able to teach the rest of their academics if they are not also teaching social-emotional skills. I don't know what's happening generationally because we have a group of kindergarteners now who are, they're just different. They're not–some of them are just completely undiagnosed, bless them. Many of them are more violent than I've ever seen, and the art teacher, she's a good friend. We were having a conversation about it, and she said, "COVID shouldn't be causing this effect still." And I don't know why it is because they're five now, they would have been two, maybe, at the time of COVID. Her statement was that they were babies, and they were at home. Once I thought about it, I was like, maybe what they were seeing at home is what's actually causing the issue. Maybe because people were at home, there was more violence. I don't know.

Interviewer: Yeah. I hadn't thought about that.

Music Educator A: Yeah.

Interviewer: So, it what situations would you use trauma-informed teaching in your music room?

Music Educator A: Well, there are two. I do it regularly with the SEL songs. There's usually one a day that we do that encourages different areas of growth or self-concept, like "YOU-NIQUE." It really works on self-concept and self-image more than anything else, but there are other great songs that they have about friends and things like that. But there are other times. The other situations that really call for it are when severe behaviors happen, or even if it's just multiplied. Like, it could be low level behaviors, but they're all being rude to each other. Or things like that, and I stop. It's frustrating to me because we lose a day of music lesson, but I felt like it was enough that we needed to completely stop and have an entire lesson on how to exist with each other, how to live with each other, how to treat each other so that we feel safe, and all of these things. You know what it is, but those are the times. I mean, there's a very basic once a day song that happens in most classes and then when targeted behaviors arise. That's going to take a whole different shift.

Interviewer: Right. What was your experience of teaching through the pandemic like?

Music Educator A: COVID was horrible. I'm sure many people could say that or everybody probably. Teaching through the pandemic was frustrating because as a professional, I watched music education and other exploratory classes get pushed to the side. The year of the full shut down, we rarely saw students. I had to ask to be invited to class Zoom meetings, so that I could work with students even for a short period of time. I think that was the most frustrating thing was that what our principal told us to do was to write up some basic activities, post them to our Google Classroom, and hope that the parents would do them. There was no expectation, but on the flip side, as a human I knew that these parents were just as overwhelmed as everybody else. There's no way. However, if we weren't actually doing it, then it wasn't getting done. During that time, especially the shut down, I was dealing with my own fears and struggles during the pandemic, so coming up with creative ways to reach out to students at home seemed like an impossible task. It really–and at the time, I only had one little girl. I have two children now. But I had one little girl. And it was just she and I, and it was a lot. I mean, it was a lot for everybody. I do realize that. But trying to find new ways to teach at the moment with our, I can't think of another way to say it, but basically the lizard brain, it just seemed like a ridiculous thing to ask. I don't know. I felt like that was absolutely horrible. I also teach theater. It's not a class; it's like an afterschool–I do a play basically, after school. I had this great hope that somehow I would find a way for the play to continue because that's where we were in March of 2020 when everything shut down, and I didn't want to let these kids down. But in the end, it never happened. There was no way. Since then, I've seen ways that other people did it, but it was just outside of my wheelhouse and outside of my abilities in that moment to come up with a way to still do the play.

Interviewer: What about that following fall? That next school year, after the shutdown, were you guys digital or [hybrid]?

Music Teacher A: So, we were fortunate that we were only in person. Unless, there were a few times that they actually sent us home for short periods of time. We have an online academy. It's called . . . and they basically took the portion of students who intentionally wanted to stay home given everything that was going on which actually decreased our in-person numbers. And some of the things that I learned from having a smaller class size actually changed the way that I do

things now. It also causes frustrations now that we're back to, you know, twenty-five kids in a class. But, anyway, at that time we only had to teach in person. I think there might have been a semester where they might have said, "Hey, throw some activities their way." It really wasn't much, and I don't know that anybody ever used it because it wasn't a good process for the online learners.

Interviewer: You said that it changed how you teach class a little bit having those smaller class sizes. How did it affect your teaching and student learning, that experience, compared to now? How did it affect it?

Music Educator A: One of the biggest things is that I saw the benefit of a student having their space. In my classroom, I have a large carpet. I can't remember how many squares, but it's sufficient for a class of twenty-four/twenty-five that each student has their own square. But during the pandemic, we couldn't sit–you know there were guidelines as to how far apart the students had to be and all of that stuff. So, I started using the carpet, but they could only sit one for every three squares or something like that. It was kind of bonkers. So, I had to create ways in my classroom to get the students to have their own personal space, and that actually became one of the best behavior management tools that I've ever had. It's because formerly each kid had their own square, so they're all kind of boxed up really tight to each other. And they mess with each other. Or they just need more space, so they accidently hit some kid. You know, it gets to be a thing, and I had never thought about just revamping the whole thing to where each child has sufficient personal space. Now what I do is, even with a class of twenty-five, each has, using that same exact carpet with the squares and what not, each student has their square that they sit in, but then there is a square that is free beside them on each side and a square that is free in front of them and behind. What I did to make it work was I actually added tape on my floor to extend the carpet. It looks a little weird. But I've had other teachers who come in and see it and say that it's just a really neat thing and a neat way to do it, so that they have room. And specifically for music, they have room for instruments. That's actually what I tell the students now. I don't tell them it's because they need their own personal space, which they do. I tell them that they need room for instruments because the last fifteen to twenty minutes of class is always for instruments. And that space gives them that room to move, and to play, and just be. And they're not bothering each other. It helps a lot.

Interviewer: That's actually really interesting because I also kept my COVID set up. Not as distanced, but we don't gather on the carpet anymore. I have dots on my floor. That's interesting that you kept the same thing.

Music Educator A: Yeah, actually, I forgot about the dots. I did use dots for a little while, and there was a funny time where I actually had the kids sanitize their dot.

Interviewer: I did that too at first!

Music Educator A: You know, just trying to do anything we could. I still have the dots in case I ever have to extend it further than what I have now, but the dots, they moved. The kids would move them so much, and I would get frustrated with how much they moved. So, I decided to just use the carpet.

Interviewer: You have a tile floor?

Music Educator A: Yes.

Interviewer: I have Velcro dots because my floor is carpet, but they still try to move them. But they're noisy, so it's not as easy to move with the Velcro.

Music Educator A: It also applies to having them line up because transitions are one of the hardest things for kids. When we lined up during the pandemic, they were so far apart from each other. It was amazing, and they didn't mess with each other. When I have it in place, it's actually not in place right now I had to take my tape up over the summer, and I forgot to put it back down. But just making a tape line where they know exactly where to stand. I've seen some teachers where they will do one student per tile, and it's too close. They'll still mess with each other or bump into each other, and so I've spread that out even further. My classroom is big enough that it's not a big deal. That's been a really nice thing to be able to continue as well. And I do need to get back on that because there's such a huge difference when they know that this is their space, and they don't have to worry about somebody getting into it. That probably just leads into them feeling safe that they're not going to be bothered by the student behind them or in front of them.

Interviewer: The next question kind of deals with this because it's got the behavior management in it. Having them separated like that definitely helps. How would you describe student needs, their behavior, and behavior management in your room pre-pandemic? Let's kind of split the question up because it's more like a three-part question. We'll start with pre-pandemic.

Music Educator A: So, this goes back to . . . being Title I and how I feel like we have always had significant issues, and we will continue to have those issues. So, pre-pandemic, they were there. There're huge student needs. When you have a student whose parents or single parent is working three jobs trying to make ends meet, they're never home. And, so, that student, if they're not incredibly motivated, they're just going to do the bare basics of what they need, and that's completely understandable. You know, they're living in their own traumatic situation. So, that's something that was there and hasn't gone away. In fact, I think it was amplified because of the pandemic. As far as management and seeing it in my classroom though, I didn't see it as much. I didn't see the violence in the lower levels, and it was there. There are examples that run across my mind of a first grader. I hadn't been teaching but a few years, and a first grader been suspended or expelled. He had bashed another students head in on the bus, and that was in the 2010's, somewhere in there. It was horrible, and there were other lower offenses here and there from other students, but they were there. I don't think I saw them in my classroom as much until post-pandemic. I'm sure that the academic teachers are dealing with them every single day for a longer extended period of time. I'm sure that they saw more of course, both before and after. Does that answer your question?

Interviewer: Yes, it does. So, with the post-pandemic compared with the pre-pandemic, is it just like the violent behaviors that you've noticed that have increased, or is there any other kind of difference?

Music Educator A: Mental health issues that manifest as behavior issues have increased, in my opinion. Let's see, I would say, just the increase in mental health issues coming from trauma, and then maybe for the population that–I mean the mental health, you could say that runs across the board no matter economic status, but there's also a feeling of being overwhelmed which I think

is happening more and more with students at this age. You know, K-2 is not usually a time when you would expect students to get incredibly overwhelmed with anxiety and just all the things going on, but they are. In fact, I had one chorus student, her mom officially notified me just today, I found out somehow last week, but she's quit chorus because she says she has too many things going on. And I completely understand. She said she had chorus, and gymnastics, and probably soccer, I can't remember what the other stuff was going on, but it's more than what these students can handle. Personally, in my own home life, I feel it too because I have a third grade who, she used to do dance and soccer and maybe something else, I can't remember right now, but our schedule was pretty packed. And it was just me and her, and we were making it. I'm now married, so we're a two-parent household with two kids. And she's the only one who has got all this stuff going on, but she and I are both feeling overwhelmed with it. So, I feel like that has changed. Before, we could do it, and now I feel like we are more easily overwhelmed with the number of things that have to get done.

Interviewer: That's so interesting. I'm experiencing the same thing with my daughter. That's so interesting. So, do you feel like it's a definite pre-pandemic, post-pandemic difference? What about in the pandemic, were you observing the violent behaviors, the overwhelming-ness, you know?

Music Educator A: Any time some says during the pandemic, my brain goes straight to the shutdown portion. I know that it's much more extended than that, but during the shutdown I don't know that we were. We weren't overwhelmed with a schedule because we couldn't do anything, and we couldn't go anywhere. But there was this sense of un-knowing that was absolutely terrifying to me. I mean, I'm sure it was to you as an adult living through it. [My daughter] would have been four. She was in pre-school. Bless it. Her pre-school teacher tried to do Zoom every single day with that class. It was the kindest thing she could every do, but at the same time, it was like herding cats with a video camera. But the violence, those behaviors, I didn't see them, but that's one of those things that when we were shut down and even once we came back to in person there were still so many who stayed home. It's like we didn't get to see into each other's lives and into what was going on. We didn't see them regularly enough to realize that something traumatic is happening to them beyond the simple knowledge of a pandemic. I know that in my own experience there would be times where I would be the one who had to go, my mother was living with us at the time too, and I would go get groceries all by myself doing pick up or however they did it at the time. And I would just spend time in the car crying and in an emotional breakdown basically. I didn't know. The hones truth is that I never lost a person to COVID, praise God. I don't know how that's possible. I know that so many people died, and so many people lost lives from COVID. But I never had that specific tragedy. But yet, there was this world-wide feeling that–it's like I still carried the grief. I guess that's just empathy of some sort coming through.

Interviewer: You're right. Even simple things were hard.

Music Educator A: Yes. Oh, and that was one of the things that came out of COVID is simply a greater empathy for people that are going through anything. Everybody has something that's going on. And when I see my students, and I learn how my students are doing. And I see their behavior. Like, I have a student in chorus now who, I'm working with him and his mom. And I think a lot of his behavior is ADHD, at least that's what mom is saying because he has medicine and then it wears off by the time he gets to chorus. I see his behavior, and it makes me wonder

what more has been going on behind his behavior because it's not just being overactive. He's super needy, and he needs reaffirmation or affirmation. So, there is that. And I think before, I would have just seen the ADHD student who is no longer on his meds, and I would have been incredibly frustrated. Doesn't mean that I'm not frustrated now, I just feel like I have a much better understanding and empathy towards students.

Interviewer: Definitely. It's definitely been a time of trying to show grace and find all the patience we need.

Music Teacher A: It's a lot.

Interviewer: It definitely is. I think we're almost there. We're on the last question. How does trauma-informed teaching meet the needs of post-pandemic primary music students?

Music Teacher A: I believe that it teaches the whole child. This is something that I'd say when I was first teaching, but probably the first ten years of my teaching, I was so incredibly focused on just teaching music. And I felt offended if I was asked to teach anything beyond it. I go into an EIP classroom in the mornings, and I help students with reading now. We've done that over the years, here and there, where the principal comes up with the schedule, and we just help out. I know that I always felt like it was asking me to do something outside of my field, but I also didn't understand. I didn't see the picture of the whole child. Where, post-pandemic, I'm seeing the whole child. I see, and honestly this might come from the simple fact that I'm also a parent now, where there was a lot of that I didn't see. Now, with empathy, with all these other things that we see. I feel like that's transferred to what I'm teaching in reading. I see these students who are lagging behind. And they might struggle for any number of reasons, and it's my job to help them bridge that gap during that hour and a half that I'm working with them. Honestly, I feel like during that time I'm creating a rapport with them that carries over into the music room. They see me in there, and we're learning music concepts. And we're learning a language. That's how I approach it. And those skills transfer, and the rapport transfers. So, I'm building a relationship that will carry through, and being a teacher that teaches K, 1, and 2, that relationship is really important because we're going to have them for three years. We don't do just the one year deal. And back when we used to do K-5, woo-wee, if we had a child we had them for six years. It's important, just in the relationship building. It's funny because I'm actually doing a course on gifted teaching, teaching gifted students, and this has been a theme throughout that course is simply building relationships to know what a student needs. Without the relationship, you're just throwing information out into the wind.

Interviewer: This has been so good! Is there anything else that you want to add?

Music Educator A: You know, I said COVID was horrible. It was, granted. But there were things, there were skills that I gained that I wouldn't have had otherwise. We talked about empathy, but there were other things that happened. I had to do all the video editing for multiple projects, and that skill was actually able to transfer into my classroom when we didn't get to have a chorus concert. Instead of having a chorus concert, maybe the first or second year after COVID, there was a time where we couldn't sing in our classrooms. But, once we could do that, I recorded the students because we couldn't have an in-person concert. And then, I was able to put it together, you know, in a pretty nice way for parents to be able to see. And also, teaching by

Zoom. I didn't get to do much of it, but I feel like it's a skill that I now have that I wouldn't have had otherwise. Most people wouldn't have had it, had we not been stuck at home.

Interviewer: I did the same thing. I got good at video editing, so that I could share the performances with the parents. That's so interesting that there are so many similarities.

Music Educator A: Yes. It's really nice to talk to a K-2 teacher because I didn't realize how many similarities we would have had. The only other K-2 teacher in . . . County started after COVID. She was doing her own school during COVID, and I know that's a whole different ordeal.

Appendix G: Interview Music Educator B

Interviewer: How are you doing today?

Music Teacher B: I'm good. How are you?

Interviewer: I'm doing pretty well, thank you. So, you teach in . . . County?

Music Teacher B: Yes.

Interviewer: How long have you been teaching?

Music Teacher B: Seventeen years.

Interviewer: Oh, wow. You've got a couple on me. I'm on year fourteen. How long have you been at the primary level?

Music Teacher B: The whole career, but I did do K-5 for the first nine years. Now, it's just K-2.

Interviewer: That's funny. That's the same for me. I started off being split between two schools. So, I was K-5 split between the primary and elementary school.

Music Teacher B: I kind of went through a couple of different scenarios in the same system. They kept re-doing their schools, and so I was teaching 2-3 at one school and 4-5 at another school. And then, they re-routed everything and made each school K-5, and I was housed at one school after that. But then I left as the school closed, and I came out to the county instead of the city. I've been teaching K-2 since then.

Interviewer: Ok. That's great. Do you have any questions for me before I get into the bigger interview questions?

Music Teacher B: I'm not really sure what you're looking for, but I'll do my best to help. I don't have any questions because I'm not really sure what your study is. I read the thing, but we could just go ahead.

Interviewer: Ok. That works.

Music Teacher B: I hope I can help. That's it.

Interviewer: Well, you don't have to have any background in trauma-informed teaching. If the answer is no, I don't really know anything about it, that's ok too.

Music Teacher B: Ok. Alright.

Interviewer: So, no pressure.

Music Teacher B: Ok.

Interviewer: Alright. Can you describe your experience with social-emotional learning and trauma-informed teaching? Maybe just start with social-emotional learning.

Music Teacher B: How do you mean?

Interviewer: So, does your school have a schoolwide SEL program? Do you do something in your classroom for that? Or maybe you guys don't touch on that at all.

Music Teacher B: I don't touch on that at all, but I'm sure the homeroom teachers do. I wouldn't know. When we do PLCs, they just tell us what we need to know, and if it's something we don't need to do, they don't really tell us about it. I would say that I don't know a whole lot about that.

Interviewer: Is that kind of the same for trauma-informed teaching?

Music Teacher B: Yeah. I don't even know what that is.

Interviewer: I didn't either.

Music Teacher B: I'm not sure how much I can help you because I've never even heard those terms.

Interviewer: That's totally ok. As I was doing background information on it, that's a lot of what I was finding is that we don't have a lot of that in music education.

Music Teacher B: Right. Now, I know that when COVID happened there was a lot of mental health stuff. I don't know if this is what you're talking about, but there were a lot of lessons that the homeroom teachers had to do that had to do with mental health check-ins if that's what you mean. I know that the homeroom teachers did that. I don't know if they are still doing that, but we never had to do anything like that in our rooms.

Interviewer: Alright. Ok. Great, so we can move on to the second question.

Music Teacher B: Ok.

Interviewer: Can you describe how social-emotional learning and trauma-informed teaching might affect or benefit primary music students? Do you think it would have any benefit for them?

Music Teacher B: Well, younger kids have trouble expressing themselves anyway. So, if they're having issues at home, it's hard for us to know everything they are going through. I have six hundred students every couple of weeks. So, I see the same kids for a week, and then I don't see them again for five weeks. So, their situations–I'm not privy to that information.

Interviewer: So, you see them for a full week in a row?

Music Teacher B: Yeah. For a full week, and then I don't see them again for five weeks. We have five different specialty classes, so I see them maybe seven weeks of the whole year–each kid. So, it's not much.

Interviewer: That's an interesting schedule.

Music Teacher B: Yeah.

Interviewer: Ok. In what situations might you use trauma-informed teaching practices in your music room? [Long pause] It's ok if you wouldn't.

Music Teacher B: I don't know what it is. Maybe I'm using it already and don't know it? I don't know what that is. . . . We don't talk about that sort of thing in my room, but if someone is having a hard time, I try to talk to them one-on-one while the other kids are working about what's going on with them. I don't have a chart. I've seen those charts where they say, "Oh, I'm here or I'm here." I don't have one of those in my room. But, if I can see that a child is struggling, I try to–we have several moments in my class where we do things as a whole group, and then they do things on their own. Then, we come back together. So, that's the time where I would check in with the child and see what's going on. It would just be a one-on-one conversation.

Interviewer: That's great. That's relationship building.

Music Teacher B: I've never heard it called that. I try to make it a point to know all their names, and I try to know all their parents at car riders because I have car riders every day and talk to them. If something is going on, I do inquire with our counselor. I'll be like, "Ok, what's going on with so and so," or "Why are they acting this way? Is something going on?" And I report what I see from their behaviors to the counselor or the teacher. I feel like if you don't know what a child's situation is, and they're acting out, there is a reason for it. So, if someone is acting in a way that I need to know more about the situation to know how to handle them when I'm talking to them or how to approach them so that it's not going to make them shut down, then I do try to inquire about those things. But nobody comes up to me and says, "Oh by the way, so-and-so has this, or so-and-so has that." They really don't tell us a lot unless we ask about it. You really have to go out of your way, but I do try to. If there are some kids that have IEPs or accommodations or 504's and stuff, I do read through those, but that's more learning abilities. You know, I just talk to them, but there is a point where they tell you a little too much. There's a point where you're like, "Ok. I don't think your mom would want you to tell me this. This is getting really weird." Usually, they'll tell you how they are doing. Even if they don't have the right vocabulary, you can kind of figure it out.

Interviewer: Then next question should be a little bit easier. It's not specific about trauma-informed teaching. Can you tell me about your experience of teaching through the pandemic and how it affected your teaching and student learning?

Music Teacher B: Ok. Well, when we went home in March, and they just canceled school, the classroom teachers had to put stuff on Google Classroom for the kids. I think, actually, back then they did pick-up packets where the parents could come into the office and pick them up. I think they sent out two weeks' worth of work. They didn't expect us to do anything because we didn't know how long that was going to go on. Well then, we rolled into April, and then I think after spring break, they were like, "Ok, we're just going to be online the rest of the year." And so, they were like, "Ok. Get with your team, and come up with a Google Classroom. And all the kids can follow the same thing." Obviously, I don't have a team because I'm a team of one, so we were all like, "What do you want us to do?" And I think they had coach post some exercise things that they could do. YouTube videos that they could follow along to, and I posted some quick games that I had access to through Teachers Pay Teachers. But we didn't know how long this was going to last. We're thinking it's just going to be a couple of weeks, and it ended up being the rest of the year. I think we cut everything off a little early that year, and we said, "Ok. We'll just come back in the fall and regroup." Then, in the fall, they had all the mask mandates and the six-foot thing which my room is not big enough for. I don't have a regular music room. I have a regular classroom, and it's not huge. It's pretty small. So, I put dots on my floor and tried to space them out. I don't think I could make the six feet thing work in my room, so I think they were three feet apart. I tried to avoid using anything that I could not clean, sanitize, or spray down. So, there were a lot of things that I had to not do. And then with singing, it's really hard to teach singing with a mask on. So, I tried the visor, and it was a little better. But then, it would make me dizzy, so I went back to the mask. It just made it miserable. We couldn't do everything that we were used to doing. We couldn't touch everything that everyone else was touching. It was just kind of a nightmare. That went on for a year. I did teach a couple of classes online because some kids had the choice to stay home and do it online. They had specific times designated for us to have online classes. They had all those kids in one homeroom teacher's class or two per grade level if it was that many, and if we had that class time, we didn't teach them online. It wasn't like a Google Meet thing where they had to sign in and come to our class. They had to do that with the homeroom teachers. They had certain times where they had to be online, but for us they just asked us to post lessons that they could go through by themselves. It was self-paced. I would say out of probably twenty-two kids in each class–now in kindergarten, hardly anybody participated in those things. In first grade, I had maybe four or five students in each of those classes [who] participated in the stuff that I sent. It was stuff that could be returned to them and graded, and you give them feedback and stuff. In second grade, I think I had probably half the classes that were doing it, and they were like, "When are you going to post something else?" They were eager for more, but it's because they could do it on their own. They're older. They can navigate the computers a little bit better. It was just confusing. I had never taught like that. It was a learning process for them and for me. Then, everything kind of went back to normal the next year. Everybody was back in school.

Interviewer: Did it have any lasting effect on your teaching or student learning? For example, I had dots as well during COVID, and I kept those. We still use them. Was there anything that you kept or that influenced your teaching?

Music Teacher B: Just the spacing. I ordered a new rug this year. I had a really small rug that they would all sit on, so that we could have lots of movement room. But everyone just kept getting sick all the time, and so I bought a huge rug that can space them out from row to row and put double the spacing between the rows. I like that. That's worked out really great, but it did diminish our ability to move around as much. If we're doing a movement activity, I might have only half the class participate at once and then switch. Or come up with something else for the other half of the class to do. So, it has decreased our mobility a bit, but I don't know what else to do. I really need a bigger space, but I can't–beggars can't be choosy. As far as learning concepts, I feel like we are still on target for where I have always been. We're making the same amount of progress. A lot of times kids are out for an entire week, so when they come back the next time, I try to catch them up.

Interviewer: Ok. So, my next question is kind of in three parts: pre-pandemic, mid-pandemic, and post-pandemic. How would you describe student needs, their behaviors, and behavior management in your classroom, and let's start before the pandemic.

Music Teacher B: I've always been really good at classroom management. I've never had much of a problem with behaviors. They're willing to–I don't know how to say that–I'm very structured and "Type A." They know my procedures very well. How I like things. I'm a bit of a control freak. So, everything has to be color coordinated, and it's got to be just so. They're really good at making sure that it's the way I want it. When we had to wear masks during the pandemic, it was harder to tell who was playing, who was talking, and who was disruptive. So, I would say that is the only time that behavior issues arose because they thought, "Oh, I can hide behind this." It was just a way for them to get away with it because I couldn't tell where it was coming from if they were talking or disrupting or playing. Nothing really drastic changed.

Interviewer: So, that was the only thing that you noticed was during the pandemic was them using the masks to hide behind?

Music Teacher B: Oh yeah. Absolutely, yeah.

Interviewer: What about now? These post-pandemic kids- Have you noticed any differences in their behaviors?

Music Teacher B: Not really. Honestly, no. I mean, kids are kids. They're going to get away with what you let them and not with what you won't. Other than kids missing school a lot–I know that they are probably behind academically a bit, but in my class, it's not been really an issue. And a lot of times kids get pulled from my class anyway for other things like speech and going to someone else for something like pull out RTI. So, those kids always have a bit of a deficit

regardless. But you know that, and you just meet them where they're at. I offer different levels when I check in with them and differentiate my instruction. There're different levels that they get when we do an assignment, or we do an activity. If some of the kids are those kids that are not there a lot or they've been out all week, they get a different activity that's a little easier.

Interviewer: So, how do you do your differentiation with the different activities? What does that look like in your classroom?

Music Teacher B: Manipulatives–like to create melodies and play those melodies. If they're not in my room a lot, I just give them easier melodies: stepwise motion or rhythms that just have ta's and ti-ti's instead of longer notes. But, if they're in there all the time and know what's going on, they get the harder stuff. If they get the easy stuff right, I just bump them up a little.

Interviewer: So, you do small groups after your whole group?

Music Teacher B: I start off whole group, and then we break off into small groups for about 10 minutes. Then, we come back whole group, and go over it. Everyone gets their own individualized lesson, eventually.

Interviewer: That's really cool.

Music Teacher B: We're doing whole group on whatever the target is for that grade. When we split off if they're in first grade, but they're really good, I give them a second or third grade activity. It's the same concept, just a little harder. It just depends on where they are at. I keep a whole spreadsheet on my computer that tells me where they are at.

Interviewer: Oh, wow!

Music Teacher B: I told you; I'm "Type A."

Interviewer: That's fantastic! That's a lot of kids to keep organized and manage all that data.

Music Teacher B: They don't ever ask for it, and I don't do anything with it. It's just for me because it's how can I differentiate for that many kids. It's just a lot. Ever since I stopped doing whole group stuff where everyone was doing the same thing, they're coming so much further with everyone being on their own little level. They know which group, like which bucket of stuff, is the top group.

Interviewer: They always find out, don't they?

Music Teacher B: They're face when I say, "Ok. So-and-so," and I call the list of names for the green bucket. They know what the green bucket is. So, if they don't get the green bucket, they're so devastated. But I'm just like, "Ok. We've got to work harder, and we can get up to it you know." And they've got a red bucket, and a blue bucket, and a green bucket, and those are for the different [levels]–K, 1, 2. Even if they're in second grade and they're using that kindergarten

bucket, I don't care. Let's just keep working on it. We'll get there. But you can't teach them harder concepts if they don't have the basics.

Interviewer: That's so true.

Music Teacher B: It's just like reading or anything else. We've got to meet them where they're at.

Interviewer: I have just one more question, and it might not be applicable because it's back on that trauma-informed way again. How does trauma-informed teaching meet the needs of post-pandemic primary music students?

Music Teacher B: I honestly don't know.

Interviewer: It doesn't sound like your kids have a lot of excessive behavioral needs.

Music Teacher B: Not in my room. Now, there are other classes where they do. But I just have expectations, and they tend to meet them.

Interviewer: That's great.

Music Teacher B: We give a lot of PBIS rewards, and that's what I give them in my class. I used to do candy and try all kinds of different things, and nothing ever worked. I don't know what it is about these little fake dollars that we give them, but they will do whatever I say to get that dollar. It's just a paper dollar, but they can go to our store and buy things with it. I don't know what's in there, but obviously they want that dollar. I really have not had a lot of behavior problems in my room unless it was a SPED kid or someone who can't control it. I really don't know the answer to that question.

Interviewer: And that's okay.

Music Teacher B: Well, you've done a lot of research I think because I don't know half of what you're talking about. You know when you were saying trauma-whatever I was like, "I don't even know what that is. I don't even know what you're talking about." I've never even heard those words before, so I kind of want to read up on it now.

Interviewer: It sounds like you're not really encountering those sorts of issues, so why would you have heard of it?

Music Teacher B: Honestly, I feel like everything is just status-quo where I'm at. It's the way it's always been. I mean, there has been a decline in behavior over the seventeen years that I've taught, obviously. Clientele is a little different. Parents parent a little different, so rewards and expectations are going to be different. And the kids are different. They say the kids are changing, they're really not. It's the parenting that's changing and expectations of the kids. To me, it hasn't really had any bearing in my room because they know if they're not good, they don't get to play

instruments. If you're not good, you don't get to do this. You don't get to do that. You have to watch everyone else do it. I might let you join in eventually if you straighten up, but usually I don't have to sit kids in time-out. I don't have to send them to the office. They're pretty good in my room.

Interviewer: That's how it was fourteen years ago when I started teaching. All the other teachers were talking about all these difficult situations, and I was thinking, "Oh. I haven't experienced any of that."

Music Teacher B: Right?! Well, I feel like the opposite. Well, where I worked in the city it was a little worse than where I'm at now. But it's starting to get to the point where we're getting a lot of those kids now because they are transferring to us. I don't know why they're leaving the city. Probably the same reason the teachers are. I don't know how they act in the classroom, but teachers will bring their kids to me and be like, "So-and-so is doing this, so watch out for them." And I'm just like "Oh, ok. Thank you for warning me." And they're just perfect little angels for me. I don't even have the heart to tell them because they'll be like, "How were they"" and I'll be like, "They were fine." I'm a little scared. You're terrifying. And I'll look at the kids and be like, "What did you do?" They were fine in here, but they like my class. I think they like my class because I let them dance a lot and move a lot. They need that. You don't get that in reading and math.

Interviewer: So, it's definitely a preferred activity.

Music Teacher B: Yeah. They love my class, and they really love PE. The other three that we have, they really get mad that they have to go there, and they're behavior is worse there because they don't want to go. But I think, in that case, it's the teacher. It's not the subject. The teachers are–I don't know–they're just not like me. I have fun. I want them to love me and my class. Not to the point where I'm going to put up with anything, but I try so hard to keep everybody engaged. And they love my class, so that's great.

Interviewer: I have a question about your buckets. So, when they get their bucket, do they have options of what to do in there? Are there choices?

Music Teacher B: Yes. Yes, and if they choose to not use something that hard–like there's easy stuff in there. Ok, let's say they're building rhythms to play. Like, if they're arranging rhythms or composing rhythms or melodies, whatever it is, they have easy stuff in there too. It's like a puzzle. I put it in there like a puzzle, and they have to put the puzzle together however they want it. And they play it for me. Some of them chose to use the really hard stuff, and some of them choose to use easier stuff. But that's fine. The easy stuff is in there too, but most of them do grab harder rhythms and put them together in a song. And then, they play it. Right now, we're learning about pitch. The buckets are more when I teach about rhythm and melody. Right now, we're going over high pitch and low pitch, and they have to match pitches. It's kind of like a match game. I don't really know how to describe it, I'm sorry. I'm not doing a good job.

Interviewer: You're doing great! I'm getting so much good information from you.

Music Teacher B: Ok. They have a card with a melody on it, and it goes with a set of other cards. And they have to try to match it to the other cards in the set to make matches out of them. And then, if they're able, they play it for me like on a xylophone or sticks. If we're doing pitch, obviously [they play] the xylophones or something. Like I said, there's easier ones in there too. Like, some of them move by step, some of them move by leap, so obviously leaps are harder to play because you can't figure out how many bars are between those two notes. So, sometimes, some of the kids will pick easier ones or repeats. A lot of them pick repeats, but I won't put leaps in the easier buckets. I'll put just steps and just repeats in the easy buckets, and then I'll put leaps but less steps and repeats [in the harder buckets]. But they still have steps and repeats. They'll still have access to the easy stuff, but there's more hard stuff than easy stuff in there. And they have to maybe pick like five to play for me or three. It depends on how much time we have and how many kids are in the class because getting twenty-two kids to play five things is a lot different than twelve. Some classes are small, but our class sizes are just ridiculous right now. I don't know what's going on with that. I literally have one class that has thirteen kids in it and another class that's got twenty-three. So, it just depends on the class.

Interviewer: Yeah. That's a big discrepancy.

Music Teacher B: Big. Huge. And then, that class has so much extra time, so I have to use filler stuff. I have to come up with stuff to throw in because we get done quick. Then, the other classes, I'm trying to make it out the door on time.

Interviewer: That's all as far as the official questions go. Is there anything else you want to share about your behavior management because it seems like you are really strong in that area.

Music Teacher B: I use Class Dojo. It helps a lot because I have a horrible memory for day-to-day of who's done what. I use it to share with the parents. I use it to share with the teachers what's going on, but I really don't know. I don't know, honestly. They have warnings they'll get, and if it gets to the point where it's enough, I'll click their name. But they'll still have one more chance to fix it. Then at the end of my class, like if we get finished, I let them pick songs from my YouTube channel. Not channel, but I have a bunch of songs on there from movies like Disney movies and stuff. So, if they're name gets clicked, they can't pick their song if it's their turn. They can't play instruments. If we're doing something that I really need good behavior for, they can't have their turn. So, for them it's enough knowing that that's going to happen. So, once I click that name, it's over. They're done. They're not going to keep on. They're going to fix it because they know that's their last chance. And that's really all it takes for me or the evil eye. I have really mastered that, but honestly the best thing I find that works is to make a joke out of their behavior somehow. Make something funny out of it. Not like making fun of them, but if you draw attention to their bad behavior in a way that is hysterical, they stop because they're laughing. They're not mad anymore. I find humor works the best. Making a silly face at them

works. Sometimes, that's all it takes. You just kind of give them that look, and you're just like, "Listen. I don't know what's going on over there." I don't know. I'm just silly. I find silliness is the best deterrent.

Interviewer: Right. Using humor to diffuse the situation.

Music Teacher B: Right, because how can you be mad when you're laughing? Especially when they're about to fight or something; like if somebody's got beef with somebody. I try to find some kind of humor in the situation is what works for me. I don't know. I don't know how to describe it. I'm just weird.

Interviewer: No, I think it's great. I do the same thing.

Music Teacher B: They like it though.

Interviewer: They do.

Music Teacher B: Like, if I put my binoculars–I use my hands to make binoculars out of them to look at them. They will laugh so hard. It's so stupid. So stupid. Like, that wouldn't have made me laugh when I was a kid. I would have been like, "Oh my. You're lame." I don't know. That's all I do is stuff like that, or I'll make a face at them. Or what I really like to do is act like a kid, and pitch a fit, and lay on the floor. "They're not listening to me!" or "I'm gonna tell my mom! You're being mean to me!" Just so stupid, but they think it's hysterical. Then, they stop because they're like, "Well you look like an idiot, so I'm just gonna stop now."

Interviewer: I've done that before too.

Music Teacher B: It's just silly. I don't know. I like to be silly with them.

Interviewer: So, I'll ask one more little question since you said something about it. You said if two kids start arguing or fighting with each other –do they seem to get along well? Do they have social skills?

Music Teacher B: I just ask them what's going on, and of course they all want to talk over each other. And I'll be like, "Ok. I'm only talking to so-and so-right now." The other one has to just [wait]. Then, I'll talk to the other one. And then, if I feel like it's bad enough that they need to separate, then–I have assigned seats in my room, so I can just switch them with somebody or put somebody beside them that I know is not going to have beef with them. I have three chairs in my room that are really spread out in the back of the room. Those are my time-out spots, if they need it. Sometimes, they just need to cool down and get away from that person. And, usually, that's really all it takes. I don't really have kids busting into fights or anything like that. It's not like that–just getting on each other's nerves. I'll tell them, people get on my nerves all the time. But there's a respectful way to handle it, and there's a disrespectful way to handle it. People in

here get on my nerves too, but we've got to get along. We got to all be here together, and that's the way it is.

Interviewer: That's great. Do you have any questions for me?

Music Teacher B: No, but I need to read up on what you're talking about.

Appendix H: Interview Music Educator C

Interviewer: How are you doing?

Music Educator C: I'm doing well. How are you doing?

Interviewer: I am also doing well. Thank you.

Music Educator C: I heard you have a performance tomorrow night?

Interviewer: We sure do. We have our big Christmas showcase.

Music Educator C: We just got finished with ours last week. It's a big relief once that thing gets over with.

Interviewer: It sure is. There's always so much build up for it, and then afterwards you feel so much better.

Music Educator C: Oh yes, absolutely.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for letting me interview you. I know it's a busy time of year, so I appreciate you taking the time to talk with me tonight.

Music Educator C: You're welcome.

Interviewer: How long have you been teaching?

Music Educator C: I've been teaching since 2001. So, twenty-three, going on twenty-three years.

Interviewer: Ok, and how long have you been teaching primary-level students?

Music Educator C: I've taught elementary throughout my whole career, but primary school students specifically since 2016. So, going on eight years. I guess you could say this would be my eighth year. Something like that.

Interviewer: Ok. Do you have any questions for me before I get into the real interview questions?

Music Educator C: Not really.

Interviewer: Ok. Can you describe your experience with social-emotional learning and trauma-informed teaching? Maybe start with just social-emotional learning.

Music Educator C: Ok. So, from what I believe you're asking me, what my experience is with that?

Interviewer: Yes.

Music Educator C: Since COVID, the children are more– let's see, how would I say it. They're more needy. They're more touchy-feely. They want hugs. Kids will come into the room and just cry, and they want a hug. They have a lot of–I've seen more anxiety when you leave a person. Like when they leave their homeroom teacher to come into my classroom. I used to see that maybe on the first day of school of the first week when I see the kids the first time, but I've seen more of it on a consistent basis every week, especially with the lower-level learning students. Students are more immature than they used to be. They have less of an attention span.

Interviewer: Do you guys have any school-wide social-emotional learning programs or trauma-informed things that you're doing?

Music Educator C: Our counselor just retired, but previously they would do–they had a homeroom class section, and then the counselor would go around to every homeroom and teach classes. She'd also pull students for one-on-one counseling or small group counseling. That sort of thing.

Interviewer: So, pretty much the counselors handle all of that? They don't expect you to do anything in the music room?

Music Educator C: Well, they're supposed to handle it, but we have a school of eight hundred plus kids and just one counselor. You've got to handle stuff in your classroom. I'm sure with you being a teacher, you feel like sometimes you're the mom, you're the nurse, you're the teacher, you have to be the disciplinarian, and sometimes you have to talk to them. For example, I don't know if this fits in, but one day a second-grade class came to me after–right straight from lunch. They had seen one of their classmates get choked. It was a bad experience for them–very traumatic. They don't teach you how to handle that in college. That was the first time I ever had to deal with that. I'm a believer in the Lord, and so, I was like, "God, how do I handle this?" The kids ended up making a song for that child, and it kind of eased off, and after thirty minutes, we could have class. That was an example of a traumatic moment. But that was kind of just a one-off kind of a deal. The consistent thing is anxiety when they're leaving their teacher. We have one child whose parent came from Ukraine, and so she brings something with her every class period–something that comforts her: whether it's a handkerchief, whether it's a note, or whether it's something that's comforting to her. And some kids come in, and they're comforted when I give them a hug. So does that help answer some of your questions?

Interviewer: It does. These are really good examples that you are giving. The social-emotional things that are going on, I guess the coping skill that you're talking about using like making the song and the kids having something with them to help them cope with the anxiety, how does that affect or benefit the learning of your music students?

Music Educator C: Well, it greatly affects them because if there is one student who has anxiety issues or is having a meltdown and is screaming the whole time, and they're screaming for like 15 or 20 minutes consistently, you can't really get a lot of teaching done in those fifteen or

twenty minutes. So, I've been working this one. I actually see him tomorrow. I see the kids once a week. So, tomorrow I know when I see him, I'm going to give him a really good hug. So, that's one thing–when they're settled, and they're calm, that makes the teaching in the classroom and all that much better. Because, even when just one kid, and it doesn't matter if he's a behavior child. I use a lot of close proximity with the students who are behavior students, and I find that it is mostly boys. I have found that predominately all these social things and all these classroom discipline issues happen to be mostly with boys. There're a few girls, but it's mostly boys.

Interviewer: So, you kind of already touched on this with talking about the situation where the child was choked and their classmates made a song for him that calmed everyone down, but the next question is in what situations would you use trauma-informed teaching in your music room? Are there any other situations where you help the children with coping skills or use some kind of different technique?

Music Educator C: Well, there have been several times over the years where I've taught students. They'll come into the classroom, and there is something that has happened that day with the previous teacher. They're talking bad with each other. They're calling each other names, and you can't just go get the counselor. You've got to deal with it. So, we'll have mini-lessons before we start the music lesson just on the power of our words. I don't know if you've ever seen–Ikea has a really good commercial on YouTube where there's a plant that is being bullied, and there's a plant that's being spoken well of. And you can tell the difference in one week. You can see a difference between the plant that's being bullied and the plant that's being well-spoken to. The plant that's being bullied dies, and the plant that's being spoken to is flourishing. I'll show that video, and then we'll talk about, "Just imagine, if this plant has died because of the words we've spoken to it, what does that do to us as humans? How does that affect us?" And so, we'll talk about the power of words and how we are supposed to speak life over each other. I do that. I have done that quite a bit. Not so much this year, but in the previous past two years. A lot with second graders. A lot of babies in kindergarten and first grade, but it seems when they make it to second grade, they really start understanding that. And of course, their personality starts to develop.

Interviewer: So, you use the videos and class discussion. Do you use any songs to teach them about their emotions or social skills?

Music Educator C: There's this man, he has a character CD, and he talks about if you want to have a friend, first you must be one. I'll remember his name in a minute. I'll play that song for them. That was one of the class routines I did with this one class every week last year was that song. Every week. Every week when I saw them because they needed to hear that. They would be the class that would bully each other and talk bad about each other. I also–there's a book. What's that book called? It's a Max Lucado book, and it talks about wooden people and how the wooden people get dots and stars put on them. This one wooden person named Lucia does not have any dots or stars, and why? One of the characters in the book asks her, "Why don't you

have any?" and she says, "That's because I go see Eli." And, basically, it's representing God. Eli is supposed to represent God. Lucia doesn't have any dots or stars because she goes to see Eli, and it doesn't matter what anybody else says. I play that video that has a song that goes with that, and so we kind of did that as a mini lesson before we went into the main music lesson. I don't really bring up God, but if a child brings up God, then I let them have a little discussion about it.

Interviewer: That's great. You're doing all kinds of stuff with social-emotional learning–the literature, the videos, and the songs, the classroom discussions. That's really cool.

Music Educator C: Thanks.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about your experience of teaching through the pandemic, and how it has affected your current teaching and student learning?

Music Educator C: When I first started teaching through the pandemic, I did not know how I was going to teach music. How do you teach someone to keep a steady beat over a computer screen? I told my kids I'm a YouTube star. I made over a hundred difference videos over different things. But basically, it has totally changed my teaching. It totally shifted it because I rarely used electronics and whiteboards and stuff like that because I didn't really have one that was really working in my classroom, so everything was done in class. So then, we had the pandemic, and we shifted to online learning. I was like, "How am I going to do this?" So, I basically took my lessons, and I filmed myself teaching. My family–my husband would come in, and he'd be my partner. Then, my kids would come into my classroom and do the circle dances and things like that. I would tell the people at home to go get your momma, brother, sister, aunt, grandma to do this with you. I got a lot of positive responses from it at first. I don't really get those anymore, but when everybody was online, I would get a lot of feedback saying that they really enjoy it.

Interviewer: So, in that fall of 2020, your school system went digital?

Music Educator C: Yes. We came into work, and we filmed. We teachers reported, but students did not. And so, we did everything electronically. Now, I will say ours at the primary school, our county was not set up to be all digital. We did it digitally, but that doesn't mean that every student received the work. Does that make sense?

Interviewer: Yes.

Music Educator C: At the elementary school, every child had a Chrome Book. Not so much at the primary school.

Interviewer: How long were you guys digital?

Music Educator C: Let me see. I'm trying to think. It seemed like we were digital–we started in July. Let me think back. During the pandemic–that came out around March of 2020–and so from March of 2020 to that summer we were all digital. But it was like we were scrambling trying to

figure out things. So, then we come back during the fall, which we come back in July, they figured out some things. So, then at that point we were digital until I want to say– I felt like it was the whole year. But I think we were digital until probably the next March, or February. It seems like that's how we did it, and then we went back to school four days a week. And then, one day was the digital day. So, Mondays were digital days, and the rest of the week, we had people coming into school. So, we offered a hybrid. We offered all digital, and we then we offered both digital and in-class learning. That was hard because everybody felt like–I don't know if you know Harry Wong and the *First Days of School* book? But it was like everybody was doing the same thing because everybody had to learn this online learning at the same time. But that was hard.

Interviewer: And then, the following year was back in person?

Music Educator C: Mhmm. Back in person because our county believes in the kids being in the classroom, so we tried to get the kids back in the classroom as soon as possible. But it was crazy, even when we went back into the classroom, there'd be days where I'd have like five or six kids, and the rest of them would be out. Because of the fourteen days they had to be out on the–the fourteen days –what did they call that?

Interviewer: The quarantine.

Music Educator C: Yes, that's the word. I think it was fourteen days. In some instances, it was fourteen days and some instances ten. And they didn't really count attendance during all that time.

Interviewer: Wow. My next question is kind of a three-part question–pre-pandemic, during the pandemic, and then post-pandemic. How would you describe student needs, their behaviors, and behavior management in your classroom pre-pandemic?

Music Educator C: Well, like I said, I didn't really use a lot of digital things during that time, but my classroom management style–it really is the same. I used magnets in my classroom and numbers. And I have the kids sit in color-coded spots, and each team gets moved up. I focus more on the positive than I do the negative. So, I do that now digitally. Same kind of concept, but I do it digitally instead of having a magnetic board. That's the same. . . . I can tell you that since COVID, I have felt like it was going downhill a little. There're more kids that have more behavior issues. There seems to be a lot more neediness of the students.

Interviewer: So, I know you kind of talked about that at the beginning, the neediness, the anxiety, the escalating behaviors–did you notice any of that during the pandemic, or do you feel like that was a definite switch after the pandemic?

Music Educator C: I really didn't notice that during the pandemic at all. Kids were just happy to be at school and not be at home. That's what I noticed, but I can tell you as far as their learning

goes, I can see a whole big difference in their learning. Pre-pandemic, my kids retained things better, we could do harder songs, those types of things. We could perform bigger skits and things like that. And then, the pandemic happened. We call it the "COVID slide" with the education because everybody went backwards. It doesn't matter what county you worked in; all the kids went backwards. We see that nationwide. So, the focus is more reading because it seems to be that the kids, they've missed something, and online learning really wasn't helping.

Interviewer: Right. Well, I just have one more question we are almost done. How do you think trauma-informed teaching, or using these social skills, can meet the needs of these post-pandemic primary music students?

Music Educator C: The way I feel like is, they may hear it from their homeroom teacher, they may hear it from the counselor, they may hear it in the art room, and then they hear it in the music room–so, they're being reinforced in several times on different things. So, I felt as though they may not learn it from me, and it stick with me. But I'm planting seeds to help them. So, then I can share with our team, this helped me with this child, and this helped me with this child. This might help you with this child. They may hear about it in their homeroom class. They may hear about it from the counselor. Our counselor is really good at talking about positive words. Being a bucket filler is what she called it. So, they can hear it multiple times. So, hopefully, these multiple times, it sticks with them before they move on. . . . We have kindergarten at the end of the day.

Interviewer: So do we.

Music Educator C: And it's always interesting.

Interviewer: It is. How is it for you with these kindergarteners that are just here now compared to kindergarteners that you've had in the past? Is there a big difference?

Music Educator C: There is such a big difference. I always try to train my mind to know that the kindergarteners at the end of the year are not like the kindergarteners I see at the beginning. I teach ten kindergarten classes, and most of the kindergarten kids are very immature. I would say like three [years old]. They're just now, in my opinion, getting a little more mature. It's the whole, touching each other and all these little petty things, and I'm like, "You can't touch each other. You've got to keep your hands to yourself." That sort of thing. The special ed classes seem to be getting bigger. I'm seeing a lot more kids in wheelchairs and just having issues like that.

Interviewer: Do you have anything else you'd like to add, or do you have any questions for me?

Music Educator C: No, I can't think of any other questions pertaining to your study. I think it's really cool that you're doing it.

Appendix I: Interview Music Educator D

Music Educator D: This is she. How are you doing today?

Interviewer: I'm doing very well. How are you?

Music Educator D: I'm good now that my last program is over with. You know you kind of breathe a sigh of relief.

Interviewer: We just had ours on Tuesday. So, you had yours this morning?

Music Educator D: Yes. We sang at a thing downtown last week, and then this morning we did it for the school and all the parents and stuff. So, yes. We just got done with that, so I am good.

Interviewer: Wow. You have had a busy day then. Do you still have classes this afternoon?

Music Educator D: I do not, thank goodness. I'm done.

Interviewer: Then, you really are breathing a sigh of relief.

Music Educator D: Absolutely. So, what can I help you with?

Interviewer: Well, let's start with just a few warm-up questions. How long have you been teaching?

Music Educator D: This is year twenty-eight.

Interviewer: Oh, that's exciting!

Music Educator D: Yes, it is.

Interviewer: Good for you! How long have you been teaching at the primary level?

Music Educator D: twenty-eight years. I've been in the same position for twenty-eight years.

Interviewer: Oh, wow. At the same school as well?

Music Educator D: At the same school. We've consolidated, but it's been in the same county at the same school. Yes.

Interviewer: Ok. Before I get into the bigger interview questions, do you have any questions for me?

Music Educator D: I do not. I'm good.

Interviewer: Ok. Can you describe your experience with social-emotional learning and trauma-informed teaching?

Music Educator D: Let's see. Social-emotional learning. Well, sometimes, music can kind of help that. Really and truly, social-emotional learning, I just kind of incorporate all of that into my lessons. If there's a child that's in the classroom, and you know that they have social-emotional issues, you just kind of teach them the same way you do all of them. You may give them a little more grace, or you may let them move to the back of the room if they need a minute to calm down. You may give them a stuffed animal to hold while they're in here. Just different things like that.

Interviewer: Does your school have an SEL program that you use school-wide, or you mostly just do it within your room?

Music Educator D: Each teacher kind of does it in their room, but we have had a guidance counselor for the past couple of years. She does a program with identified students. She meets with them sometimes daily, sometimes once a week, sometimes twice a week. We also have an ABS room where students who might not need necessarily ISS or the office, they can go to this room to kind of calm down. We've got a program, Suite 360 is what it's called, that teachers work with social-emotional, or the counselor, or the ABS teacher will work on them with that.

Interviewer: Oh wow, you guys are doing a lot.

Music Educator D: We are. We really are. We have, since COVID, we have obviously seen social-emotional issues skyrocket, and we've had to implement some new things. The counselor that we've got–this is her third year, and she is young and came with a lot of ideas. We've been able to plug her in and just really, really concentrate on this kids that have got these issues. We really do try to do a lot. We've got a school social worker; I should say county social worker that checks in with these kids and their families, their home situations. So, yeah, we try to really do what we need to do for these kids.

Interviewer: So, you said you build it into your lessons. Do you have a specific resource that you use?

Music Educator D: I don't. I just kind of do–Like I said, I just kind of teach my lesson, and I know what kids I maybe need to pay closer attention to and just kind of allow them a little bit more flexibility as far as if it's too loud, if it's too [much] –you know what I'm saying? I really don't have a specific anything that I do in my lesson that's very different for them. I accommodate them, I guess.

Interviewer: So, no songs or anything like that?

Music Educator D: No. No songs. Although, our guidance counselor has a word of the month. So, sometimes I'll find songs to go with the word of the month, and sometimes those songs do coincide with some social-emotional issues. I may do that, but I really don't specifically have any songs that I do that with.

Interviewer: Ok. Can you describe how social-emotional learning and trauma-informed teaching affect or benefit learning for our primary music students?

Music Educator D: It gives them ways to cope with certain things, and therefore, they can focus more in the classroom. I know we work a lot on strategies for these kids to deal with these social-emotional and trauma issues, and so as they're learning those strategies and when they're faced with something in the classroom, they can go back to those strategies. And therefore, they can obviously learn better, learn more if they are able to cope with what is going on in their life.

Interviewer: That's great. In what situations would you use trauma-informed teaching practices in your music room?

Music Educator D: Situations. Well, for example, we've got a student who lost her brother on a four-wheeler accident back in the summer. Obviously: trauma. When she comes in the music room, I may be mindful maybe at Thanksgiving talking about things such as I'm thankful for my family, I'm thankful for my brother –you know, you might just want to–I guess I'm just more careful about that. A lot of times, I try to be aware. Sometimes, the music teachers are not necessarily aware of things that go on. So, I try to really build relationships with my kids so that I know and that I'm aware of all that's going on in their life. Just so that, if it is a song we're singing, maybe pulling out a certain part of the song and make the class aware of it. Then that student knows I'm aware of that situation, her situation or his situation, and that I care about them.

Interviewer: Great. Can you tell me about your experience of teaching through the pandemic, and how it has affected your teaching and student learning?

Music Educator D: Ok. So, teaching through the pandemic, we–I tried to do some online activities with them during the 6 months that we were out of school. I posted in Google Classroom–lots of activities such as that. Didn't really work. . . . County is not really–at that time we were not prepared, obviously, for that–technology and all the kind of stuff. So, we weren't really able to plug into that aspect of it. When kids came back, it was kind of scary. At that time, I put more space between them. It was hard. They came back, and they were different. It was almost like they were scared to hug, to talk. I mean, there was a while that we didn't even sing because we didn't want to spread germs. I was going from room to room for a while and not having them come to my room. I was on a cart and going from room to room, so they wouldn't be switching in and out and getting in the halls and being around kids. So, that was hard. That was a new experience for me. I had never had to teach from a cart before. Since then, we've just seen such a difference in the kids. Many, many, many more social-emotional issues. This year my learning goal –we have to all set a professional learning goal–and my learning goal is actually teaching kids to listen more because they are so–I've just noticed that they are so busy. They can't sit still even to watch a short video, and so for my learning goal we are listening every day to music. I'm teaching them how to be an awesome audience–how to sit and focus and

pay attention because that has definitely gone away since the pandemic. I've noticed that it's just different. Just different. It really is. So, that's one way. That's one way that I've tried to do that.

Interviewer: That's a really good goal. My kids need help with that too, and now that you've said that and described it, I'm going to pull that for my classroom.

Music Educator D: I use Teachers Pay Teachers a lot, and there're already units on listening. I've got forty-five minute segments with them once a week, and so the first part of it is to listen. Or even the last part of the lesson–I found a listening [game] where you roll the dice, and then you talk about what you heard: dynamics, tempo, and different stuff like that. They like doing that. You get to roll the dice, find that number, and answer that question today. They enjoy that. The listening has definitely become an issue since the pandemic. They don't know how to sit. They don't know how to sit. Attune to things.

Interviewer: What kind of other social and emotional things have you noticed?

Music Educator D: Behavior. They can't handle things. If I'm talking to a student, and even if I use my normal voice which I very much try to do, but - you know those students who need to be talked to quietly or without raising your voice and you know those students who are only going to respond if you raise your voice, although I try not to, but I do. Even if you tell them, "No. You can't play that instrument." Or they wanted a drum, but you gave them sticks. I've had kids throw the sticks across the room because they want to play a drum. I've had them just sit there and not play instruments because they wanted another instrument. It's just little things that like. They just can't handle things. They can't cope. Not all of them are like that, but a lot of them are like that. They cannot cope with everyday situations. They want everything to be their way, and they are not used to being told no. I don't know if that's due to the pandemic. I feel like a lot of it is because the parents were home with them. Instead of trying to tell them no, they just let the kids do whatever, so that they could work or so they could take care–you know what I'm saying? I think too, they can't do anything for themselves. I've noticed, parents are doing everything for them. They can't tie their shoes. They can't put on their coats. If there's a piece of paper on the floor, they're just going to leave it. Walk right by it. They're just different. I blame the pandemic, but I also blame social media. All of them have phones. I had a kindergarten come and tell me, "Oh, I'm getting a new phone for Christmas." Oh really? So, you have a phone, and you're getting a new one? My girls, my children, didn't get phones until they were 13. And now, I've got 6-year-olds and 7-year-olds telling me about their phones, and they're watching TikToks and all that kind of stuff. I don't know that all of it can be blamed on the pandemic, but I think a lot of it can be.

Interviewer: Right. Well, the next question, I think we've actually touched on it quite a bit, but I'll go ahead and ask it because maybe it will spur something else. How would you describe student needs, their behaviors, and behavior management in your classroom, pre-pandemic, mid-pandemic, and post-pandemic? Maybe start with pre-pandemic.

Music Educator D: So, pre-pandemic, you know like the listening thing. I could put on a piece of music, and they would sit and listen or lay down and listen without talking to their neighbor, without rolling all over the floor. I guess their attention span was longer. I guess I should say that. Their attention span was longer, pre-pandemic. Pre-pandemic we did more as far as listening, as far as singing. Well, that's another thing. Pre-pandemic, I had programs at night where the parents were invited, you know, at night. The community came. Large, county-wide fine arts programs where each school would bring a performing group, and we would all do together. That doesn't happen anymore. I do not have night programs anymore. I have them during the day. I did have that one. It was with the city. They called and asked to sing at Christmas Song Square, so we try to do a little bit of that. But, as far as having concerts and programs at night, I haven't done that since the pandemic. Actually, I just started back my performing group last year. I just started that back because before that, that first year back, we didn't really know what things were happening and what things were going on, so I didn't have a performing group. I just really taught my classes, so that has been something pre and now post– the number of concerts and the times that we have them and all that kind of good stuff. As far as kids, my lessons we've touched on how they are post-pandemic. It's just different. Different.

Interviewer: What prompted the change from the evening performances to the morning?

Music Educator D: So, some of it was me. We don't have a lot of parent support here at a Title I school. Lots of kids–I don't have after school rehearsals either–I did that pre-pandemic because parents don't pick them up. I would have a rehearsal until 4:30, and I would still be here at 5:00. The parents just don't come and get their kids, and you'd call and call and nobody would even answer. I had two girls of my own that were active in a lot of stuff in high school and doing things, and my principal was like, "Let's try this out during the day to get this done, so that these kids can get on the bus and go home" because a lot of them don't have transportation either way. It's a whole thing. So, what we do is, with my performing group–I've got a group of second graders. They're called … Singers. What I do is, we practice before school. So, we practice from 7:30 until 8:15. Even then, some of them can't get here, but I make them sign a contract, and that's worked out. That's something that happened post-pandemic as well, rehearsal times. And another thing is that they're involved in everything else. Rec department, baseball, football, basketball, cheerleading –so, it's just they're too busy. They can't get here. Don't come to afterschool performances or the nighttime performances. So, we always just since COVID we've just had in school performances during the school day.

Interviewer: Ok. I would love that. I don't think my administration would go for that. So, we've talked about the pre and the post with these changes in their attention span and their behavior. Did you see any of that during the pandemic? Or do you feel like it was a pre/post kind of switch?

Music Educator D: I guess during the pandemic, and I guess I'm thinking during the pandemic as when we weren't even in school. But, probably that first year back, it was an immediate switch.

I'm not sure that there was a mid-pandemic thing. I think it was they were one way when we left school that March and when they came back in August, we saw what it had done. Since then, this kindergarten class that we've got–we've had this discussion with both this school and a private school here. I've got friends that teach there, and we're seeing it across the board with this class. They were the babies during COVID, and so they were at home with moms that were working, or dads that were working, and trying to take care of older siblings. They were probably put in front of the TV, or put on a device, and so they don't- it goes back again to these program that we're having. I mean literally, they don't know how to sit and watch. They don't know how to– because you think about. They didn't go to grocery store. They didn't go to church. They didn't go to performances because there were none. I guess that's the main thing is that mid-pandemic, that's kind of where it was leading to. Because all that was going on, they weren't going anywhere or doing anything, and then all of the sudden, bam. We've opened back up, and we're doing things. But yet, they don't know how to function in those things or at those things.

Interviewer: I have one clarifying question, and then the last question for the interview.

Music Educator D: Ok.

Interviewer: So, obviously in March of 2020 you guys went home, and you said you went digital. And then, that following August, you came back strictly in person?

Music Educator D: No, and that was another thing. I've tried to block that out because that was literally one of the hardest years I've ever had in my twenty-eight years of teaching. We came back, and we did this crazy schedule where you had A and B students. A students would come in on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and B students would come back on Tuesdays and Thursdays. And then, you had C students who were totally virtual, and then you had other students who came every day. So, it was a mass confusion of everything, and so it was crazy. I had forgotten that. I really had forgotten that until you just asked that question, but it was just such chaos. Parents really–and I don't blame anybody for it because we were in uncharted waters. We were trying to do everything to get–because parents were scared–because we did have a lot of kids whose grandparents or parents died from COVID. And so, obviously the fear was there, and they didn't know what the best thing was. Nobody knew. So, some wanted to come back to school full force. They're ready; let's go. Others were like, "I'm not setting foot in that school. I want my kid to learn virtually." Yet, they weren't at home with them. They didn't make them log in. So, we started actually, that next summer, we had a first-grade class and a second-grade class come back two weeks early, like in July, with those kids that had been strictly virtual. So, those were fourteen student classes, and they just kind of got a jump start on things. They were literally, quite literally, a year behind because they had not logged on. They had not done anything, but their parents kept them at home saying that they were virtual. So, we tried to make up and bridge the gap. You're still seeing the gap, but we did try that. So, yeah. It was just mass chaos back then. It really was. I can't believe that was only, what, two years ago? Three years ago? I blocked it out from my mind because it was so bad. It was horrible. It really was.

Like I said, it was one of the worst years that I have had in twenty-eight years because it was just–it was bad. It really was.

Interviewer: Yours is definitely the most complicated schedule that I've heard. That was kind of intense.

Music Educator D: Leave it to . . . County to be a little complicated. At that time, we had a different superintendent, but let's not get into that. We've since gotten a new superintendent this year, and things are much, much, much better.

Interviewer: Well, that's good.

Music Educator D: Yeah.

Interviewer: Ok, well, last question. How do you think trauma-informed teaching could meet the needs of these post-pandemic primary music students?

Music Educator D: Well, you and I know as music teachers, how music can kind of just touch people in ways. It can serve to ease their minds. It can be therapy for them. It can take them somewhere else that they're not used to being. Just simply singing a song sometimes makes kids feel better. If you gear music–I guess it'd be more like music therapy–but if you gear music more towards that, so those kids that have had trauma and you're aware of that, it could definitely help them. It could–like you were talking about using specific songs to address certain situations. I think that would work. Our guidance counselor, like I said, does a lot of that with our kids when she meets with them. Music is just good for people who have been through trauma. It can just touch them, and I don't know necessarily how you would do that in the regular music ed classroom unless you had those kids. I don't know how you would really teach a lesson to everybody. That would be something. It could be done. It would just have to be something that you would have to think about. Music teachers can obviously work in conjunction with counselors and in conjunction with Sped teachers and try to get some cohesive curriculum going there. Curriculum across the subjects. Music just helps everything, in my opinion.

Interviewer: Great. Is there anything else that you want to add?

Music Educator D: I don't think so. I think you've gotten everything–there's just been a lot that's happened in the last several years since that pandemic. You kind of sometimes wish it would go back to pre-pandemic ways. It's just a lot. A lot.

Appendix J: Interview Music Educator E

Interviewer: Hey, how are you doing today?

Music Educator E: I'm doing good. How are you?

Interviewer: I'm pretty good. Thank you for letting me interview you. So, you teach in . . . County?

Music Educator E: Yes.

Interviewer: Ok. How long have you been teaching?

Music Educator E: This is my third year of teaching.

Interviewer: Ok, and how long have you been teaching primary-level students?

Music Educator E: Three years.

Interviewer: Do you have any questions for me before I get started with the interview questions?

Music Educator E: No. I don't have any questions.

Interviewer: Can you describe your experience with social-emotional learning and trauma-informed teaching? Maybe just start with social-emotional learning.

Music Educator E: Like with students?

Interviewer: Yes.

Music Educator E: Just like how they behavior or like my perspective as a teacher?

Interviewer: So, is there something you do in your classroom to promote social-emotional learning? Or maybe your school has a program that they do?

Music Educator E: So, I am part of the PBIS program. I am a part of that team since I am in specials, and I work with most of the students in my classroom. What I try to do is–I always promote–we have our expectations, and I make sure that students know the expectations when they come in my classroom. A new thing that I started this year is called star musicians. It's for kids who go over expectations just for music, and they get their name written on their own star. They have their name written on there. I write their name on there, and I have them put a little autograph on it to make it look like a little famous thing. That really motivates the kids to work hard in the classroom. They also get to get in the treasure box and pick one little toy that they want for working hard in the classroom. I do the best I can with the students. I have an average of about twenty to thirty kids in the classroom. It is a lot to manage each kid, but when I do have

time to individually work with each kid, I do what I can to make sure that they're working hard and in a nice positive environment.

Interviewer: Do you have any character skills you go over?

Music Educator E: Yeah. Yeah, we go over, mostly being nice and kind. We have kids who say stuff that shouldn't be said, or it's not nice. When I correct them, I always try to give them an example. For example, I had one student, they told this girl that her breath didn't smell good, and I said that we don't say things like that. It's not nice. If you don't have something nice to say, don't say it at all. Or if they're asking–if they're telling somebody–saying something mean to somebody, I'll say, "Well how would you feel if someone said those words to you?" and try to make sure I correct them and also teach them. So, if they ever try to do that again, they will try to correct their behaviors.

Interviewer: Right. Do you have any resources that you use to help with that? Do you listen to character-building songs or use books or anything?

Music Educator E: Yes. Actually, we have a song. It's kind of our theme song here. I use Quaver Music, and the song they love so much is "You-Nique." I play it every week at the end for each class. Just so that it reminds them to be unique, and be yourself, and that you don't have to be anybody else. Being you is just fine. Since we are a primary school–the elementary school–what helps is he also plays that song for them too. So, that carries on when they go on to the elementary school.

Interviewer: I love Quaver. We also have Quaver.

Music Educator E: Yeah. It's awesome.

Interviewer: Do you have any experience with trauma-informed teaching?

Music Educator E: No, I do not.

Interviewer: That's ok. Most of the people I've talked to either haven't heard of it, or they're doing those things, but they just don't use that term for it.

Music Educator E: Ok.

Interviewer: Can you describe how you feel social-emotional learning and trauma-informed teaching affects or benefits primary-level music students? So, those character things you're doing in your classroom with "You-Nique," how does that affect or benefit their learning?

Music Educator E: I see it even when they're not in my classroom. There are some kids that song means a lot to them. I remember one day I was [walking] down the hallway, and this kid was singing the song. They stopped me in the hallway and were like, "Oh, Miss . . . , I was singing this song!" And I can tell that they enjoy music, and they want to learn. Sometimes, it's a kind of

comfort for them. Just that song itself for so many of these kids here, it really motivates them to learn music, and it helps them to learn in class in general too. I notice when I play that song for them their behavior, it changes. I try to remind them, “You’re You-Nique.” I can definitely tell a difference when they come in here. When they first come in, like the first couple of weeks, they’re like, “Oh. I don’t know about this, about music, about this person.” And then, just watching them grow throughout the year and seeing how much they have developed as students is amazing to see.

Interviewer: That’s great. Can you tell me about your experience of teaching through the pandemic and how that affected your teaching and student learning?

Music Educator E: So, I taught kind of towards the end of the pandemic. When I started doing my student teaching, I was right in the middle of it. So, I came in when they took out the mask mandate in our county. They were still doing the little bubbles where kids had their own little bubbles. It was a struggle because I had chairs in the room. So, I had to have chairs for each kid, and some of the classes at that time were about thirty to thirty-five kids. I had to make sure I had enough chairs for the kids. And I also had to make sure there was room for the kids to move–for students to move around in the room because they’re little, so they like to move. And also, dealing with if a class had a kid who had COVID, we all had to wear masks. We transitioned out of that. Then, the clubs too as well. We didn’t have clubs. I think my clubs started late in the spring, so I was the only club running. There were a lot of factors in it that happened. It was a challenging year. . . . The second year was somewhat normal. They stopped the social bubbles and the masks. We still have a lot of sick kids that come it. I guess it’s not as tense as it was when I first started.

Interviewer: Did you do any observations at the primary level before the pandemic?

Music Educator E: I did. Yeah, I did. I did mostly primary and a little bit of high school.

Interviewer: Ok. So, you can answer the next question based on what you observed before the pandemic then?

Music Educator E: Mhmmm.

Interviewer: So, the next question is, how would you describe student needs, behaviors, and behavior management in your classroom, or in a classroom, pre-pandemic, mid-pandemic, and post-pandemic? So, when you did your observations in primary, what was student behavior like?

Music Educator E: Well, it was a lot of kids. . . . We had to go in the classrooms. Really, it was mostly social, and I noticed that even after the pandemic. The kids are not really social. Their social skills are low. Their behavior, like when it comes to their manners and stuff–I just feel like the kids are more needy now than they were during the pandemic. It’s been a challenge dealing with the kids, trying to get their social skills up. And also, being creative too. I’ve noticed they’re

not as creative. I have to teach them how to be creative and think outside of the box. During [the pandemic] most of the kids, they were not really talkative. Probably because they were separated from other people.

Interviewer: So, you said you've seen this difference post-pandemic–that they're needier, they have less social skills. Are there physical behavioral problems? Have you noticed any of that?

Music Educator E: Yeah. At our school, we do have some kids that are physical. I've never encountered any physical in my classroom, but I've seen it outside of my classroom. Some of them are a lot my physical.

Interviewer: Did you notice these types of things during the pandemic with the social skills and the neediness?

Music Educator E: They're social skills were low, even during the pandemic. They were all separated just because they were trying to get the six feet correct, so they could only talk to certain kids. Most of them were just in their own little space.

Interviewer: Do you feel like that's gotten worse for the primary students?

Music Educator E: Yeah, I believe so. Because some kids, they don't say not even a word. It's hard for them to communicate how they are feeling. I like to know why, so I'm like, "Hey, what's going on?" Most of them don't communicate how they are feeling. I guess it may be a trust thing too. There might be something else going on. I have some kids; their social skills are just low. They stay where they are, and they stay in their own little area.

Interviewer: In what situations do you think you might use trauma-informed teaching practices in your music room? Like, if someone was exhibiting an extreme behavior what would you do? Or if you've had any extreme behaviors [what did you do]?

Music Educator E: I'm trying to think of one that I've had. I would try to de-escalate the situation. I did have a student recently who just came here to our school. I'd heard that behavior-wise, he has a lot going on. So, he came in my room, and I have a little stage. He would just jump on and off the stage, which is not safe for him and the other kids because he could hurt them. So, what I would do is, I would play an interactive video for the kids to work with while I try to work with him and try to de-escalate because he does get upset when things do not go his way. I try to problem solve like, "Hey, ok. What can I do to make this better?" or "What can we do?" and so on. I try my best to de-escalate, and so far, it's been getting better with him in the classroom. He comes in now and goes to his spot. He doesn't jump on the stage like he usually does. I try to de-escalate it as much as I can, and then, if I cannot, I try to get [administration] to help with that. Like I said, I've got so many kids, and it's hard to try to get the one kid to calm down. I try to make sure that I accommodate not only to him but to everybody else in the

classroom as well. So, it's not just focused on just pleasing him or making sure he doesn't go off. It's just for everybody.

Interviewer: What other kind of de-escalation techniques do you use?

Music Educator E: I just talk to them most of the time. I try to talk to them. If we have our laptops, I know some kids get frustrated with the laptops. I have them take a break. I do have some corners in my room where I say, "Hey, why don't you go sit in the corner and take a break." And I do have some puzzles too to help them have a little space and calm down a little bit. I also have some of my students that de-escalate help around the classroom. So, if they're calm for about a good 10 minutes, I say, "Hey, can you help me put these bells up real quick?" or something like that. And I give them a positive incentive. So, I just say, "Hey, thank you for helping me with this. I really appreciate you calming down and helping me with this stuff." I always try to reassure them like, "Hey, I want you to keep up this behavior." And I just want them to feel like this is a safe place for them to just be calm and feel safe.

Interviewer: That's great. I have just one more question. How does trauma-informed teaching, so those things you are doing like the social-emotional learning and the de-escalation and building the relationships with students, meet the needs of these post-pandemic primary music students?

Music Educator E: You said how does it meet their needs?

Interviewer: Yes. Like you said, they're lacking social skills, they're more needy–how does the trauma-informed teaching help with that, or how does it meet their needs?

Music Educator E: I try to be actively engaged as much as I can. Sometimes, we do small group stuff and I go around, and I make sure what they are discussing and how they can solve a problem on whatever they are working on. I do this thing where when we play a game with the whole class. I have a spinner. We always do a little drum roll, so they can anticipate whose number is going to be picked. So, when the kids come up there, we have a special chant that we do. So, if the kid is not sure–one of the games we play on Quaver is a quarter note/eighth note soccer game–if they're not sure of it in the class I say, "Hey class, can we help so-and-so with the questions?" Once they help them, they gain a little confidence and start doing it on their own. That's why I try to help build their confidence and try to talk to their classmates and encourage them. Another way is, I have a kid who assists me in the class. It might be one. It might be two, and they go around and help the kids. Sometimes–I have them–I say, "Hey, why don't you go sit with so and so and them with their laptop?" because I had a kid who struggled with the laptop. Actually, her mom contacted me, and so I talked to the child and said, "Hey, I can get you somebody to help you in the classroom." And she came up to me when we had laptops and said, "Hey, can I have somebody help me?" She doesn't speak that much either in the class, so I was shocked that she came up and asked me for help. I had a student who helped her with the laptop, and she has a lot more confidence in working with the laptop now when we are on Quaver. I

always try to make sure the kids learn some leadership skills to help those that are low with social skills or anything else.

Interviewer: This is just a curiosity question. Do they bring their laptops every time to music?

Music Educator E: Not every time. Just about once or twice a month.

Interviewer: Ok, and just another curiosity question. When you do the activities with the spinner, and it chooses a child, do you have kids that get really upset if it's not their turn or who refuse to participate if their number gets chosen?

Music Educator E: Yup. I had a kid my first year, she never participated when it would land on her number until like the last day of school. She finally built up the courage to go up. I've had kids who have gotten upset that it hasn't chosen them. I always try to tell them–I said, "Sometimes you get chosen, and sometimes you don't. But we don't get upset about it." I always have to tell them that. Usually, the first day I have everybody go, just so everyone gets to experience it. Once a month or so, I have all the kids go, and then some days I have just some of the kids go. I do have kids that get quite upset that they don't get to go, and they calm down after a while.

Interviewer: What do they do when they get upset?

Music Educator E: Some of them, they pout. They cry. If we are doing something else after the spinner then they will not participate anymore because they are upset. I tell them–I say, "Hey, we are about to do something else really cool after this, and I would really like it if you would participate." Sometimes, we'll do the spinner, but we'll play a game all together as a class without using a spinner. I say, "We're going to play a game with the whole class, and I would love for you to join." Or "Hey, I want you to participate with the rest of the class because we're going to do this, and I'm passing out this." Sometimes, the kids will participate right after I said it. Sometimes it takes them a few minutes to process, and then they'll come back and participate again.

Interviewer: Right. Ok. Is there anything else you want to add about your behavior management or the behaviors that you've noticed that might be relevant? Maybe something I didn't ask, but you thought of it.

Music Educator E: I just really like creating a positive environment in my classroom. This is just a little extra note for me as a teacher–I always make sure if a kid wants a hug, I always tell them you can always come to me if you need a hug. It doesn't matter what time or day. If you want to give me a hug, or you want to give me a high five, or talk–you can always come to talk to me. I always feel like for being a teacher it's important to have that positive environment because that sets the expectation of what it's going to feel like when they come in my room. I did have some cases where they can't be in here, or I've had some cases where the kids coming here was just

their place of calming down and things just de-escalate and enjoy school and music. I really do like working with the students and making sure they're in a positive environment.

Interviewer: Great. Do you have any questions for me?

Music Educator E: Nope. No questions.