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Challenges To Musical and Organizational Growth in Small Rural Community High School Instrumental Music Programs in Georgia

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by

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ABSTRACT

Rural school instrumental programs are commonly categorized as small and struggling. Teaching in these programs is often considered a stepping-stone for music educators. Despite common challenges such as limited or less educated staff, underdeveloped musicians, and a lack of resources, some rural programs have found inventive solutions to combat the obstacles of rural schools and grow successful band programs. There is a need to address the obstacles of being a high school band director whose program is growing or needs to improve regarding student participation and musicianship in this setting. This qualitative research study seeks to uncover similar challenges current high school band directors face when increasing or attempting to develop their programs musically and organizationally in small rural communities in Georgia. Existing literature combined with a research survey will emphasize high school directors' specific challenges in these settings. The solutions they report will also be published. The results of the research survey suggest that although there are many trials in teaching in these situations, music and organizational growth can still be found. The study has implications for current or future band directors, as it will fill a gap in the literature about the challenges facing high school band directors in Georgia regarding organizational and musical growth. By reading about how current directors overcome difficulties, other directors may be encouraged to grow similarly. Furthermore, the writing of this study could embolden additional research into the hardships of other teaching aspects in small-rural school settings by this or other authors.

Keywords: Rural, Band Director, Success, Challenges, Retention, Recruiting

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my fantastic wife, Jamie. She is my rock and the reason I am the husband and father that I am. Her encouragement constantly motivated me to finish what I started. God has blessed me with the greatest friend I could ever receive. She is my love and the reason I want to better myself.

I also dedicate my thesis to my sons, Marcus, Blake, and Jase. You are growing to become strong, Godly men. Being Marcus and Blake's band director has given me the opportunity to see them prosper in their musical journey. Jase has also shown an interest in music. This has been an added blessing. Thank you for your hard work at school and for supporting your father in his dream.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT)

Career Technical and Agricultural Education (CTAE)

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE)

Georgia Music Educators Association (GMEA)

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Large Group Performance Evaluation (LGPE)

Music Education Association (MEA)

National Association for Music Education (NAfME)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Professional Development (PD)

Professional Learning Communities (PLC)

Virtual Professional Learning Communities (VPLC)

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Presumably, no educator goes into the teaching profession to fail. The same logic applies to the music director, who spends countless hours after school on top of regular teaching duties, to produce a musical event. There are challenges in every teaching situation, and rural schools may have different teaching difficulties than urban schools. Author Vincent Bates, in his article on the benefits of rural education, describes a dangerous trend in today's thinking called *urbanormativity:*

> Cities are associated with a range of positive values: prosperity and progress, education and refinement, cosmopolitanism, and diversity. In contrast, those living in the country are associated with poverty and backwardness, ignorance and crudeness, boredom, and homogeneity. Moreover, as the world becomes increasingly urban, the effect is not only demographics but cultural as well.[1]

Although teaching in a rural setting can be difficult, the experience can also be rewarding. There is beauty, diversity, and rich culture in the rural environment, as well as community and close relationships. By studying the obstacles rural teachers face and the actions that directors in the environment have taken to rise above them, this study aims to promote music in rural schools and overcome the idea of *urbanormativity*. Studying the specific challenges rural teachers have encountered and conquered can also help other rural directors succeed, potentially attracting more people to their music programs.

Background

Rural music education is a topic worth studying. Small rural schools comprise a significant portion of school districts within the United States. As of 2021, "more than half of all

[1] Vincent C. Bates, "Thinking Critically About Rural Music Education," *Visions of Research in Music Education* 32, no. 1 (2018): 3, https://digitalcommons.lib.uconn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1201&context=vrme.

operating regular (whether public or private) school districts and about one-third of all public schools were in rural areas, which means that a large proportion of the country's educational infrastructure serves rural students."[2] Rural school districts in Georgia percentage is even higher. According to the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE), "40.5% of the population in Georgia is rural."[3] Georgia has many rural areas because agriculture is a significant part of the economy. According to the New Georgia Encyclopedia, "Georgia now consistently ranks first in the nation's production of poultry and eggs and is also a top producer of peanuts, pecans, tobacco, blueberries, and peaches. The state accounts for two percent of total U.S. agricultural sales."[4] With all the land needed for farming these crops and raising livestock, it is unsurprising that Georgia is a vast state with many rural areas. Moreover, the average farm size is growing, and there are fewer farms than in the past. The New Georgia Encyclopedia reports, "Average farm acreage in the state increased by three percent between 2012 and 2017."[5]

Statement of the Problem

Rural school settings, with their unique challenges, are worthy of study. Music author Daniel Isbell puts it this way, "There is a substantial lack of literature to help teachers who choose to work in rural schools. The lack of literature is surprising since two-thirds of all public schools in this country are, by some definitions, considered rural and are responsible for

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[2] Angela Johnson, Megan Kuhfield, and James Soland, "The Forgotten 20%: Achievement and Growth in Rural Schools Across the Nation," *AERA Open* 7, no. 1 (2021): 1, https://doi.org/10.1177/23328584211052046.

[3] Dr. Bronwyn Ragan-Martin, "Rural Education and Innovation," Georgia Department of Education, Accessed February 22, 2023, https://shealy-my.sharepoint.com/:p:/g/personal/bronwyn_ragan-martin_doe_k12_ga_us/EVNQvk9O94NIjLoS2WyDpJoB9aT8i7wSHHuoaWUlxtO3vw?rtime=yikPWSgV20g.

[4] William Flatt, "Agriculture in Georgia," New Georgia Encyclopedia, February 25, 2022, https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/business-economy/agriculture-in-georgia-overview.

[5] Ibid.

educating one-quarter to one-third of all school-age children."[6] With such a substantial number of rural schools in Georgia, it is probable that many of these programs have achieved growth in musical achievement or in student program enrollment. It is also likely that programs that have failed to grow in these aspects aspire to do so. A quick internet search produces results for topics like "how to develop a mature-sounding instrumental program"[7] or "how to recruit and retain band students."[8] Books and articles focus on the challenges that all instrumental programs face, from issues such as breathing to scheduling. Schools in small rural communities face additional obstacles. Specifically, a literature gap exists regarding organizational and musical growth in small rural schools in Georgia. Every band program has obstacles that must be addressed, but small rural music programs seeking to grow musically and structurally face unique difficulties. Despite common struggles, such as limited staff or less educated staff, underdeveloped musicians, and lack of resources, some rural programs have discovered inventive solutions to solve their issues and grow successfully. Examining the similar challenges that exist across rural Georgia instrumental programs, not just growth hindrances in small rural areas, will also prove insightful.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of the study was to uncover barriers to program growth, specifically in small rural areas of Georgia, and propose solutions. The researcher made an inquiry to all rural

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[6] Daniel Isbell, "Music Education in Rural Areas: A Few Keys to Success," *Music Educators Journal* 92, no. 2 (2005): 30, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3400194.

[7] Mike Lawson, "Good Phrasing: A Game Changer for Achieving a Mature Ensemble Sound," *School Band and Orchestra,* December 6, 2017, https://sbomagazine.com/good-phrasing-a-game-changer-for-achieving-a-mature-ensemble-sound.

[8] Ronald E. Kearns, "Building A High School Instrumental Program from Scratch," Band Director.com, accessed March 10, 2023, https://banddirector.com/teaching-technology/building-a-high-school-instrumental-program-from-scratch.

Georgia high school band directors, to learn about the specific common challenges they faced. Directors who have successfully grown programs, as defined through core musical concepts, or by adding students to program enrollment, were asked how they overcame growth barriers. These results are reported in later chapters. This doctoral thesis ascertained the commonalities of present implications and identified future areas of research.

Research Method

This study involved administering a Likert scale survey to participants and conducting a literature review of current dissertations, books, and articles to identify specific trials that high school directors face in rural Georgia. The survey emphasized program growth (measured musically and structurally), and as well as common challenges that rural music ensembles face. A qualitative research methodology was selected as it "is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem."[9] Specifically, for this inquiry, a grounded theory study was chosen. According to researchers John and J. David Creswell, this research method emphasizes the "importance of reporting the complexity of a situation."[10] Therefore, it was optimal for discovering barriers to the musical and organizational growth of instrumental programs in Georgia through interpretations based on data analysis and the implications of the survey results.

Research Design

The first step in the research plan was to submit the application to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and obtain approval to conduct an open-ended survey. This survey was then

[9] John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publishing, 2018), 4.

[10] Ibid.

sent to current public high school band directors in all rural communities throughout Georgia via their school email. The researcher obtained the email addresses of band directors through the Georgia Music Educators Association (GMEA) members' website.[11] The survey items included questions about the band director's current situation, including the size of their program, whether it was growing musically or organizationally (according to pre-established criteria), and the obstacles to growth that they encountered. Band directors who did not initially respond received a reminder survey and a phone call to boost participation levels.

Rural areas were identified using Georgia's Appendix B sheet through the Georgia Department of Education website.[12] Georgia classifies school districts by different locales. The state education department breaks down rural categories into three distinct classifications: rural, fringe; rural, distant; and rural, remote. The following survey questions were sent to all rural band directors in Georgia, regardless of the number of students enrolled. Using the rural categories breakdown can help distinguish between large schools with small bands and small schools with large bands when comparing program participation numbers from the survey to a school's overall enrollment. The categorical breakdown assisted in comparing small and large programs in Georgia because some programs that are now large may have previously been classified as small.

One purpose of the study was to identify outliers that defied expectations. For example, professors Carlos Abril and Kenneth Elpus found that "Band enrollment rates [averaged] 11% of

[11] "Opus," GMEA, accessed March 10, 2023, https://www.gmea.org.

[12] "Download," Document, GOSA, accessed March 10, 2023, https://gosa.georgia.gov/document/download.

students enrolling in at least one band course at some point during high school."[13] For the present study, the survey was sent to all rural band directors of public high schools in Georgia with the aim of identifying shared experiences and high-performing outliers. The open-ended survey included a brief description of the study's purpose and described the careful consideration that went into its design (see Appendix A).

The literature was examined using the qualitative research method to answer the proposed questions. The literature came from sources such as scholarly journals, recent dissertations, magazine articles, educational materials, books, and websites. Qualitative data was collected in accordance with the study's themes, which included obstacles to the musical or organizational growth of small rural high school instrumental programs and common challenges these programs face, regardless of size.

Significance of the Study

The formal surveys and literature review aimed to identify programs that have faced growth challenges in small rural schools and examine whether these programs were able to grow musically or organizationally, and if so, how. The data provided an informed view of the growth challenges that band programs encounter in small rural communities in Georgia, from the perspectives of high school directors currently occupying these positions as well as in the literature. The compiled data established common themes regarding shared problems that small rural schools face in Georgia and the growth challenges associated with small rural programs. This thesis focuses specifically on the musical and organizational challenges that current band directors have faced regarding program growth, and the accounts of those who have found

[13] Kenneth Elpus and Carlos R. Abril, "Who Enrolls in High School Music? A National Profile of U.S. Students, 2009 – 2013," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 67, no. 3 (2019): 328, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429419862387.

promising solutions for the future. It also seeks to identify unique circumstances that small rural programs may have, and it attempts to address solutions to such problems. Programs that grew musically overcame challenges to do so, and there is value in studying the solutions the band directors have found.

When all the data is compiled, examined, and analyzed, the resulting material will lay the foundation for possible solutions for future directors. This groundwork will help directors combat challenges to the growth of small rural programs, both musically and structurally. This study's conclusions can convey advice from experienced directors who have faced difficult situations. This thesis seeks to identify problems common to instrumental programs in rural high schools and provide opportunities for future research focusing on these programs.

Research Questions

Rural school districts throughout the United States face unique challenges. Professors Katie Lewis and Cecelia Boswell discovered that "Understanding how culture defines rural communities and influences educational decisions is key in overcoming challenges."[14] This study, in examining these challenges to growth and the everyday trials faced by high school band instrumental programs in rural Georgia, sought to answer the following questions:

> Research Question One: What barriers to the musical growth of instrumental programs exist in small rural high schools in Georgia?
>
> Research Question Two: What barriers to the enrollment growth of instrumental programs (in terms of organization and structure) exist in small rural high schools in Georgia?

[14] Katie D. Lewis and Cecelia Boswell, "Perceived Challenges for Rural Gifted Education," *Gifted Child Today* 43, no. 3 (2020): 184, https://doi.org/10.1177/1076217520915742.

Research Question Three: What common challenges do instrumental programs in rural Georgia experience overall?

Hypotheses

The first research question may be answered with the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis One: Barriers to students' musical growth in instrumental programs in small rural high schools in Georgia may include an overworked or inexperienced band director, limited of support staff, or inadequate opportunities for individual growth as musicians.

One barrier to musical growth in small rural Georgia may be present when a single band director is responsible for both middle and high school instrumental programs. This could result in challenges to musical growth due to time constraints. One director shared that overseeing both middle and high school results in less time for both. Much work happens within a band program. Many ensembles include smaller groups, such as jazz bands, indoor drumlines, steel drums, brass ensembles, concert bands, marching bands, pep bands, flute choirs, and other chamber ensembles. In addition, there are honor bands, all-state tryouts, and playing "Taps" at military and police funerals. Some ceremonies include holidays, graduations, athletic events, and more. Additionally, the director may be asked to offer courses such as general music or music theory, and they are expected to contribute to other activities, like the community theater or the local festival parade panel. Band directors may even have bus duty, hall monitoring, or other supervision and school responsibilities unrelated to music. All these demands on a single teacher's time often lead to exhaustion, and the teacher may be too busy to invest in private lessons, intense score study, or other activities that contribute to a student's musical growth.

An experienced director can solve some of these issues and may be able to delegate responsibility. After all, they have been in the field and know where to delegate when they are

musically fatigued. This may not be the case with an inexperienced band director, who may be overwhelmed or too embarrassed to reach out for help. Feelings of burnout and frustration may result and be "linked…to professional demands."[15] Longevity in the teaching profession produces a deep connection between the director and their students. An experienced, creative director willing to think in new ways or an inexperienced director ready to seek a mentor can profoundly influence a program. Roger E. Anderson, a doctoral student at Arizona State University, notes that the "impact of a single teacher, either bad or good, can have a long-lasting impact, indeed for decades in some cases."[16] An experienced teacher, or a new teacher with a mentor and support staff, can be essential to growing a successful program. Other factors also influence the director's impact on student musicality. A doctoral student at Auburn University, Ronnie B. Davis, found a correlation between high concert band ratings and the "age, teaching experience, and level of the band director."[17] He asserts, "Higher levels of education seemed to help directors prepare their bands for concert competition more adequately."[18] Experienced directors who have been at an establishment for at least more than two years know how to run an efficient band program.

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[15] Jessica Nápoles, "Burnout: A Review of the Literature," *Applications of Research in Music Education* 40, no. 2 (2022): 20, https://doi.org/10.1177/87551233211037669.

[16] Roger E. Anderson, "A History of the Coolidge High School Band: Building a Rural Program Through Community Engagement and Stakeholder Support, 1935-1980" (PhD diss., Arizona State University, 2019), 50, https://go.openathens.net/redirector/liberty.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/history-coolidge-high-school-band-building-rural/docview/2331269399/se-2.

[17] Ronnie B. Davis, "A Study of the Relationship Between Rehearsal Procedures and Contest Ratings for High School Marching Band" (PhD diss., Auburn University, 2000), 17, https://go.openathens.net/redirector/liberty.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/study-relationship-between-rehearsal-procedures/docview/304582302/se-2.

[18] Ibid.

Not only are a band director's ongoing education and dedication to staying in a position one of the possible factors in promoting musical growth, but they may also be essential. Music professor and author Thomas McCauley expanded on this concept by declaring, "The keys to affecting positive change … are consistency, persistence, and love."[19] While there are many possible explanations for this correlation between education and experience, such as advanced technical training and life experience, a consistent, a steady educator is also more likely to have learned from previous mistakes. They may approach problem-solving in unique ways, conveying this passion to students who dig in and grow musically. Band directors from small rural programs who succeed in improving students' musicality know their ensemble and can make important decisions to help their group excel. For example, when selecting music and working with limited instrumentation, the experienced director familiar with their program can select a superior repertoire. Seasoned directors can choose a repertoire that challenges their students but still helps them grow musically. Inexperienced directors may select music that is either too difficult or too easy for their group and contains no real educational value. When music professors Jay Juchniewicz, Steven Kelly, and Amy Acklin surveyed characteristics that superior band directors had in common, the directors mentioned "the importance of music selection"[20] as a factor.

Another possible impediment to musical growth in a small rural ensemble is a shortage of available or willing staff to help sponsor the various groups in the instrumental program. At a small school in a remote location, there are fewer people from which to choose. A band director

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[19] Thomas McCauley, *Adventures in Band Building, How to Turn "Less Than It Could Be" into "More Than It Should Be* (Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc., 2016), 123.

[20] Jay Juchniewicz, Steven N. Kelly, and Amy I. Acklin, "Rehearsal Characteristics of 'Superior' Band Directors. *Applications of Research in Music Education* 32, no. 2 (2014): 41.

may learn other instruments, but becoming proficient in all instrument families is challenging, even with ongoing education. Staff members, preferably those with performance experience on the instrument they are instructing, must demonstrate their knowledge, from correct playing positions to alternate fingering. For example, knowing which notes on a trumpet may be challenging to tune and understanding when the saddle and third valve slide must extend may not be common knowledge for the band director whose primary instrument is not the trumpet. With limited staff, addressing complex musical issues across the spectrum of instruments can be difficult. Furthermore, a sole director needs dedicated staff to address challenges common to rural schools in Georgia. For example, if students must attend after-school practices but live many miles away from the school building, they will likely need transportation home; therefore, staff must be able to drive a bus or stay after school with an ensemble. A small rural school typically has fewer faculty than those in urban schools. The small number of staff members in school may create difficulty in finding qualified staff to help teach the instrumental music program.

Yet, another potential obstacle small rural bands in Georgia face involves inadequate opportunities for students to grow as musicians. A lack of funding for the arts, and, therefore, limited or nonexistent music classes, could contribute to the musical decline. Such classes can provide the background knowledge needed for students to develop into a mature musician before reaching high school. In his article on the decline of music literacy, John Henschen, founder of Intellectual Takeout, attributes skill loss to the cutting back of arts programs. He states, “Over the last 20 years, musical foundations like reading and composing music are disappearing. School programs and at-home piano lessons are two primary sources for learning to read music.

Public school music programs have declined since the 1980s."[21] With budget cuts and staff reductions, students are being limited as musicians. Individual lessons and small group ensembles are restricted or nonexistent when other areas demand the director's time. There are few to no opportunities for private lessons, ensemble practice, or performance opportunities.

The second research question may be answered with the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis Two: Barriers to instrumental program enrollment growth in small rural high schools in Georgia may include a lack of musical growth, insufficient financial support by the school, and declining stakeholder support.

Another possible obstacle to increasing student enrollment in small rural schools is a lack of musical growth, either individually or as an ensemble. As hypothesized in research question one, band director responsibilities, support staff, and access issues in a rural program can hamper musical growth. Class conflicts and scheduling difficulties can block student access. Smaller school populations can also be a factor. According to music Educator and author Vincent Bates, "The expectation to build the ideal band, orchestra, or choir program in a small rural school is an almost insurmountable challenge. Just one family moving from a small community, for example, can significantly undermine years of careful planning for a balanced and proficient ensemble."[22] Bates urges rural teachers to think creatively, even outside of traditional ensembles.

After all, if a program is dying, not fun, or boring, students may not want to join. An effective way for a band director to generate musical growth and excitement, while also growing students musically, involves finding ways for schools to stand out. An example is offering a steel

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[21] John Henschen, "The Tragic Decline of Music Literacy (and Quality)," *PR Newswire*, August 22, 2018, https://go.openathens.net/redirector/liberty.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/wire-feeds/jon-henschen-publishes-tragic-decline-music/docview/2090997259/se-2?accountid=12085.

[22] Vincent Bates, "Preparing Rural Music Teacher: Reflecting on 'Shared Visions'," *Journal of Music Teacher Education* 20, no. 2 (2011): 92, https://doi.org/10.1177/1057083710377722.

drum ensemble or a traveling jazz band. Clinician, professor, author, and conductor Tim Sharp noted in his book on renewal and innovation that small rural schools require a niche. He observed that some schools, "comprised of leaders and conductors of groups of musicians… were very good at collaboration within their…rehearsal room, but not very good at collaboration outside their…rehearsal room and organization."[23] For small groups to attain success and stand out, they require a niche, and they must be innovative and creative in the process, willing to collaborate outside their organization and promote it.

Another hindrance to enrollment growth could involve schools' lack of financial support. Take, for example, a growing band that needs instruments. A school board may find it tempting to purchase numerous cheaper instruments, but the students must sound competent and grow musically. Therefore, education and awareness regarding the effect of quality equipment on musicality will help the school board realize the requirement for competitive instruments. Additionally, purchasing quality equipment may eventually save the program money on repairs and help produce a more mature sound. As Texas music educator Scott McAdow says, "Even with limited resources, a major priority must be placing your students on reliable, quality musical instruments that are in good working order!"[24] Funds must be raised by all those involved, and instruments taken care of. Moreover, money must be spent and allocated wisely, as a better instrument will produce a superior sound. The better the sound, the more confident the player. The more confident the player, the more pleasing the performance, and the more support the program will receive from the school and the community at large. Higher-quality instruments

[23] Tim Sharp, *Innovation in the Ensemble Arts: Sustaining Creativity* (Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc., 2017), xviii.

[24] Scott McAdow, "Developing a Successful Band Program in Title I Schools," *Bandmasters Review*, (2016), 7, apps.texasbandmasters.org/archives/pdgs/bmr/2016-12-mcadow.pdf.

sound better, and some are easier to play and tune, with extra keys and valves. Obtaining quality instruments create a snowball effect and lead to increased financial support.

Finally, lack of support from stakeholders (i.e., the parents, school, and community) for the band and all they do musically may hinder small rural programs. Without stakeholder support, funding, morale, and reputation will suffer, inhibiting overall enrollment growth. A doctoral student at Mercer University, Robert Louis Bryant, found that "administrative support was … the strongest predictor of job satisfaction for instrumental music teachers in the state of Georgia."[25] Community support is also essential. A grassroots effort must begin in the community for the ensemble's work to be recognized and supported. A well-thought-out outreach campaign is critical. Author and music educator Sean Smith advises, "Market your music program like your financial support depends on it!"[26] To fund the expanding costs of a music program, the community must see and recognize the band at work, and marketing is one way to promote the instrumental ensemble. Author Amy Cox-Petersen expressed the importance of educational partnerships in stating that effective collaboration between the school and the community usually contains "common goals communicated amicably."[27]

Some of these challenges may not be strictly unique to small rural schools, but the solutions may require different handling in that setting when compared to larger urban schools. This cycle of collaboration and promotion can encourage growth in enrollment numbers through renewed interest in the program. Phillip Hash, professor and coordinator of music education at

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[25] Robert Louis Bryant III, "Predictors of Instrumental Music Teacher Job Satisfaction" (PhD diss., Mercer University, 2012), 111, https://go.openathens.net/redirector/liberty.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/predictors-instrumental-music-teacher-job/docview/1041251136/se-2.

[26] Sean Dennison Smith, *Marketing Your Music Program: From Traditional Branding to Digital Promotion* (Delray Beach, Florida: Meredith Music Publications, 2018), 15.

[27] Amy Cox Petersen, *Educational Partnerships: Connecting Schools, Families, and the Community* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2011), 11.

Illinois State University, discusses the importance of renewal in program offerings because it generates renewed interest. This interest "is the key… that attracts and retains students from the first day of beginning band through high school graduation and beyond."[28]

The third research question may be answered with the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis Three: Common challenges experienced by high school band directors in rural Georgia may include recruiting, retention, and instrumentation.

Conceivably, some challenges might be identical across rural Georgian schools. It makes sense to that some common obstacles would surface between small and large rural groups and even urban groups in similar categories. Data filtering is essential to decipher common emerging themes and patterns. For example, many books in the relevant literature include a section or chapter on recruiting and retaining students, as it is a common theme among urban and rural schools. In addition to the students, a program must also recruit and retain a quality band director to ensure its stability.

Once the band director and students are recruited, the next step involves director and student retention. To explore retention issues, it is also necessary to consider student participation in multiple activities or student sharing. In a small rural school, the process of sharing students who participate in numerous activities outside of the band may look different than it does in a larger urban school with a larger student population. For these small programs, instrumentation shuffling and custom arranging are possible solutions to the everyday challenges of insufficient players per part or instruments missing altogether. These solutions must be examined to assess their effectiveness in the small rural school instrumental music programs. These practices may involve asking willing students to switch instruments to fill out the band's

[28] Phillip M. Hash, "Re-Energize Your Band Program," *School Band & Orchestra,* March 2018, 27.

instrumentation. According to band director William Miller, "The most successful band directors are the ones who teach their bandsmen to want to make the band as good as possible."[29] This can be fun and give the students ownership as they do what is needed to make their program successful. Miller also cites a study led by Jack Mercer in which successful band directors were surveyed to find correlations, such as the success level of the high school they went to, what college they attended, and whether they were average or superior musicians. Miller reveals, "Nothing correlated except one thing: With every successful band director Mercer found 'he was well liked and respected.'"[30] Undoubtedly, having such a relationship with the students, school, and community will increase students' desire to achieve and perform well and become more successful individuals.

Ultimately, regardless of its cause, a band program's musical growth may be attractive to others, causing nonmusicians to desire to join the ensemble. This sudden growth can be overwhelming, in a positive sense. Considering that lack of resources can impede ensemble enrollment growth, overcoming these obstacles through creativity can look differently in small rural programs. Innovative solutions to growing a successful ensemble are possible because others have done it. Auburn University doctoral student Robert Joseph Grogan discusses how a stumbling block can itself foster new perceptions, stating, "Too often, the image of high-achieving band programs is one of suburban, predominantly white students even though high-achieving band programs in low-income neighborhoods exist."[31] Bradley J. Regier, the assistant

[29] William Miller, *Band Director Secrets of Success* (Lakeland, FL: Aiton Publishing, 1997), 18.

[30] Ibid., 15.

[31] Robert Joseph Grogan III, "A High Achieving Middle School Band at a High Poverty School in Georgia: A Case Study" (PhD diss., Auburn University, 2022), 2, https://etd.auburn.edu/bitstream/handle 10415/8286/PhD% 20Dissertation%20-%20Robert%20Grogan.pdf? sequence=2.

professor of music education at Illinois Wesleyan University, highlights possible solutions when he notes that director self-efficacy is influenced "not only by previous experiences and the physiological state associated with a presented task but also by numerous contextual factors, such as personal and school demographics, content knowledge, and competence for a task."[32] Experienced directors' knowledge helps them overcome barriers to enable ensemble growth in small rural schools. They function as the critical resource when other resources are in short supply.

Core Concepts

Musical and organizational challenges to growth comprise the core concepts of this study. Success must also be defined, since the study seeks to examine successful programs. Musical growth challenges are defined as any reason a small rural high school instrumental program fails to develop musically. For example, obstacles to musical growth may involve high school students who wanted to join an instrumental ensemble earlier but lacked the opportunity to play an instrument. When these students go on to play in a mature ensemble with a beginner tone, it hurts the overall sound production of the ensemble. Traditionally, beginning band is taught at the elementary or middle school level, and students who miss this stage have much to learn in a shortened amount of time. Another example is a high school that includes eighth graders in the high school instrumental ensemble for scheduling reasons. These students missed out on intermediate band instruction due to being incorporated into the high school band, possibly restricting their music proficiency due to the workload of a sole middle and high school director.

[32] Bradley J. Regier, "Examining Relationships Among Concert Band Directors' Efficacious Sources, Self-Efficacy for Teaching Strategies, and Effective Teaching Skills," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 68, no. 4 (2021): 446, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022420943137.

Organizational growth challenges include circumstances inside the high school music program that would be difficult to address procedurally or provide for physically if the program suddenly experienced a large influx of students. Examples include difficulty securing funds to buy new uniforms, requiring additional buses and drivers (which are hard to come by) to play at an out-of-town event that the band is expected to pay for, inadequate participation, or lack of financial support from stakeholders. Additional concepts explored in the study include common challenges faced by all small rural instrumental programs, specifically, growth. Prior to this study, these concepts of musical and organizational growth challenges and shared trials across small rural programs had not been explicitly documented in those terms.

Instrumental music program success is often measured in the number of accolades earned from a competition. Band programs attend marching venues or concert festivals to achieve high scores. Programs that are considered successful have often won prestigious competitions or been selected to perform after auditioning for nationally televised events. Music educators must reflect on what defines a program's success.

John Wooden, former Hall-of-Fame UCLA men's basketball coach once stated that peace of mind "is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you did your best to become the best you are capable of becoming."[33] His definition of success focused more on being one's best and less on competing with others. Referring to Coach Wooden's example of extraordinary leadership, retired band director and music author Trey Reely argues that "band directors must formulate their definition of success for themselves."[34] Music author Sean Dennison Smith states

[33] John Wooden and Jay Carty, *Coach Wooden's Pyramid of Success: Building Blocks for a Better Life* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2005), 148.

[34] Trey Reely, *Building a Band Program that Lasts* (Chicago: Meredith Music Publications, 2021), 43.

that music educators should "own (their) content and be proud of the product!"[35] Ultimately, he felt it was up to the music educator to find the best solution for themselves and the community. Each situation is different, and the measure of success will also vary among schools and situations. Thus, one of the open-ended survey questions inquired whether the directors felt their program was musically successful. In this study, the programs will be considered successful if the director who completed the survey deemed them so.

Definition of Terms

To ensure clarity, some terms must be precisely defined for clarity as they relate to the topics in this work. These terms include the following:

Access - Access refers to the musical classes offered at a school and a student's ability to take those classes due to academic performance or scheduling availability.

Band boosters - "A Band booster club is a non-profit organization generally run by parents or band alumni for the purpose of raising funds to keep the music program running smoothly. These are volunteers or fee-based members that give their time and support to all aspects of the band program. They are often in charge of fundraising."[36]

Barriers - Anything that inhibits success or makes moving ahead more difficult.

Diversity - According to the Oxford English Dictionary, diversity is "the practice or quality of including or involving people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds and of different genders."[37]

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[35] Sean Dennison Smith, *Marketing Your Music Program* (Delray Beach, FL: Meredith Music Publications, 2018), 109.

[36] "What is a Band Booster? If You Have a Kid in Band It's You," Band Booster, Top Music Tips, accessed October 20, 2023, https://topmusictips.com/what-is-a-band-booster-if-you-have-a-kid-in-band-its-you/.

[37] "Diversity", Dictionary, Oxford English Dictionary, last modified 2023, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/diversity_n?tab=factsheet#6305053.

Instrumentation - The instruments the students are playing. For example, if a concert band piece includes an oboe part, but no one in the program plays oboe, the director must rewrite the part to fit the group instrumentation.

Musicianship - "Skill as a musician or composer."[38]

Organizational Growth - When the music program has more students participating from one year to the next.

Recruitment - Attracting teachers to a rural school or students to a band program.

Retention - When teachers or students return each year.

Rural - "Of a person: living in the country as opposed to a town or city."[39]

Scheduling - Scheduling refers to class schedules for our purposes. Some schools have a six-period day, while others have a block schedule. Some students may attend music for less time than language arts and math. Some classes are scheduled simultaneously, like music and reading remediation. These are all examples of scheduling conflicts.

Small Program - For our study, a small program will refer to a "single A" school size, or approximately fifty or fewer students in the ensemble.

Staff - Staff can refer to teachers in a school building. It can also refer to other adults, teachers, or community members who assist the band during band camp or throughout the year in various areas such as auxiliary, brass, winds, percussion, and visual groups.

Student Sharing - Student sharing means students are involved in multiple activities. For example, a student may participate in the band and other groups.

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[38] "Musicianship", Dictionary, Oxford English Dictionary, last modified 2003, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/musicianship_n?tab=meaning_and_use.

[39] "Rural", Dictionary, Oxford English Dictionary, last modified 2011, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/rural_adj?tab=meaning_and_use.

Support – Support refers to the activities that outside entities perform to help the band financially. These might include supervision, attendance, or other means and can refer to school, community, or parental support.

Urban – Urban refers to the area that people live "in a town or city."[40]

Conceptual Framework

This study identified unique challenges to instrumental program growth at small rural schools, as well as the common challenges that all band directors at small rural schools in Georgia experience. The researcher examined the data through a constructivist worldview. According to authors Creswell and Creswell, the goal of the constructivist world view is to "rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied."[41] This view helped "individuals develop subjective meaning of their experiences."[42] Through these experiences, barriers, and difficulties that were unique to growth in rural schools and all their instrumental programs were identified.

One common problem across all rural programs involved inconsistent musical opportunities and educational opportunities for growth. For example, some schools offered K-12 music classes, with the high school(s) offering a concert band, a symphonic band, a jazz band, an orchestra, and a choir. In contrast, other schools provided music classes in middle and high school only, and their high school instrumental program had one concert band. Music educator Karl Gehrkens states, "The number and kind of experiences in music provided by different

[40] "Urban", Dictionary, Oxford English Dictionary, last modified 2011, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/urban_adj?tab=meaning_and_use#15975708.

[41] Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 8.

[42] Ibid., 7.

schools will vary greatly – more, probably, than in the case of any other subject."[43] In other words, the number of offerings and the quality of music instruction are inconsistent among schools and districts. Research data has shown "a positive correspondence between formal music education and subsequent wealth and participation in higher education."[44]

Simply put, students are not receiving the same level of music instruction or quality of education in class offerings depending on their school or district. Doctoral researcher Ryan N. Bledsoe states, "Music education is at a tipping point caused by the changes in the ways music is experienced and changes in educational practice."[45] Elpus and Abril concur, noting that, "While music programs may be present in schools of different SES (Socioeconomic status) levels, their quality varied."[46]

Music education is not the only area suffering. Overall, education in Georgia's rural schools is considered subpar. According to *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* writer Ty Tagami, "the Rural School and Community Trust rate Georgia the seventh worst in the nation for the way it educates rural students. The problem is big given the state's relatively high rural enrollment of nearly a half million students, behind only Texas and North Carolina."[47] Expanding the music course offerings, enhancing the quality of music education, and growing the music programs, especially in rural districts, offers one way to combat this dilemma. Writer Peter Giles states:

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[43] Karl W. Gehrkens, "Musical Offerings in High School," *Music Educators Journal* 24, no. 1 (2015): 30, https://doi.org/10.2307/3385491.

[44] Ibid., 33.

[45] Ryan N. Bledsoe, "Music Education for All," *General Music Today* 28, no. 2 (2015): 18, https://doi.org/10.1177/1048371314549888.

[46] Kenneth Elpus and Carlos R. Abril, "Who Enrolls in High School Music?" 324.

[47] Ty Tagami, "Report: Rural Schools Struggle to Make do with Low Funding," *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, November 8, 2019, https://www.ajc.com/news/state--regional-education/new-report-georgia-rates-poorly-rural-education/aK3Aldb7IkzQpf0kZzwxUI/.

> Research shows that learning music results in educational, cognitive, social, emotional, and physical benefits. For example, pioneering research conducted by neurobiologist Nina Kraus offers insight into how musical experience affects brain function across the lifespan. Findings to date indicate that tapping into the brain's potential for music learning supports overall learning and is most critical for disadvantaged and under-served students.[48]

Expanding music education would benefit rural districts and bolster the state's reputation.

Chapter Summary

Since one research question concerned common challenges all rural programs face, the researcher emailed all rural high school band directors in Georgia. The data from the surveys were analyzed to help determine the challenges to growth these schools have faced, what obstacles were overcome by programs that were able to do so, what roadblocks programs faced if they were unsuccessful in their program growth efforts, and what common challenges all rural programs experienced, regardless of size. In addition, the data comparison sought trials unique to small rural schools. In conclusion, this chapter identified challenges that current rural high school band directors in Georgia faced when growing or attempting to grow their programs musically and organizationally.

[48] Peter Giles, "Millions of U.S. Students Denied Access to Music Education, According to First-Ever National Study Conducted by Arts Education Data Project," PRWEB, September 12, 2022, https://www.prweb.com/releases/2022/09/prweb18890841.htm.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Determining which practices and strategies work to overcome obstacles specific to rural instrumental situations can be daunting. Associated challenges include identifying what defines success; how to recruit, train, and retain quality teachers in rural schools; how to grow underdeveloped musicians; and how to find resources that are unavailable in rural settings. As music educators Catheryn Foster and Melody Causby observe, "Teaching instrumental music in a rural setting presents its own set of challenges as compared with teaching in a suburban or urban setting."[49] These obstacles are often assumed, such as location and distance from colleges or universities, but they must be studied to determine whether existing assumptions are accurate and identify what can be done to aid rural music educators. These authors, who conducted their own research in rural Mississippi, mention the following:

> While rural music educators find the musical aspects of their positions rewarding, such as fostering a love of music in their students, they believe that non-musical skills related to teaching were more important than their own musical skills. The three greatest challenges named by participants were limited funding, lack of resources, and little support. Conversely, the most frequently reported reward was student personal growth.[50]

Teaching is rewarding, and rural students need quality educators. Therefore, research into improving the rural music program is of paramount importance.

Definition of Success

Like in general education, success in music education can be defined in various ways. Some instrumental directors feel that success accompanies program growth. Others will define success as an increase in student musicianship. In any case, this term still involves a measure of

[49] Catheryn Shaw Foster and Melody Causby, "Instrumental Music Education in Rural Mississippi: A Descriptive Study," *Journal of Music Teacher Education* (2023): 1, https://doi.org/10.1177/10570837231182401.

[50] Ibid., 48.

conjecture. There is no statewide test for instrumental music performance students in Georgia. To define an increase in musicianship, some might count an increase in the number of seats their students fill from year to year in an honor, region, or all-state auditioned ensemble. Others may refer to their large group performance evaluation (LGPE).

LGPE is a concert band setting with three judges and a sight-reading activity. With an improvement in LGPE score, a marching band competition score, or other standards like solos and ensembles, directors can make a case for program improvement between different years. However, these are not perfect indicators of program health and can still raise questions as measures of success. For example, LGPE attendance is not required, and groups who attend can perform any level of music they wish. There are no guidelines for the music grade each school ensemble must select. A group that performs more challenging music but receives an excellent grade when, in a previous year, it earned a superior with less challenging music would still be considered successful to many due to the rise in the demand for musicality. Additionally, judging can be an arbitrary process. Music educator Marcos Álvarez-Díaz commented, "Evaluation of music performance in competitive contexts often produces discrepancies between the expert judges."[51] Judges do not consistently deliver the same numerical score; in the best case, they use a rubric and consistently score the bands based on achievement.

Even if success is defined by program enrollment, several undisclosed factors can contribute to an increase in numbers. Educator Marci L. Major studied two schools whose programs were thriving based on their numbers. He found "common qualities, such as effective leadership, appropriate music repertoire, reliable feeder systems, sufficient funding, adequate

[51] Marcos Álvarez-Díaz et al., "On the Design and Validation of a Rubric for the Evaluation of Performance in a Musical Contest," *International Journal of Music Education* 39, no. 1 (2021): 66, https://doi.org/10.1177/0255761420936443.

community and school support, student enjoyment, high-quality program management, varied concert programs, creative and aggressive scheduling, and educational goals of providing a social education for students."[52] For a program to improve, thought, planning, and reflection must regularly occur. Major emphasizes, "Music educators must understand the mechanisms by which successful programs achieved their success and must conduct research that uncovers what music teachers must do to sustain the support necessary for their continuance."[53] In order to achieve success, band directors must be their own advocates as well as their own worst critics.

For this study, each ensemble's director was asked whether their program was successful. They were asked to justify their answer, and the researcher categorized their reasons as "not yet prosperous," "mildly successful," "moderately successful," and "very successful." The directors were asked to justify their answers. As the previous article states, "Music performance, like any other human output, is subject to psychometric laws, and therefore can be measured and analyzed with parameters of validity and reliability."[54] Success is a noun because it is an abstract idea that is nevertheless measurable using certain parameters. Therefore, the survey aimed to justify a program's success from a scale of "no success" to "very successful." The survey informed the participants that the results would be anonymous and asked that they honestly report their current situation to the best of their ability to ensure the integrity of the research.

[52] Marci L. Major, "How They Decide: A Case Study Examining the Decision-Making Process for Keeping or Cutting Music in a K-12 Public School District," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 61, no. 1 (2013): 7, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429412474313.

[53] Ibid., 7.

[54] Álvarez-Díaz, "On the Design and Validation," 74.

Education Challenges

Historical

Rural education in America once occurred in one-room classes that mixed all ages and grades. As music professor C. A. Fullerton states, "The one-room school, generally poorly equipped and taught by a teacher of rather limited training, furnishes a striking contrast to the general life of the community in which it is located."[55] Fullerton observes that the community and even urban schools of the 1920's were well ahead of the consolidated rural schools, and education was not the primary focus, as the farmers were struggling to feed and clothe their families. Still, he makes his case for music education in these rural schools. The new technology of the radio, purchased for business but listened to as pleasure, was the basis for his argument for music education even in this rural setting. The teacher was not equipped to lead a group of students in music, but Fullerton proposed that students could listen to identical albums and thereby learn the melodies and lyrics. Students from various backgrounds could unite in knowing the parts to the same songs and performing them together. Even in this challenging rural setting, there was a way to work around obstacles and provide music instruction. While problems within rural education remain, there are also solutions that can lead to successful musicianship.

As time progressed and education became compulsory, there was the expectation that education would be unequal. A music professor at Weber State University, Vincent Bates, states, "Despite the belief that public education is a 'great equalizer,' American school systems tend to reinforce economic disparities, sorting students according to their parent's income, education

[55] C.A. Fullerton, "Music in Rural Communities," *Music Supervisors' Journal* 14, no. 2 (1927): 35, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3382715.

level, and occupational status."[56] In an article about the lack of equity in music education, Bates asserts, "A century ago, people were surprisingly open about this: Woodrow Wilson said, 'We want one class of persons to have a liberal education, and we want another class of persons, a very much larger class of necessity in every society, to forgo the privilege of a liberal education and fit themselves to perform specific difficult manual tasks.'"[57]

Tax-funded public school buildings with diverse populations and learning styles are prominent today. Education is currently being prioritized, and an effort is being made to include more people. The Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act (IDEA) of 1973 outlined the concept of a free appropriate public education (FAPE). In 2001, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was initiated. According to Major, this act "shifted educational priorities toward subjects assessed on standardized achievement tests. These subjects included math, science, English, and history but did not include music or the other arts."[58] Major asserts that "School district decision-makers shifted priorities toward education in the subjects covered by the standardized tests, which exerted a negative effect on music education."[59] With money and time focused on nonmusical subjects, the music education landscape became uncertain.

While efforts are being made to include and avoid discrimination, a quality music education is not universal. Bates observes that "Regardless of the constant change in education, there will always be challenges. These challenges will be amplified naturally in a rural school

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[56] Vincent C. Bates, "Equity in Music Education," *Music Educators Journal* 105, no. 2 (2018): 72, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26588696.

[57] Ibid., 72.

[58] Major, "How They Decide," 6.

[59] Ibid., 6.

setting due to geography, population, and the area's economics. Some challenges will be unique to rural schools."[60]

Diversity

In the article "Thinking Critically about Rural Music Education," Bates notes the varying definitions of "rural":

> Of course, not all rural music teaching positions are the same; if there is one quality that could apply to all small town and rural schools, it is, paradoxically, their diversity. They include positions in villages situated not far from metropolitan areas, to "consolidated" or county schools serving students from multiple communities to schools in isolated communities of various sizes located far from cities. Some rural schools are not even located in towns but instead on the prairie or in high desert valleys, serving the needs of surrounding farms and ranches. Quite a few of America's rural schools are located on Indian reservations.[61]

Rural schools are indeed diverse, and diversity among students, cultures, and music curricula has become a predominant focus in the current educational landscape. This emphasis on diversity education is known as culturally responsive teaching (CRT). An author of many articles on the subject, Geneva Gay, defines CRT as "using the cultural knowledge, priors, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them."[62]

The focus on diversity in the curriculum is accompanied by a focus on the diverse needs of the students in the classroom. Educators Carla Dearman and Sheila Alber interviewed a fifth-grade teacher from Mississippi for their article, who stated, "One size does not fit all. To

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[60] Bates, "Thinking Critically," 2.

[61] Ibid., 2.

[62] Geneva Gay, "Teaching To and Through Cultural Diversity," *Curriculum Inquiry* 43, no. 1 (2013): 49-50, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23524357.

accommodate diversity, we must change the way we teach. We can do that if we have time to collaborate and plan effective interventions for each individual child."[63] The way a teacher instructs their classroom must change, but a hindrance to change can come from the lack of time for training, planning, implementation, and collaboration. New education laws and trends change so quickly that teachers are unable to adequately reflect on the needs in their classrooms. Collaboration can be complex in a rural school setting due to the lack of a larger teacher population and resources closer to the school, such as prominent universities.

Funding

Another challenge to most districts involves funding. Even if a school has a sufficient budget, sometimes that money is already appropriated as to how or where it should be spent. Either way, lack of funding restricts many schools' operating mission and effectiveness. A Kappan poll found that "75% of teachers say their community's schools have too little money."[64] Evidence shows that funding for education falling short of what is necessary. In his article, educational writer Walter McMahon argues, "In spite of this evidence that there is underinvestment in education at all levels, and evidence of skill deficits, of a depressed middle class, and of growing inequality related in part to education, most U.S. states persist in cutting back their support."[65] The lack of funding is causing deficits in education. Teachers often spend their own money to obtain the materials necessary for their students to succeed, or they use their

[63] Carla C. Dearman and Sheila R. Alber, "The Changing Face of Education: Teachers Cope with Challenges through Collaboration and Reflective Study," *The Reading Teacher* 58, no. 7 (2005): 634, https://www.jstor.org/stable/20204286.

[64] Phi Delta Kappa International, "Frustration in the Schools," *The Phi Delta Kappan* 101, no. 1 (2019): k16, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26781051.

[65] Walter M. McMahon, "Financing Education for the Public Good: A New Strategy," *Journal of Education Finance* 40, no. 4 (2015): 434, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24459433.

free time to write grants or petition donations on sites like donarschoose.org and Amazon. Professors Catharine Biddle and Amy Price Azano, who write about rural school problems, state that "schools have faced these challenges in the context of increasing fiscal constraints, as tax bases have eroded, and state and federal budget cuts have implications at the local level."[66] Rural school setting funding tends to be less than that of public schools in large cities.

Yet another challenge teachers face is feeling devalued as educators. The Kappan poll states, "Public school teachers' views that they are underpaid and their schools underfunded tie with a broader concern over the way teachers say they feel valued by their communities."[67] Factors like lack of discipline for students, lack of accountability for other issues such as student attendance, and low pay have caused teachers to leave the profession for nonteaching roles.

Teachers feeling inadequate and unappreciated is not a uniquely American problem, as educators worldwide face similar experiences. Researcher Elizabeth Buckner notes, "In an era where many nations around the world have difficulty recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers, there is much concern over teachers' satisfaction in the profession."[68] Teacher satisfaction is never more critical than in a small, rural school setting where recruitment and retention are imperative due to a limited population of qualified applicants who would be willing to move to the area and stay to invest in the school.

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[66] Catharine Biddle and Amy Price Azano, "Constructing and Reconstructing the 'Rual School Problem': A Century of Rural Education Research," *Review of Research in Education* 40 (2016): 300, https://www.jstor.org/stable/44668625.

[67] Kappa, "Frustrations," K6.

[68] Elizabeth Buckner, "The Importance of Teacher Satisfaction," *The Status of Teaching and Teacher Professional Satisfaction in the United Arab Emirates* (2017): 5, https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep41596.4.

Teacher and Staff Challenges

Recruitment

Rural schools in America struggle, just as urban districts do, with recruiting and retaining quality teachers. Teacher shortages are becoming a global problem. Music educator John A. Williams writes, "Although teacher workforce and labor market concerns have dominated the field of teacher education for decades in the United States, the teacher shortage crisis is a worldwide conundrum."[69]

Schools in rural settings can face an even more significant challenge when recruiting teachers. As psychology professor Kari Oyen and education professor Amy Schweinle report, "Geographic isolation, inadequate professional development, lower base salaries, as well as difficulty managing the workload requirements are just a few reasons that new teachers fail to apply for careers in school districts located in rural settings."[70] Oyen and Schweinle go on to describe reasons teachers could be recruited to a rural situation. They examined existing evaluations and wrote that previous researchers "evaluated mechanisms of resilience, which they call protective variables, to evaluate factors that lead to persistence in a task or challenge despite several risk factors. Witt further evaluated protective factors for new teachers in rural classrooms to demonstrate three types of protective factors: supervisory support, peer support, and kinship support."[71] In addition to retaining teachers, rural schools must also find quality assistants who could one day fill these teacher roles. As author Catherine Hunt notes, students tend to return to

[69] John A. Williams III et al, "Teacher Recruitment and Retention: Local Strategies, Global Inspiration," *Journal of Teacher Education* 73, no. 4 (2022): 333, https://doi.org/10.1177/00224871221118155.

[70] Ibid., 12.

[71] Kari Oyen and Amy Schweinle, "Addressing Teacher Shortages in Rural America: What Factors Encourage Teachers to Consider Teaching in Rural Setting," *The Rural Educator* 41, no. 3 (2020): 12, https://doi.org/10.35608/ruraled.v41i3.923.

where they attended high school or where they worked band camp prior to graduating college. She writes that "undergraduate music education majors were more likely to choose teaching positions similar to music programs they experienced before college than to choose unfamiliar programs."[72]

Recruiting quality staff to assist the high school director with responsibilities such as band camp, drill design, and other teaching responsibilities throughout the year is essential. Music researcher Timothy Groulx from the University of North Florida states, "Customized marching band drill, customized marching band music, and additional instructional staff were positively correlated with band ratings."[73] While additional staff is needed to run a program, it can be costly and depends upon who lives close to the area, who can be housed effectively for a short time (in the case of band camp), or who can volunteer throughout the year. These limitations may hinder rural band programs due to their location in isolated areas away from cities and universities, lack of funds, and the fact that smaller programs produce fewer alums.

Professional Development (PD)

All teachers require training and ongoing learning activities to increase their experience. However, training for educators can be a challenge in rural school districts. As the State of Music Education Census discovered, "58.9% of music educators attend local music education

[72] Catherine Hunt, "Perspectives on Rural and Urban Music Teaching: Developing Contextual Awareness in Music Education," *Journal of Music Teacher Education* 18, no. 2 (2009): 35, https://doi.org/10.1177/1050837083 27613.

[73] Timothy J. Groulx, "Relationships Among Race, Poverty, and Band Ratings Fifty Years After Desegregation," *Contributions to Music Education* 48 (2023): 150, https://www.proquest.com/docview/282250 9405/F4C699F95EDE4F8DPQ/13?accountid=12085.

association (MEA) events. While only 20% attend both national and local MEA events."[74] Staff challenges may be more significant for music programs across rural Georgia than at larger schools. Lack of funding limits schools in terms of professional development (PD), and some educators feel this lack of funding negatively affects rural school districts more than urban ones. A study in the early 2000s assessed the effects of NCLB. According to music educator Eugenie Burkett, researchers found that:

> many teachers in rural areas suffer additional stress from the mandates of NCLB. They concluded that students' poor performance and school failure to meet testing benchmarks reported as Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) may be a consequence of limited PD, coaching, and mentoring of teachers. This finding corresponds to a study by Frantz that revealed rural school districts experience higher rates of attrition because of, among several factors, limited PD opportunities.[75]

In addition to the limited PD opportunities, teaching can be a lonely career. The isolation increases when the subject matter is specific. Some teachers may be the only music instructors in their school or community. Educators David Rolandson and Lana Ross-Hekkel note, "The physical isolation caused by distance can also lead to intellectual isolation because music teachers lack music colleagues in the building with which to collaborate, share ideas, or discuss music teaching in general. It is also common for extended work hours and diverse teaching loads to contribute to feelings of isolation."[76] Rolandson and Ross-Hekkel list several additional

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[74] "The State of Music Education Annual Census," Downloads, Be Part of the Music, last modified October 2023, https://www.bepartofthemusic.org/downloads/SoME-Census-2023-(Public).pdf.

[75] Eugenie I. Burkett, "A Case Study of Issues Concerning Professional Development for Rural Instrumental Music Teachers," *Journal of Music Teacher Education* 21, no. 1 (2011): 51, https://doi.org/10.1177/10570837221077430.

[76] David M. Rolandson and Lana E. Ross-Hekkel, "Virtual Professional Learning Communities: A Case Study in Rural Music Teacher Professional Development," *Journal of Music Teacher Education* 31, no.3 (2022): 3, https://doi.org/10.1177/10570837221-77430.

reasons for isolation. Two of the five factors include music teachers' "workload, exclusion from building-wide initiative or decisions and lack of support or materials."[77]

Workload overload is a genuine issue facing the modern music teacher. Whether in a rural or urban situation, they may lack planning period, have multiple subjects to prepare, have supervision duties before and after school, and oversee the various ensembles that meet and perform after school and on weekends. Authors Melissa Heston, Charles Dedrick, Donna Raschke, and Jane Whitehead express that "in music education, which requires band directors to perform an extremely wide variety of professional tasks, job stress factors may have a distinctly negative impact on the quality of a school band program."[78] These responsibilities are in addition to their regular teaching duties, like attendance, classroom grades and projects, and chaperoning school events.

Bringing band directors with similar situations together could combat teacher isolation and address other needs, like the need for productive PD. Rolandson and Ross-Hekkel note, "Researchers have found that professional development delivered over extended periods of time (e.g., an entire school year) may have more significant influence over teacher growth [than short-term PD], especially when teachers have opportunities to integrate what they have learned into their classrooms through hands-on experiences."[79] They note the importance of extended conversations, and they discussed allowing rural directors to complete PD through virtual professional learning communities (VPLCs) or professional learning communities (PLCs). With

[77] Rolandson and Ross-Hekkel, "Virtual Professional Learning Communities," 3.

[78] Melissa L. Heston et al., "Job Satisfaction and Stress among Band Directors," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 44, no. 4 (1996): 320, https://doi.org/10.2307/3345444.

[79] Rolandson and Ross-Hekkel, "Virtual Professional Learning Communities," 82.

technology and flexibility, finding workarounds for professional music development is often possible through virtual connections.

Retention

Many teachers no longer see teaching as a career-long occupation, as evident in the increased number of short-term teachers relative to their career-long counterparts. This trend does not bode well for rural districts looking to hire and retain quality employees in the long term. Music teacher Henry Tran states, "The U.S. national teacher turnover rate is approximately 8% a year, two-thirds of which leave before retirement age."[80] According to the 2023 State of Music Education Census, "67% of music educators surveyed who said they would not teach until retirement indicate concerns around workload/hours as the leading reason they would not continue teaching."[81] The workload of band directors in small, rural high schools may be more challenging than that of their urban counterparts due to other factors, including the wide gap in age in the students they may have to teach or the number of different classes they must prepare for. Hunt explains, "In rural districts, lack of resources, such as no music store and few, if any, private teachers, was a consideration. However, the music teacher's demanding teaching schedule represented a bigger issue."[82]

Authors and professors Devon Brenner, Amy Azano, and Jayne Downey also note the teacher turnover problem: "up to 44% of new teachers [leave] the field within the first three to

[80] Henry Tran and Douglas A. Smith, "Designing an Employee Experience Approach to Teacher Retention in Hard-to-Staff Schools," *NASSP Bulletin* 104, no. 2 (2020): 85, https://doi.org/10.1177/0192636520927092.

[81] "The State of Music Education Annual Census."

[82] Hunt, "Perspectives on Rural and Urban Music Teaching," 41.

five years of teaching."[83] They describe the importance of relationships and supporting colleagues in order to foster retention, stating that "Teachers in all kinds of schools tend to be happier in their work, and more likely to stay in the profession, when they feel supported by colleagues and mentors, especially when they are new and learning their craft."[84] Although this may sound easy to accomplish, Brenner, Azano, and Downey identify specific difficulties that teachers in rural schools may find when seeking support. Relationship building is an essential tool to combat teacher turnover; however, "in rural schools, teachers may not have as many colleagues and potential mentors. In smaller schools, they may be the 'only' one of their kind — the only 3rd-grade teacher, the only science teacher, or the only music teacher—and they may even be required to travel to various school buildings."[85]

Erin McHenry-Sorber, Matthew Campbell, and Daniella Sutherland discuss that recruitment and retention are more difficult in rural areas. The authors state, "Rural schools experience greater challenges in recruitment and retention than other geospatial contexts. Many factors have been attributed to the rural retention issue, including social isolation, geographic isolation, distance from university teacher preparation programs, and comparatively lower salaries."[86] McHenry-Sorber, Campbell, and Sutherland emphasize that while relationships help, the teacher must fit well into the community.

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[83] Devon Brenner, Amy Price Azano, and Jayne Downey, "Helping New Teachers Stay and Thrive in Rural Schools," *Phi Delta Kappan* 103, no. 4 (2021): 15, https://doi.org/10.1177/00317217211065821.

[84] Ibid., 17.

[85] Ibid., 17.

[86] Erin McHenry-Sorber, Matthew P. Campbell, and Daniella Hall Sutherland, "If I Ever Leave, I Have a List of People That Are Going with Me: Principals' Understandings of and Responses to Place Influences on Teacher Staffing in West Virginia," *Educational Administration Quarterly* 59, no. 2 (2021): 436, https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X211053590.

Brenner, Azano, and Downey emphasize the importance of building relationships in the local community and planning ways to succeed. They argue that retaining teachers in rural settings, using local resources, and forming solid relationships in professional organizations may lead to success. They suggest that principals or schools may fund these types of initiatives to alleviate the burden on the rural educators. One teacher who chose to stay in a rural setting explained the following reasons to Brenner, Azano, and Downey:

> Rural schools are a great place because of the number of opportunities open to you. You have the ability to try out different approaches and see what works for students. You also have a chance to make a contribution to the community. And the community support is amazing. They were very welcoming and personable. I have been able to build personal and long-lasting relationships with students and colleagues.[87]

Relationships retained this teacher in the area; moreover, the teacher viewed the unique situation as an opportunity to grow and experiment, not a limitation built on barriers with unfavorable circumstances. Rural teaching may become more attractive when presented as an opportunity to contribute and make a big difference in a small setting.

Authors Maggie Hannan, Jennifer Russell, Sola Takahashi, and Sandra Park discuss the need for networking not only within the community, but also between educators. They mention that "New teachers who leave the profession most often cite dissatisfaction with school-level support and working conditions as the primary reason for their departure."[88] It is important to support teachers and help them develop roots in the rural community and in the school. It is also vital that they establish professional relationships with other directors in similar situations. These authors go on to note the following:

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[87] Brenner, Azano, and Downey, "Helping New Teachers Stay," 18.

[88] Maggie Hannan et al., "Using Improvement Science to Better Support Beginning Teachers: The Case of the Building a Teaching Effectiveness Network," *Journal of Teacher Education* 66, no. 5 (2015): 494, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487115602126.

> Beginning teacher support is a complex issue that functions on many levels: It significantly impacts teachers, school administrators, school districts, and the educational system and labor market more broadly. Establishing high-quality and reliable new teacher support systems involves many different, interlocking organizational processes, roles, and functions, including, but not limited to, teacher time allocation and scheduling, evaluation processes, professional development, and human resources.[89]

It is imperative for new teachers to form meaningful professional relationships and to have ample experience to draw from for other teachers' instruction.

Student Musicianship Challenges

Access

Disparities remain between musical offerings across school districts and states, whether urban or rural. Not every student receives access to music education at all, regardless of its quality or lack thereof. Michigan State University music professor Ryan Shaw states, "Only 22% of high schools with high concentrations of poverty offer five or more visual arts courses, compared with 56% of high schools with low concentrations of poverty."[90] Shaw also writes, "Some evidence suggests schools with mostly white students offer significantly more music offerings than schools in the same metropolitan area that serve mostly students of color."[91]

Poverty or lack of resources due to financial considerations or geographic location can present an access challenge to students. The isolated location of some rural districts can bar students from private lessons, keep college staff from working with students during the year or at

[89] Hannan, "Using Improvement Science," 495.

[90] Ryan D. Shaw, "COVID-19 Threatens the Already Shaky Status of Arts Education in Schools," The Conversation, November 1, 2021, https://theconversation.com/covid-19-threatens-the-already-shaky-status-of-arts-education-in-schools-168548.

[91] Ibid.

band camp, and make attending live professional performances (which provide students with specialized sound models) very difficult.

One way to allow students to hear ideal tones is through technology. While technology is not identical to attending a professional performance, it is better than nothing. Still, being in a rural setting and lacking access to private lessons remains a barrier. In this age of technology, if students have internet service, they can take virtual lessons. Not all families can afford this, however. Educators Kate R. Fitzpatrick, Jacqueline C. Henninger, and Don M. Taylor suggest that "Due to a lack of private lessons and monetary resources, students from historically marginalized populations often are not able to participate in musically enriching activities, such as honor or all-state groups, even though several of our participants identified these activities as being especially valuable to their music development."[92] University of Virginia music professor Adria R. Hoffman echoes this sentiment, stating that "the poorest students in the country were significantly underrepresented in high school music classes."[93] She argues, "The poorest students were both significantly underrepresented in middle school arts classes as well as overrepresented in remedial math and language arts classes that restricted them from enrolling in elective classes."[94] Due to these requirements, students must take remedial classes that are electives. They have little to no opportunity to participate in music education classes during the school day.

Often, student schedules impede band access. They must take a particular class for Career, Technical and Agricultural Education (CTAE) or to fulfill graduation requirements.

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[92] Kate R. Fitzpatrick, Jacqueline C. Henninger, and Don M. Taylor, "Access and Retention of Marginalized Populations Within Undergraduate Music Education Degree Programs," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 62, no. 2 (2014): 121. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429414530760.

[93] Adria R. Hoffman, "Compelling Questions about Music, Education, and Socioeconomic Status," *Music Educators Journal* 100, no. 1 (2013): 63, https://www.jstor.org/stable/43288772.

[94] Ibid., 63.

Doctoral student and band director Christopher John Libby uncovered this trend during his doctoral thesis research into rural band programs. Libby states, "Nearly all the participants in the study said something similar. They are losing students due to the demands of Career Technical and Agricultural Education, dual enrollment, and advanced placement classes."[95] He observed that students are often required to skip band for a semester or more to take other classes. Usually, these students return, but sometimes they do not. It is easier to stay out of a program if they are disconnected.

Robert Kim, former deputy assistant secretary in the Office for Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Education, discusses rural school disparities in his article about the rights of rural students. He considers one state specifically: "by the 1980s, Tennessee's poor and rural public schools had seen their budgets fall far behind those of the state's urban and wealthy districts. As a result, they were incapable of offering competitive salaries to teachers or funding important administrative positions. Students lacked access to current textbooks, working computers, and laboratory."[96] After the issue went to court multiple times, the legal system agreed that the students were not treated equally and it was time for correction. Kim states, "In *Tennessee Small Sch. Sys. v. McWherter*, the state's supreme court agreed, concluding that the 'disparities in educational opportunities available to public school students throughout the state [are] constitutionally impermissible' and were 'caused principally by [the state's education] funding

[95] Christopher John Libby, "Competing With Small Town Football: The Challenges of Teaching High School Band in Rural America," (Doctoral thesis, Liberty University, 2022), 79, https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/4041.

[96] Robert Kim, "Under the Law: The Rights of Rural Students," *Phi Delta Kappan* 103, no. 4 (2021): 64. https://doi.org/10.1177/00317211065836.

scheme.’”[97] Kim notes that there are still issues to be resolved in Tennessee and throughout the rural school settings in America.

While much work is still needed, Fitzpatrick, Henninger, and Taylor have some suggestions for combating this lack of access. They recommend that directors “bring such [music] students to campus for lessons, summer music camps, concerts, and other performances. Once identified, these students might be paired with peers, staff, or faculty mentors from similar backgrounds.”[98] Author Andrew Goodrich also supports peer mentoring: “Peer mentoring can provide many benefits to a music program, such as increased student knowledge about music, elevated performance levels, and improved classroom management.”[99] In circumstances involving access challenges because of remote location, lack of funds, or other access barriers, peer mentoring can provide a step to bridge the knowledge gap for students in lower grade levels.

Class Length

A limited amount of total class time for teaching has been a common challenge for teachers and their musicians in several districts. The 2023 State of Music Education Census found that “163 is the average number of minutes students rehearse weekly.”[100] Teaching music in a rural school district can be even more challenging when considering time allotment. Even in 1954, William C. Rice, a professor at Baker University, noticed that there was insufficient time

[97] Kim, “Under the Law,” 64.

[98] Fitzpatrick, Henninger, and Taylor, “Access and Retention,” 121.

[99] Andrew Goodrich, “Getting Started with Peer Mentoring,” *Teaching Music* 31, no. 2 (2023): 18.

[100] “The State of Music Education Annual Census.”

for music lessons. He stated, "Rural teachers have a real problem in time allotment."[101] How to structure a school day has always been a crucial dilemma, and music and the arts still fight for time in the school day.

According to Shaw, in the NCLB Act of 2001, "the arts were considered a core subject."[102] However, only 32 states currently consider music a core subject. Moreover, after the NCLB Act and other legislation, schools scrambled to improve students' scores in core subjects that are tested statewide. Music, however, is not a statewide tested subject. As a result, many of the arts offerings have been eliminated, or their time was dramatically reduced. Shaw explains, "In two studies from 2007 to 2008, schools indicated that they had cut an average of 145 minutes per week across the non-tested subjects, lunch, and recess. Where visual art and music were cut back, it was for an average of 57 minutes per week."[103] He adds that a superintendent's beliefs about the importance of the arts often determine how often they are offered. Shaw's found one school that only "offered one music and art class once every eight weeks."[104]

Regardless of the reasons, the arts have proven invaluable in the minds of many educators. Some argue that cognitive ability, achievement, and other improvements like discipline, time management, and grit come with training in the arts, and therefore, these subjects should be a focus at all schools. Others argue that more research is needed to prove the accuracy of these studies. After all, if the arts aid students as much as some studies claim, they should be mandatory in every school. Shaw acknowledges that:

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[101] William C. Rice, "Music Education for the Rural Teacher," *Music Educators Journal* 40, no. 3 (1954): 44, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3387873.

[102] Shaw, "COVID-19 Threatens."

[103] Ibid.

[104] Ibid.

> Arts education has been associated with increased cognitive ability, academic achievement, creative thinking, school engagement, and so-called "soft skills" like compassion for others. However, many of these studies are correlational rather than causal. It may be that more advanced and more privileged students pursued arts education in the first place.[105]

Even if the latter is the case and more advanced, more privileged students pursue arts education, the dialogue must then turn to the question of "why." It is vital to ask why some students are more privileged or advanced than others. In America, the focus must turn to leveling the playing field for all students, and arts education should be part of the discussion and the school day to promote successful musicians and well-rounded students.

Resource Attainment Challenges

It not only takes a long time to build a reputable rural music program; it also takes constant focus to sustain it. The 2023 State of Music Education Census found the "59% of music educators surveyed indicate their current administration does not provide adequate resources/funding for their program."[106] This statistic highlights the lack of resources that music educators receive for their classroom. Isbell states, "A rural music teacher's willingness to take risks and try new approaches in organization and pedagogy, even if those changes seem radical at first, will keep the music program fresh and engaging year after year."[107] Constantly assessing how to maintain a thriving music program, what needs to change, how best to take new risks, and how to mitigate failure all present challenges to the band director. Not all new approaches will succeed, but evaluating risk and planning purposefully can help promote achievement.

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[105] Shaw, "COVID-19 Threatens."

[106] "The State of Music Education Annual Census."

[107] Isbell, "Music Education in Rural Areas," 30.

Economic Support

Historically, music education has been eliminated due to funding challenges in small, rural schools. On the positive side, music programs have been recently reincorporated to the curriculum. The reintroduction of music instruction, however, may have occurred in tandem with budget cuts for resources or schools choosing to add only a few music course offerings. Research professor Rekha S. Rajan noted in his journal article, "With music education's continued unstable role within the school system, music educators are actively seeking external funding to support and augment their programs."[108] Band directors must be clever to find successful ways of funding their music programs. According to the 2023 State of Music Education Census, "55% of high school educators reported having a budget for instrument replacement."[109] The other forty-five percent of music educators must find ways to fund their need for instrument replacement.

Program Enrollment

After NCLB was passed in 2001, schools shifted their focus, money, and time to tested subjects without lengthening the school day. Major found that "National statistics on music education support these findings and show that schools nationwide have decreased the total minutes given to music education during the school day and also have seen declining enrollment in music classes."[110] The pandemic of 2020 accelerated this trajectory. According to Shaw, "high school music class enrollment has suffered during the pandemic. The lack of music enrollment may result from students exiting the public school system or safety concerns regarding singing

[108] Rekha S. Rajan, "Funding Music: Guidelines for Grant Writing in the Music Classroom," *Journal of General Music Education* 30, no. 1 (2016): 30, https://doi.org/10.1177/10483713166449641.

[109] "The State of Music Education Annual Census."

[110] Major, "How They Decide," 6.

and performing in large groups."[111] The Music Education census found that "21% is the average percentage of school enrollment participating in music education across all grade levels."[112] The good news is that the number of students enrolled "has increased this school year [2023] compared to last year."[113]

For a school to have a music program, students must be willing to join. Since post-pandemic enrollment in music courses has suffered, recruiting and retaining students has become increasingly critical. One way for music teachers to promote these goals is to be involved early and often. Rural instrumental music educators must actively participate in the district feeder programs. Student retention is a universal problem among music educators. The 2023 State of Education survey states that "By the time beginning students reach high school, more than 50% will no longer be enrolled in school-led music education."[114] Moreover, the survey found that, "16% of band students stop participating in music classes after their first year."[115] Secondary music teachers must find improved methods to retain students as they enroll in high school. One suggestion comes from Thomas McCauley: "Whatever you do, you must be visible."[116] Sometimes, directors in rural schools also teach their feeder programs. Other times, different teachers direct the programs. McCauley cites various methods of being "visible" in the feeder programs. He suggests activities such as "inviting students to perform with your group, taking your group to perform at the feeder schools, or even scheduling an annual social event with the

[111] Shaw, "COVID-19 Threatens."

[112] "The State of Music Education Annual Census."

[113] Ibid.

[114] Ibid.

[115] Ibid.

[116] McCauley, "Adventures in Band Building," 20.

students and parents of the feeder program."[117] These events can be a vital part of helping music educators recruit and retain students from school feeder programs. McCauley says, "Recruitment and retention are like score study. It is an ongoing process that needs constant attention, consistency, and persistence."[118]

Student Sharing

Extracurricular activities are an important part of a youth's middle and high school years. Students should be free to pursue their passions. Students from athletics, theater, music, and other clubs and organizations often express interest in more than one area. There are many benefits of student involvement in multiple school organizations while attending high school. Professors Jennifer A. Fredricks, Corinne J. Alfeld-Liro, Ludmila Z. Hruda, Jacquelynne S. Eccles, Helen Patrick and Allison Ryan discovered in their research that students involvement in extracurricular activities "has the potential to (a) limit the time adolescents can become involved in risky activities, (b) teach adolescents values and competencies, and (c) help to situate adolescents within a peer group and enhance the opportunity to establish positive social networks."[119]

While student participation in extracurriculars yields benefits, it can also create havoc in small rural districts whose many activities and organizations draw from a limited student pool. Iowa State University professors Alyce Holland and Thomas Andre discovered that in "small schools, the typical student participated in more than twice as many activities as students in

[117] McCauley, "Adventures in Band Building," 20-21.

[118] Ibid., 22.

[119] Jennifer A. Fredricks et al., "A Qualitative Exploration of Adolescents' Commitment to Athletics and the Arts," *Journal of Adolescent Research* 17, no. 1 (2002): 69, https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558402171004.

larger schools."[120] Since rural schools are typically smaller than those in urban areas, the students in rural school districts generally participate in multiple extracurricular activities. The way each district handles student sharing will vary, but if the coaches, club directors, and instrumental teachers are unwilling or unable to share, the impact on a small music program may be severe. While some researchers might argue that students who do both are rare, other researchers disagree. Bo Robinson, a former football player who now sings professional opera in New York, commented, "I don't think it's as rare as people think. I think the type of discipline it takes to be an athlete carries over to the discipline it takes to be a classical musician."[121]

Instrumentation

Balancing instrumentation is almost always a concern for smaller groups that have less control over who plays each instrument. Students may base their participation on program choices, directors may change, students seldom start on certain instruments (like the bassoon), and instruments that represented in an ensemble rarely fit the score of the music the band is performing. The unbalanced instrumentation is especially apparent in concert and marching bands, and may create complications in small school bands. An anonymous author wrote the following about this topic: "Between routinely having to travel hundreds of miles for performances and balancing instrumentation in small schools, it can be incredibly challenging for high school music programs in some of the more sparsely populated corners of America to

[120] Alyce Holland and Thomas Andre, "Participation in Extracurricular Activities in Secondary School: What is Known, What Needs to Be Known?," *Review of Educational Research* 57, no. 4 (1987): 446, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1170431.

[121] Bo Emerson, "Education: Students Making Tackles and Music: McEachern High School Players Balance Football and Violins," *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, October 12, 2016, https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?p=GBIB&u=vic_liberty&id=GALE%7CA466321871&v=2.1&it=r&sid=summon&asid=d6528dcd.

create or sustain a marching band."[122] This student's solution was to join multiple bands for a group marching band experience. Rural and urban directors do this by way of festivals and honor bands.

For the individual school group experience, unbalanced instrumentation can pose a big significant problem. Thomas McCauley describes the instrumentation difficulties of high school band as follows: "Beethoven didn't have to come up with music scored for middle school bands made up of 57 alto saxophones, 40 trumpets, 15 percussionists, and one oboe."[123] Although his example is for middle school and an extensive program, it illustrates that many programs, regardless of size, face instrumentation barriers. McCauley states that "As a music educator today, you just be ready to accept the fact that it may be a very long time before your band program is fully instrumented."[124] In his book *Adventures in Band Building*, McCauley describes various ways to combat this barrier. Sometimes, directors can ask students to switch instruments. They can rewrite parts to be covered by other instruments that are already present. Ultimately, McCauley concludes that music groups must look ahead each year to their feeder programs and offer incentives. For example, groups might offer free rental for a year, if the students must rent their instrument from the school, for instruments a program will need.

Chapter Summary

Success in a music program is often defined in terms of program enrollment and high-quality music performance. For a high school band program to succeed, intense reflection and

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[122] "Rural Schools Team Up to Form the Southwest Marching Band," *School Band & Orchestra* 11 (2011): 10, https://go.openathens.net/redirector/liberty.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/magazines/rural-schools-team-up-form-southwest-marching/docview/912016277/se-2.

[123] McCauley, "Adventures in Band Building," 149.

[124] Ibid., 133.

program health considerations are critical. Band directors must seek inventive solutions to program challenges. One necessary task involves fighting within the school system to educate those in decision-making capacities about the value of music education. Programs also challenges associated with including a diverse population, regardless of remediation and other attributes. Funding an organization like the music program that requires costly instruments, repairs, and travel budgets presents its own set of obstacles.

The director is the most impactful person in a music program. Heston writes, "In addition to teaching students, band directors assume responsibilities for such time- and energy-demanding activities as planning concerts and trips, training ensembles before and after school, raising money, and recruiting students."[125] Recruiting a quality director is necessary for any district that is serious about its music program. After that, providing the individual with meaningful PD while retaining them in their job is critical to maintaining a successful program. Student retention can be accomplished in a rural school if directors are supported and empowered to build relationships in the school, the community, and other professionals through local organizations.

Students may be restricted from participating in the music program or have limited access due to course-offering conflicts or required remediation classes. Music classes are sometimes shorter or less frequent than classes in other subjects. Enrollment in music programs has declined, especially due to renewed emphasis on tested subjects and the COVID-19 pandemic. In small rural programs, students involved in multiple organizations might be able to split time and attend each activity if the coaches and directors allow the students to divide practice between activities. Limited instrumentation may also inhibit a program. Organizations must share students to combat this problem, allowing them to attend both music classes and athletics. Parts

[125] Heston, "Job Satisfaction," 320.

can be rewritten to accommodate the missing instruments in the score. Even in a rural environment, there are ways to address barriers, but those decisions may require creativity.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Barriers such as staffing issues, poor musicianship, and insufficient resources stop many rural instrumental programs from succeeding. Still, some instrumental programs thrive, even in these circumstances. Although successful programs exist, there is a lack of research defining how instrumental programs, specifically in rural Georgia, can solve these issues and grow successfully. As a result of this deficiency, it is critical to examine the solutions that experienced professionals in similar situations have enacted in their programs to address and overcome these obstacles. Similar challenges exist across most rural instrumental programs in Georgia. This study examined growth hindrances in small rural areas and similar challenges that exist across all rural Georgia instrumental programs. This chapter contains the study's methodology and approach used to conduct this study, including the research design, participants, setting, procedures, and methods for data analysis. These elements endeavor to answer the research questions posed in chapter one.

Research Design

This study aimed to determine the techniques and strategies successful band directors in rural Georgia have enacted to bypass common barriers to success. According to Creswell and Creswell, "In contrast to other designs, the qualitative approach includes comments by the researcher about their role and their self-reflection (or reflexivity, it is called), and the specific type of qualitative strategy being used."[126] As these guiding principles align with this study's approach, the researcher selected an inquiry design based on a grounded, qualitative approach to best serve this project. As Creswell and Creswell define it, "Grounded theory is a design of

[126] Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 180.

inquiry from sociology in which the researcher derives a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of participants. This process involves using multiple states of data collection and the refinement and interrelationship of categories of information."[127] Through the literature review and survey, several hypotheses were tested. The research project focused heavily on the views of band directors currently working in rural areas and their beliefs and experiences.

Research Questions

As an examination of challenges to growth and the everyday trials faced by high school band instrumental programs in rural Georgia, this study sought to answer the following questions:

Research Question One: What barriers to the musical growth of instrumental programs exist in small rural high schools in Georgia?

Hypothesis One: Barriers to students' musical growth in instrumental programs in small rural high schools in Georgia may include an overworked or inexperienced band director, limited of support staff, or inadequate opportunities for individual growth as musicians.

Research Question Two: What barriers to the enrollment growth of instrumental programs (in terms of organization and structure) exist in small rural high schools in Georgia?

Hypothesis Two: Barriers to instrumental program enrollment growth in small rural high schools in Georgia may include a lack of musical growth, insufficient financial support by the school, and declining stakeholder support.

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

Research Question Three: What common challenges do instrumental programs in rural Georgia experience overall?

Hypothesis Three: Common challenges experienced by high school band directors in rural Georgia may include recruiting, retention, and instrumentation.

Participants

For this study, purposeful sampling was used. According to Froehlich and Frierson-Campbell, this type of sample entails "Making choices about research participants based on your research purpose and question(s)."[128] This doctoral thesis hypothesizes that instrumental instructors face specific challenges in small rural parts of Georgia. Furthermore, it posits that directors who overcame challenges may share similar methods that explain their success, which would be worthy of further investigation.

Creswell and Creswell state that in some qualitative studies, theory becomes the endpoint. The authors state that "The researcher begins by gathering detailed information from participants and then forms this information into categories or themes. These themes are developed into broad patterns, theories, or generalizations that are then compared with personal experience or existing literature on the topic."[129]

Specific participants were chosen based on this criterion. Participants had to be from a rural district in Georgia. To determine which districts in Georgia were rural, the researcher used the GaDOE website. The specific page is called "Rural Education and Innovation." There were 115 rural counties in Georgia at the time of the survey, and every effort was made to only

[128] Hildegard Froehlich and Carol Frierson-Campbell, *Inquiry in Music Education: Concepts and Methods for the Beginning Researcher* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 164.

[129] Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 63.

question directors from these districts. To safeguard this selection further, the survey's first question included a map of Georgia with the rural counties highlighted in green, which came from GaDOE's webpage. The participant was asked whether they were teaching at a school in one of these places. If they are clicked "no," the survey ended.

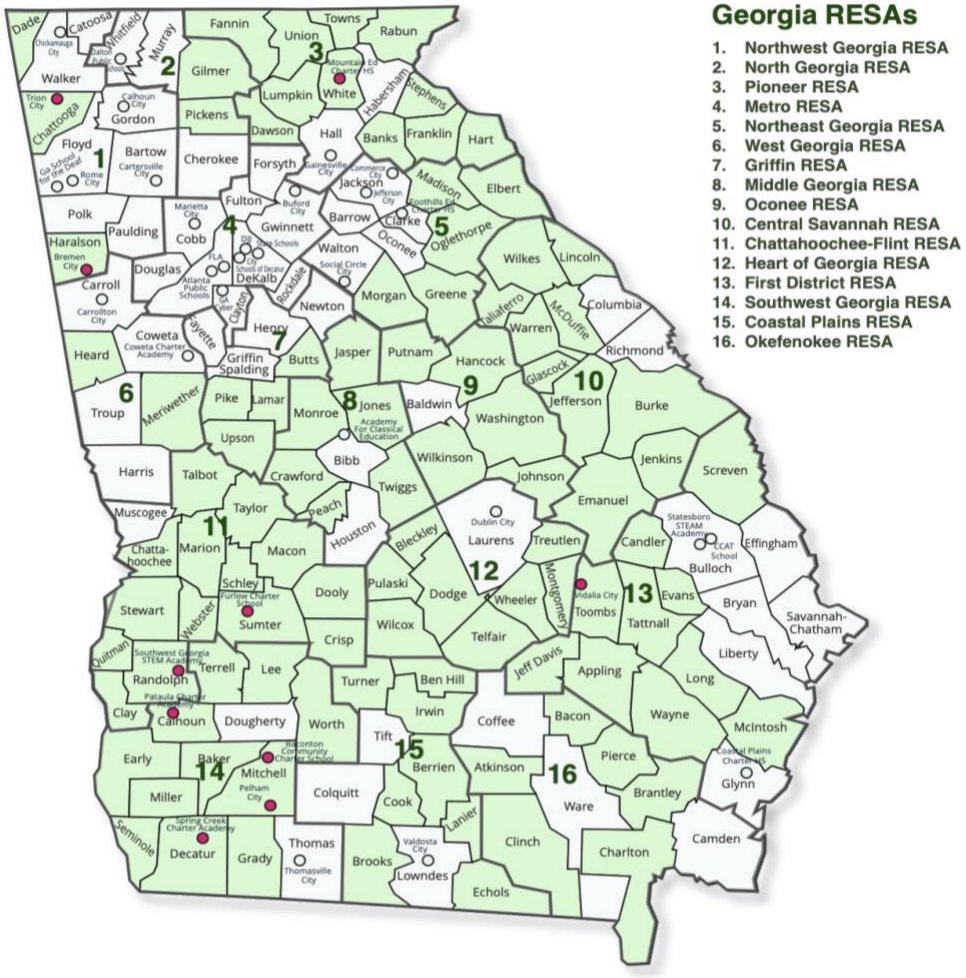

Figure 1. Map of Rural Georgia. "Rural Innovation Map," Rural Education and Innovation, GaDOE, last accessed February 17, 2024, https://www.gadoe.org/rural/Pages/default.aspx.

The researcher used GMEA's member site, OPUS, to obtain participants' email addresses. On this database, the email addresses of all public and private music educators in

Georgia are listed, provided they are members of GMEA. At the IRB's recommendation, the survey was also listed on a social media research site.

The study results were tabulated and reported anonymously so the participants could freely express their opinions, concerns, and personal experiences. No rewards were granted for participation or for completing the study. Public and private high school instrumental ensemble directors who taught in rural districts could complete the survey. A total of 125 participants received a survey link via direct email. The survey link was also posted on the Georgia Band Director's Facebook page. It gathered thirty-one responses, yielding a 24.8 percent completion rate.

Setting

The survey was hosted primarily on Google Forms. Participants received the link with an email and a consent document that detailed the study and how the responses would be used, explained that it was anonymous, and indicated how participants could view the survey results. The survey contained two sections. Section one had sixteen questions. Five of these questions had optional follow-up sections where the participants could elaborate in writing if they desired. Ten questions used a Likert scale, four had a drop-down menu, and three others were open-ended. There were also three multiple-choice questions. Section two contained four questions, for a total of twenty questions in the survey. Google Forms instantly tallied the questions from the Likert scale and drop-down menus, whereas the open-ended data had to be sorted.

Froehlich and Frierson-Campbell observed that the qualitative researcher must sort the raw data into initial labels. They stated, "The qualitative researcher pays attention to those

preliminary labels and notes them for later analysis."[130] Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner further clarify this process of forming the survey and analyzing the data. The authors state, "First, combinations are used to enable confirmation or corroboration of each other through triangulation. Second, combinations are used to enable or develop analysis in order to provide richer data. Third, combinations are used to initiate new modes of thinking by attending to paradoxes that emerge from the two data sources."[131]

As common themes emerged, they were studied for possible implications. The answers were categorized based on participant responses and detailed in chapter four of this study. As this study employs a grounded qualitative approach, the coded information was analyzed conceptually, and hypotheses were formed about "possible relationships between codes and/or themes."[132]

Procedures

The literature survey portion of the study took eight months to complete. Research questions were formulated and refined during this time, and the survey was developed. Then, the IRB was contacted for permission to run the survey. The survey had to be refined, and the consent form had to be revamped based on their recommendations. The survey was collected over a one-month period, with a week to tabulate the research findings and finish the study. The total time frame of the study took near a year to complete.

In summary, the survey had twenty questions that were divided over three sections. Ten of these questions used a Likert scale, four had a drop-down menu, three were open-ended short-

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[130] Froehlich and Frierson-Campbell, *Inquiry in Music Education*, 172.

[131] Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner, "Toward A Definition," 115.

[132] Froehlich and Frierson-Campbell, *Inquiry in Music Education*, 177.

answer qualitative questions, three questions were multiple choice, and five were optional follow-up qualitative questions to the Likert scale items. As described in the *Encyclopedia of Research Design* by J. Jackson Barnette, the Likert scale "is a method of attitude, opinion, or perception assessment of a unidimensional variable or a construct made up of multidimensions or subscales."[133] The study's design allowed the directors the option to further explain the rating they provided in their Likert scale responses.

The first question featured a "yes" or "no" multiple-choice option, and validity was ensured by confirming that the person who took the survey actively taught in a rural Georgian school district at the time of participation. The question included a picture of Georgia with the different counties labeled. Rural districts were shaded in green in case a director did not know whether they were in a rural district. The survey ended if it reached someone in error who was not in a rural Georgian district.

Data Analysis

The first survey question determined whether the survey progressed. Due to the design of Google Forms and because this gateway question functioned to end the survey or move it forward depending on whether the participant met the criteria, it had to be organized in its own section. The second and third questions gauged the director's overall experience and investigated how long the director had been in their current rural job. Question four investigated the director's level of education in multiple-choice form, while the fifth question assessed the size of their instrumental program with a drop-down box option. Beginning with question six, a Likert scale from one to ten measured the director's ability to find experienced staff. A score of one meant

[133] J. Jackson Barnette, *Encyclopedia of Research Design* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2010), 714.

"very easy" while ten indicated "very difficult." A follow-up short-answer space was provided for the participant's additional comments.

Question seven's drop-down box design sought to determine how many staff worked with the director's ensemble. Question eight was a multiple-choice option asking if the participant had ever taught in an urban setting. Question nine was designed to seek the opinion of those who had taught at an urban school. It asked them to compare their two experiences and report their viewpoints in short, written form.

Question ten was another Likert scale inquiry seeking the participants' opinions on the challenge level of rural teaching was, with one being "not challenging" and ten being "very challenging." Question eleven asked if the directors faced specific challenges in a rural school. Question twelve asked how satisfied the directors were with their current level of school support. It included an option for a short-answer follow-up. Question thirteen asked the interviewee to assess their level of community support, with one being "not satisfied" and ten being "very satisfied." This question included an optional short-answer follow-up opportunity. Question fourteen asked how satisfied the directors were with the band boosters' support level, offering an open response section for further explanation. Open responses, as Professor Jolene D. Smyth states, entail "verbal and visual components working together to produce the desired end product, thick, rich, descriptive responses."[134] Question fifteen asked how successful the director considers their program. This question had an optional short-answer follow-up. Question sixteen featured a long-answer option inquiring how the director defines music program success. Section three comprised the last four questions. The questions used Likert scales to assess the impact of

[134] Jolene D. Smyth et al., "Open-Ended Questions in Web Surveys: Can Increasing the Size of Answer Boxes and Providing Extra Verbal Instructions Improve Response Quality," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 73, no. 2 (2009); 326, https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfp029.

four factors: scheduling, community support, staff numbers, and staff knowledge, from one “no impact” to ten “strongly impacts.”

Chapter Summary

This study aimed to determine the techniques and strategies successful band directors in rural Georgian enacted to bypass common barriers to success. To achieve the results, rural directors were asked about their program and about the barriers to musical and organizational growth they have faced. Twenty questions varying in format from the Likert scale to short answer were utilized, with twenty questions. Due to the nature of the survey, a grounded qualitative approach was applied because of the details that must be chosen and analyzed from the participants.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

This chapter describes how the survey responses were analyzed and applied to the research questions and hypotheses. The survey results center on instrumental rural high school programs in Georgia. They are separated into three research areas: barriers to musical growth in small programs, barriers to small program enrollment growth, and common challenges experienced by all rural programs regardless of size.

The results were also compiled based on director experience in order to identify commonalities. For example, question eight inquired about the director's urban or rural work experience. Directors who had previously taught in an urban school totaled 61.5 percent, with the remaining 38.5 percent having only rural experience. Directors with urban experience have valuable insights into teaching in two different settings, and therefore, question nine asked those with urban experience whether they found the rural setting more challenging, less challenging, or the same, and whether the challenges differed. Five directors indicated that the jobs were equally difficult but with different challenges. Three directors replied that rural teaching was simpler, and one stated that the rural environment was more complicated.

This data was compiled and examined to search for common barriers. For the purpose of the present study, small program data needed to be separated. Small ensembles were defined as fifty or fewer members. There were nine directors who fit this description. Of these nine, six had their bachelor's degree, two had their specialist's degree, one had their master's degree, and none had yet earned a terminal degree. Among the nine, one director had less than a year's experience, five had been teaching for one to five years, and three had been teaching for twenty-one or more years. Of these small band directors, the first-year teacher had been at their program for less than a year while the other eight had been at their schools for five or fewer years. Of these nine, three

had taught in an urban school setting. These three expressed different opinions when indicating whether rural teaching was less challenging, more challenging, or different. One chose less challenging because resources were abundant and student participation was high, one picked more challenging, and another felt it was just a different type of challenge. The director who responded that resources were abundant also indicated that no staff worked with their program throughout the year.

When asked about challenges specific to rural schools, the small ensemble band directors reported more than one barrier. Six directors indicated that budget/finances were a major barrier specific to rural schools, four indicated a lack of resources (e.g., decent instruments), two cited low parental support, one mentioned limited instrumentation, one said student sharing, one mentioned distance, another mentioned staff hiring problems, one was disappointed that kids would rather do chores at home than attend extracurriculars, and one director did not answer the short-answer portion.

Research Question One

The first research question was focused on identifying barriers to instrumental program growth in rural settings. Specifically, the question was as follows: What barriers to the musical growth of instrumental programs exist in small rural high schools in Georgia?

The first hypothesis attempted to answer the question: Barriers to students' musical growth in instrumental programs in small rural high schools in Georgia may include an overworked or inexperienced band director, limited support staff, or inadequate opportunities for individual growth as musicians.

Workload/Experience

Survey item one ensured that the person completing the survey was a high school band director who taught in a rural school district in Georgia. This item is a "gatekeeping" question because, as Indiana University Professor Douglas W. Maynard states, it determines "whether there will be a 'sustained' episode of interaction between a survey interviewer/called and a call recipient."[135] The criterion is important, as directors often move from one school to another, and the survey was intended for current rural directors. Moreover, the survey was posted to a director's website where both rural and urban directors might find it. This gatekeeping question therefore ensured if someone took it after being directed from that website, they were truly a current rural director. Of those who accessed the survey, 83.9 percent were current instrumental rural directors. The other 16.1 percent were unable to continue the survey.

The second item asked how many years the participant had been a director. The question attempted to gauge each director's total experience, regardless of where it occurred. Of the directors surveyed, 3.8 percent had been a director for less than a year, 23.1 percent had taught one to five years, 15.4 percent had taught six to ten years, 15.4 percent had taught eleven to fifteen years, 3.8 percent had taught sixteen to twenty years, and 38.5 percent had taught twenty-one or more years.

[135] Douglas W. Maynard and Nora Cate Schaeffer, "Keeping the Gate: Declinations of the Request to Participate in a Telephone Survey Interview," *Sociological Methods & Research* 26, no. 1 (1997): 35, https://doi.org/10.1177/0049124197026001002.

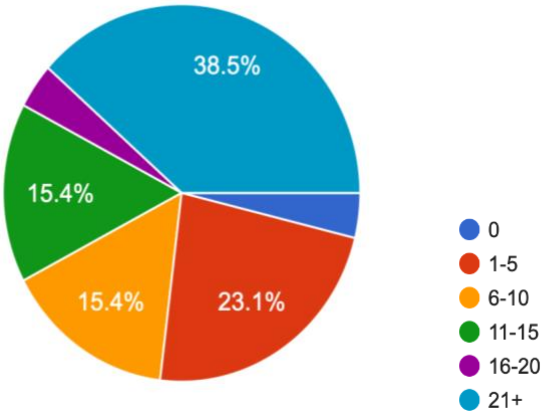


Figure 2. Years Taught - All Directors

Research question one was specific to small ensembles, which were defined as having fifty members or fewer. The data concerning the band directors' number of years in education are as follows: it was one director's first year, five directors had been teaching for one to five years, and three directors had been teaching for twenty-one or more years. No one had between six and twenty years of experience in this category.

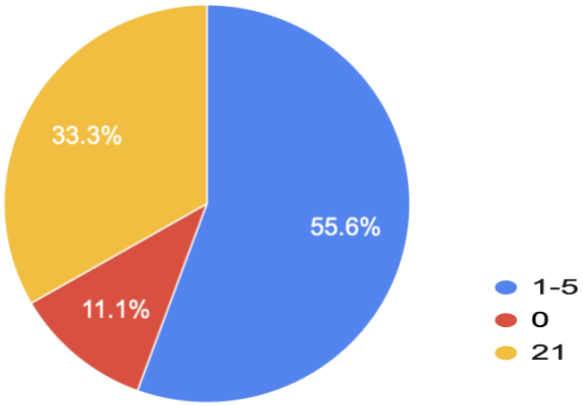


Figure 3. Years Taught - Small Ensemble Directors

The third question asked how long the director had been in their current job. Of the directors, 7.7 percent marked that they had been in their current job for less than one year, 65.4 percent indicated one to five years, and 19.2 percent had taught at their position from six to ten years. No directors indicated teaching in their current employment for eleven to twenty years,

while 7.7 percent had taught for twenty-one or more years at their current school. Although 38.5 percent of directors had twenty-one or more years of experience, only 7.7 percent of those surveyed were still at the same job, and a staggering 73.1 percent of the directors had been at their current position for five years or less, even though only 3.8 percent were new directors. These statistics may suggest that the strenuous demands of the job are overwhelming for a solo director and indicate that a rural program requires a person to be a particular fit within the school and community, and with other stakeholders. The data do not, however, suggest that rural positions for large bands are filled with inexperienced personnel, since 73.1 percent of these directors have been instrumental program directors for six or more years.

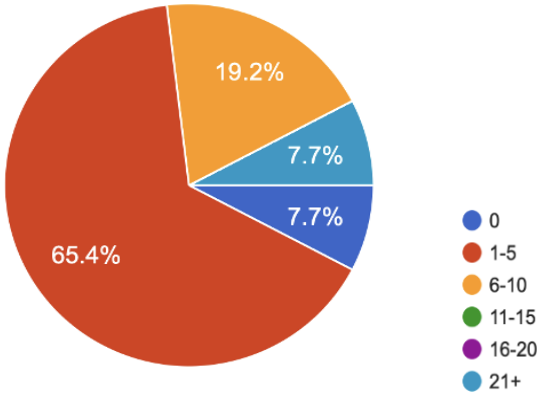


Figure 4. Years at Current Job - All Directors

When the small band director population was removed from this data, it was revealed that the majority of the surveyed directors teaching in small rural school jobs had been in their position for five years or less. This is a disconcerting statistic because it indicates instability at the small-band level. Directors filling these positions are either new or newly hired. Since there are no middle number of years of experience positions, it is possible that the three directors with twenty-one or more years of experience are there as part-time teachers, as some teachers may return after their retirement to work half days and earn extra money as part of COVID-19 funding. This observation is a potential area of further research because if this is the case, it is

necessary to determine whether these school districts are attempting to save money by hiring a part-time position or whether they could not find a quality candidate to work full time.

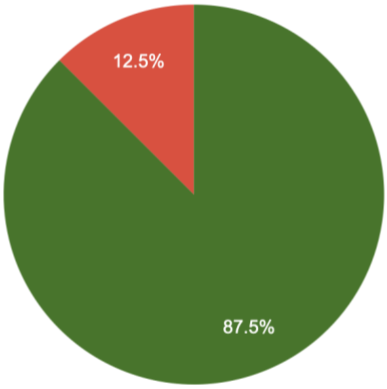


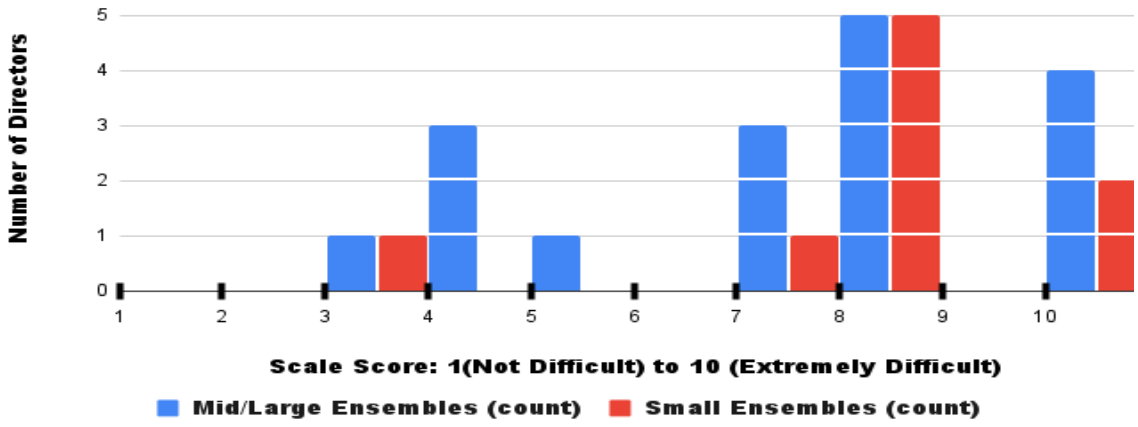
Figure 5. Years at Current Job - Small Ensemble Directors

Support Staff

Question six on the survey was a ten-point Likert scale question that asked how difficult it was to find experienced musicians to help teach the program. Level one meant it was not difficult, and level ten indicated extreme difficulty. These musicians would be employed for band camp, guest conducting, and band staff throughout the year. Of the directors surveyed, none of them chose levels one, two, six, or nine; 7.7 percent of directors decided on level three, 11.5 percent designated level four, 3.8 percent selected level five, 15.4 percent indicated level seven, 38.5 percent picked level eight, and 23.1 percent chose level ten.

Dividing the data by large and small ensembles allowed the researcher to compare the opinions of these directors based on experienced staff recruitment difficulties. Table 1 depicts these two groups. Only one small group indicated that experienced staff was easy to find, with a scale score of three, one chose seven, five directors chose eight, and two directors felt this challenge was ten out of ten. In contrast to the larger ensemble directors, in which five directors rated this category a five or below, most small band directors rated this at eight or above.

Table 1. Experienced Staff Locating Difficulty – Directors of Mid-Size/Large Ensembles



These answers demonstrate that the difficulty of recruiting experienced musicians to teach students is a barrier to all rural programs, regardless of size, with 61.6 percent selecting a challenging rating of level seven or higher. Still, this issue remains a significant problem for small ensemble directors who, with only one exception, overwhelmingly rated this barrier at eight or above. This averaged out to eighty-eight percent of small rural band directors surveyed who felt was very challenging to find musicians to help their program, while in total survey, showed 61.6 percent of directors selected seven or above.

Question six also had a short answer follow-up where directors could add comments. Of the directors surveyed, three directors indicated they were unable to hire any staff due to financial concerns, and five were unable to have staff come to them during the year due to the program's distance. One director was not permitted to hire staff outside their district, and one mentioned finding staff for band camp was not an issue, but, along with another director, they stated that staff during the year became a challenge. Three directors indicated they were near a college. However, another director could not use a local college due to scheduling issues. Two mentioned using college staff and said they still had difficulty recruiting professional musicians to work with their students. One contributor mentioned they hired former students. One assistant

director indicated that their program had no trouble finding staff because of the head director's connections. Still, with twelve of the fifteen indicating difficulty finding staff for band camp or during the year, this is clearly a challenge in rural education. After separating out the small ensemble responses, the researcher observed that four directors cited financial burdens as the reason staff were not hired, three mentioned the distance issue, and four directors did not answer.

Staff Recruitment

Rating	Explanation given for rating
	Band Size 1 - 50
8	No money/Location too far
8	No money
8	Location too far
8	Location too far
10	No money
	Band Size 51 - 100
8	Hard during the season
10	No outside help allowed to come in
	Band Size 101 - 150
4	Nearby college makes it easier to find expereinced musicians
4	Hard to find musicians for private lessons
5	Personal connections makes finding experienced musicians easier
7	Smaller college nearby
10	Area/Location
	Band Size 151 - 200
8	Area/Location
	Band Size 201 - 250
10	Distance experienced musicians would have to drive

Figure 6. Reasons for Difficulty Recruiting Experienced Musicians

Growth Opportunities

Survey item seven asked the contributors to gauge how many staff worked with their group over a year. This inquiry was based on a scale from zero to ten, with zero indicating no outside help and a score of ten indicating ten or more staff. This question addressed music

growth due to the benefits of increased individualized instruction, especially if this instruction comes from someone who plays a specific instrument or has a niche skill set. The percentage of directors who answered that they had zero, seven, eight, or ten helpers throughout the year was 3.8 percent each. Of the instrumental music directors surveyed, 11.5 percent had one staff member, 15.4 percent had two or four staff members, 26.9 percent had three, and 7.7 percent had five or six.

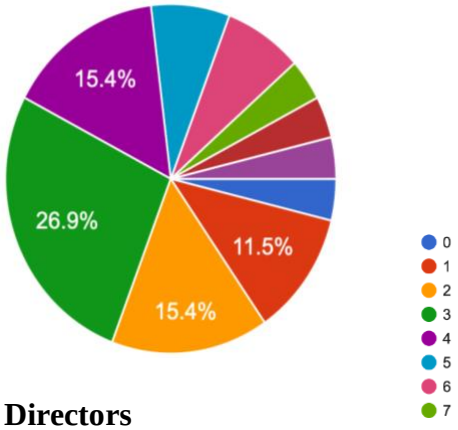


Figure 7. Number of Staff - All Directors

Most of the participants, seventy-three percent, had four or fewer instructional staff. When the researcher analyzed the small group staff specifically, twenty-five percent had three, twenty-five percent had two, the majority had one with 37.5 percent, and 12.5 percent had no

staff help. While three is the overall group average of staff, most small groups had one staff member.

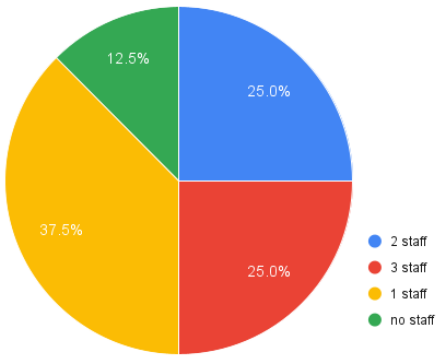


Figure 8. Number of Staff - Small Ensemble Directors

Questions nineteen and twenty were designed to gauge the director's opinion regarding the importance of having staff and whether having adult help, regardless of experience, was beneficial. For example, is it important to have any help, even if the assistant is nonmusical, or has been in high school band but perhaps is not proficient on their instrument? No directors selected levels one, two, and six for the number importance of having staff available, four percent indicated level three; twelve percent preferred levels four and nine; eight percent designated levels five and seven; twenty-four percent picked level eight; and thirty-two percent chose level ten. This means seventy-six percent chose level seven or higher relating to the importance of having some adult help, even if it was not experienced help, and forty-four percent picked nine or ten labeling it extremely important. For the importance of hired staff having deep musical knowledge, four percent picked levels one and four, eight percent selected levels two, five, and eight; no directors chose levels three and six; twelve percent indicated level seven; sixteen percent designated level nine; and forty percent preferred level ten.

When examining the small-group data, directors ranked the importance of having adults available for staff in the following ways: two directors selected four out of ten for the level of

extra staff importance. Of the other seven directors, two chose five out of ten, one picked seven out of ten, two selected eight out of ten, and one deemed extra staff importance ten out of ten. For the importance of hired staff having deep musical knowledge, one director chose four, two five, two eight, one nine, and one ten.

Not surprisingly, many directors chose staff knowledge, with fifty-six percent picking levels nine and ten over the number of staff and forty-four percent choosing the other levels. Still, it is evident that with the larger ensembles, supervision is probably more of a concern than in smaller programs. Therefore, it is more important for small groups, with limited funds, to make the most of their staff, while larger ensembles can accommodate one or two personnel with limited to no music experience just to supervise children, manage uniform cleaning, set field drill, and fulfill whatever other roles that are needed.

Table 2. Staff (Number of Adults Available)

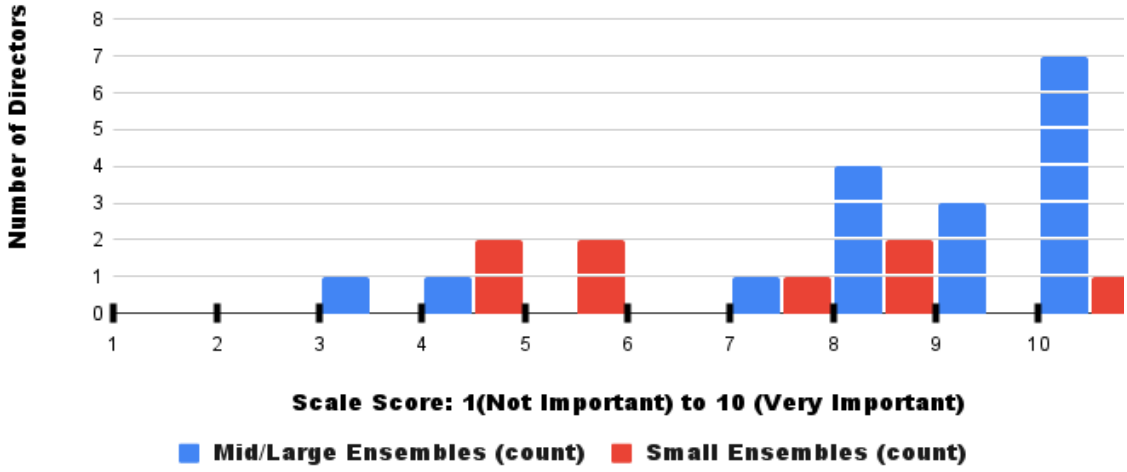
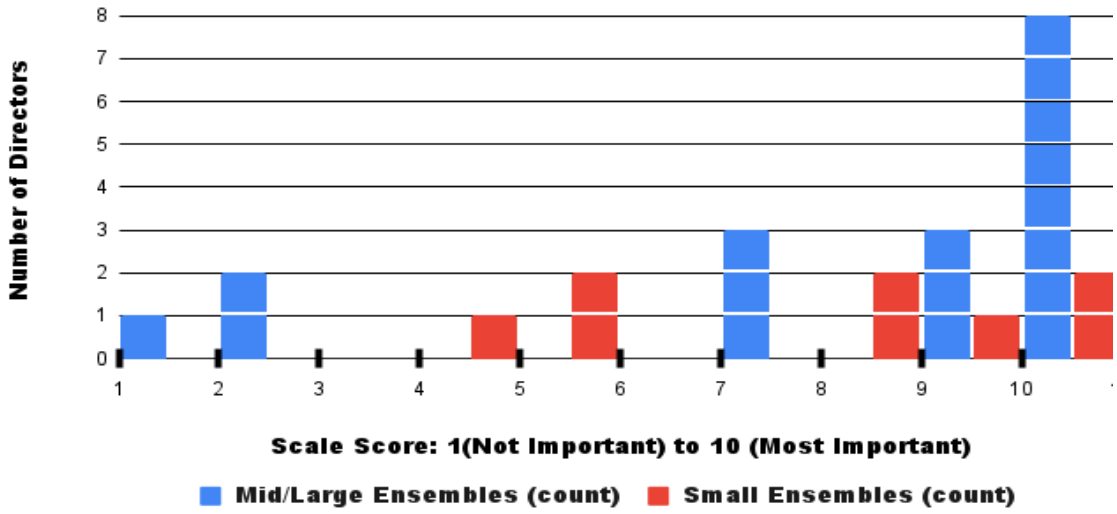


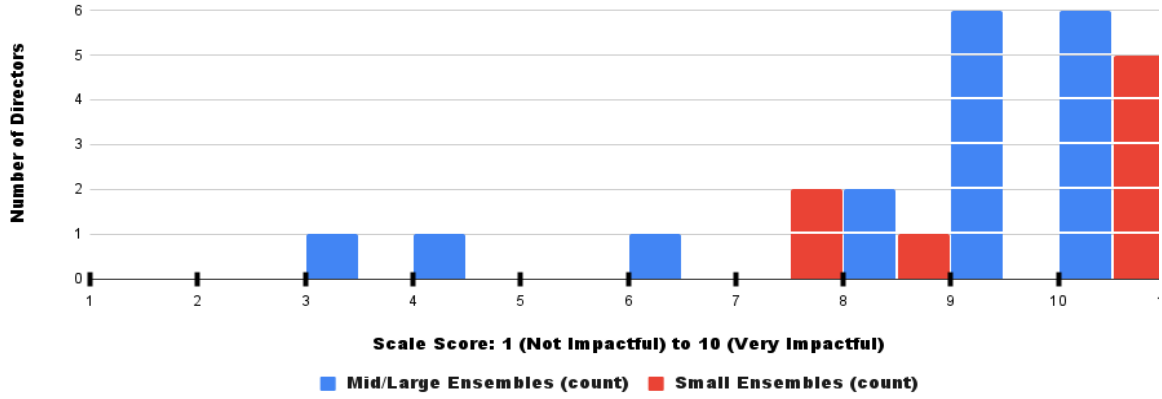
Table 3. Staff (Depth of Music Knowledge)



When addressing scheduling and how much it impacted their program's success, musical growth, and class access, none of the directors picked levels one, two, and five; four percent indicated levels three, four, and six; eight percent selected level seven; twelve percent elected level eight; twenty-four percent chose level nine; and forty-four percent designated level ten as their choice. Directors felt so strongly about scheduling impacts that eighty percent rated it as a high-impact area for program success.

When the researcher examined the small ensemble answer specifically, two directors picked level seven, one director level eight, and five directors selected level ten. All the small ensemble directors felt so strongly about scheduling that all of them chose at least level seven. Scheduling difficulties are a major barrier to the music ensemble and to small rural ensembles in general.

Table 4. Scheduling Difficulties and Program Impact



Research Question One Summary

Research question one explored barriers to students' musical growth in instrumental programs in small rural high schools in Georgia. The hypothesis was that these programs may feature an overworked or inexperienced band director, limited support staff, or inadequate opportunities for individual student growth as musicians. While there was insufficient information from the survey to determine with certainty that the directors felt overworked, it is implied, as all the directors had been in their current job for less than five years. The first hypothesized barrier (that the small ensemble directors were without experience) was inaccurate. Three-quarters of the directors had taught for six or more years. The second barrier mentioned in the hypothesis – limited support staff in terms of the number of experienced staff – appears to be present, with most directors rating this as a difficult task. The third obstacle consisted of limited musical growth, which, for myriad of reasons, such as a lack of experienced support staff and scheduling issues, dramatically impacts students' individual musical and ensemble growth.

Research Question Two

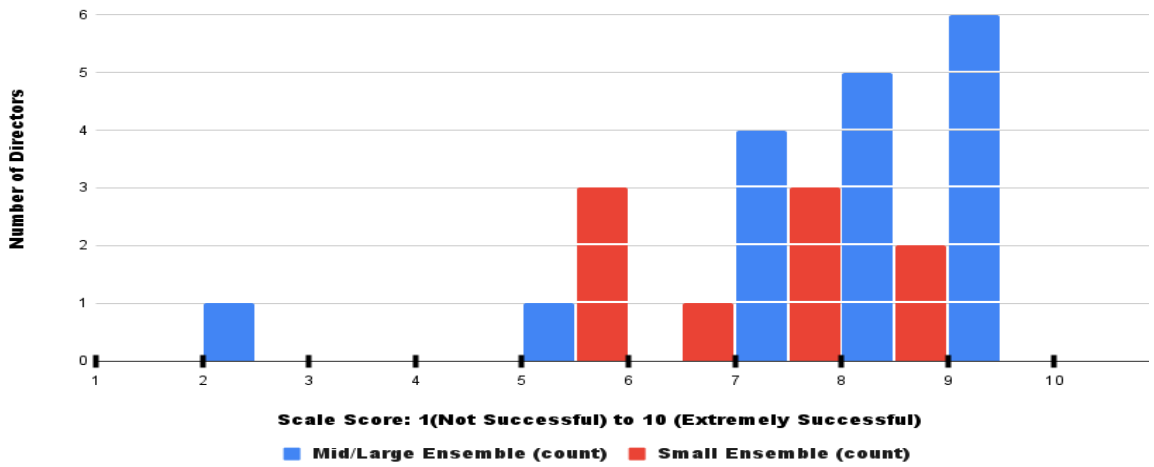
Research question two addressed barriers that obstruct program growth through lack of student participation and other mitigating factors. It asked: What barriers to the enrollment growth of instrumental programs (in terms of organization and structure) exist in small rural high schools in Georgia? The second hypothesis offered reasonable answers to this question: Barriers to instrumental program enrollment growth in small rural high schools in Georgia may include a lack of musical growth, insufficient financial support by the school, and declining stakeholder support.

Musical Growth

Though already addressed in research question one, lack of musical growth can hinder organizational growth and impede program success. If students are not growing musically, do not feel they are successful, and do not join an ensemble or quit because of a negative experience, these factors contribute to stifling the organizational maturation of the ensemble. The reverse is also true: musical growth can positively affect the enrollment, work ethic, mood, and stakeholders and the community perceptions of the program. Question fifteen attempted to assess individual programs by inquiring how successful rural directors considered their instrumental programs. Many indicated that students growing musically and enjoying the process was part of their overall success. This question was based on a Likert scale rating, with one being "unsuccessful" and ten being "entirely successful." When the researcher analyzed all directors' responses, no participants selected one, three, four, or ten. Of the participants, 3.8 percent picked two and six equally, 15.4 percent selected five, 26.9 percent indicated seven and eight, and 23.1 percent chose nine. In the small ensemble response, thirty-three percent chose level five, eleven percent level six, thirty-three percent level seven, and twenty-two percent chose level nine. It is

notable that all the small ensemble directors felt their group had attained at least average success, which was similar to the findings for mid-size and large ensembles, with the exception of one outlier.

Table 5. Program Success



This question provided an optional follow-up opportunity that asked directors how successful they consider their program. Their answers included improved scoring in competitive or festival situations; entertaining the crowd if they did not compete; increased musicianship, culture, and attitude; becoming a performance group; the students noticing the groups' improvement; doing the best with what they have; the administration determining if they were successful; or that they experienced great success recently.

Question sixteen asked directors how they define success. Seven of the nine small ensemble directors answered this question. This short answer question was summarized by the researcher with five answers mentioning individual or ensemble musical growth and five answers discussing student enjoyment. Two directors mentioned community feedback and enjoyment in their answers. By their definitions, student enjoyment and musical growth coincide, or else their enjoyment comes first – not necessarily personal enjoyment resulting from musical

growth. Though it is a subtle distinction, it is important for music to be an enjoyable journey that encourages musical and organizational growth. Reflecting on the hypothesis, the researcher concludes that lack of musical growth can be a barrier to program advancement and success.

How do you define music program success?
Band Size 1 - 50
The students deserve a well-rounded education. I have a small but dedicated crew of students who are committed to playing their instruments. In three years we have moved from reading lines from a method book to performing Georgia Grade 3 and 4 music (Pieces such as American Riversongs, for example). I consider us to be moderately successful because we are becoming literate in music and beginning to make appropriate and characteristic sounds on our instruments. We are also learning and performing with proper ensemble etiquette.
Good community feedback, personal enjoyment from students
The success of a music program revolves around the lives of students, the community, and how the director chooses to use the resources provided to them. Students MUST have fun in order for the program to be successful! The community must enjoy what you are doing to give full support. The director MUST enjoy everything about the job in order for the music program to be successful.
Every student demonstrates growth as a musician.
Progress, Musicianship, Positive student feedback
Through the student's musical growth also their ability to learn and perform lastly, their perception to demonstrate what has been taught.
Through the willingness of students want to learn , how the demonstrate what is being taught. from the results of assesments.
Band Size 51 - 100
Seeing the skill growth of the musicians at the beginning of the year and through sightreading, concerts, auditions for DHB (District Honor Band) /AS (All-State) grow and the satisfaction that the students exhibit from intrinsic drive.
Are there students in band? Are they learning? Are they having fun?
Student retainment- student engagement, student involvement.
A program that is the appropriate size for the school/community performing grade level appropriate music.
Students leaving high school with the skills needed for life.

Band Size 101 - 150
I define success as having alumni of our program continue making instrumental music beyond HS.
Seeing kids grow and mature musically and as an individual person
Individual and ensemble success. Percentage of student body in the band program.
Long term retention, musical growth, and continued participation in/value of music after graduation.
Number of participants, including those who serve as prop crew members who do not play instruments. Overall student enjoyment. Overall reception of entertainment by community
Lots of student involvement, successful performances at Marching, Parade, Concert, and Performance Evaluations opportunities.
Success to me is defined by the students. They want to feel successful. They want their parents to be proud of them and their performances. We have kids who are excited their parents and family members are finally coming to watch them. We have kids excited about joining the high school band because they see the success. If the students, staff, and community see the hard work and love the end product....you have a successful program. We may not have all state caliber kids. But they are learning about being a good human in the workforce and community when they graduate.

Band Size 151 - 200
Students being musically literate and performance evaluations
A program designed to develop students into individuals who understand what is possible when everyone does their best towards a group goal. Opening up opportunities they will never get with other organizations in the school.
Kids are having fun and improving.
The students are the most important factor in program success. If they are enjoying themselves in the activity and learning valuable life-skills all while learning how to be a better musician and person - this is program success!
Band Size 201 - 250
Students are playing their instruments daily! They enjoy participating in music activities and are progressing every week to a higher level of musicianship! We are very proud of the progress we have made in a short amount of time. The only place "Success" comes before "Hardwork" is in the dictionary. We work hard everyday and the bar is high; Our students have seen a difference. Thus, they have "bought in" to a culture of excellence.

Figure 9. How do you define program success?

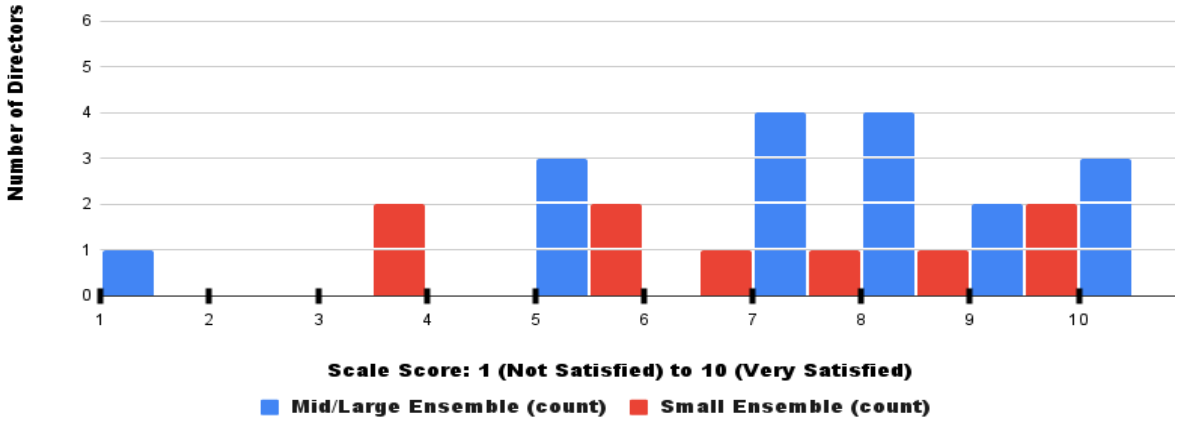
Financial Support

Question eleven asked the directors what specific challenges rural programs face. While not exclusively a financial support question, twelve directors selected funding/budget as a challenge specific to their situation, establishing it as a challenge to organizational success. Many of the other barriers also involved financial issues or resources requiring monetary support. Eight directors cited challenges such as not living near a music store, the lack of availability of private lessons, and having instruments in disrepair; five indicated a lack of staff. Four directors said sharing students, school distance, and low-income families were more specific rural barriers. Three directors said that the lack of parental support and the need to teach band culture to the community and administration constituted rural barriers. Two directors cited instrumentation problems, one stated family obligations, one said recruitment and retention, and another identified scheduling as barriers that were prominent in rural rather than urban programs. For small ensembles, five of the nine directors indicated financial difficulties – as expressed by lack of instruments, budget problems, or lack of money for staff – as a barrier specific to rural schools.

Stakeholder Support

Survey question twelve asked participants how satisfied they were with the support they received from their school. The question involved a one to ten scale, with one being the lowest score indicating no support, while ten implied maximum support. Overall, none of the directors picked two or four, 3.8 percent indicated a one or six, 7.7 percent of directors picked three, 11.5 percent chose ten, 15.4 percent selected nine, and 19.2 percent selected five, seven, and eight equally. Of the small ensembles, twenty-two percent picked level three, twenty-two percent level five, eleven percent level six, eleven percent level seven, eleven percent level eight, and twenty-two percent level nine. Compared with the mid-size to large programs, small ensembles reported feeling less supported by their school, with forty-four percent of them choosing levels five or below, compared to twenty-four percent of the mid-size to large schools, in ranking their school satisfaction.

Table 6. School Support Satisfaction



Question twelve included an optional follow-up with a chance to leave a written answer, describing how supported they felt their program was from their school. Four directors reported that the administration did not understand them musically or work with them on schedules. One

director indicated that their administration did not care when they scored the first “superior” in fifteen years.

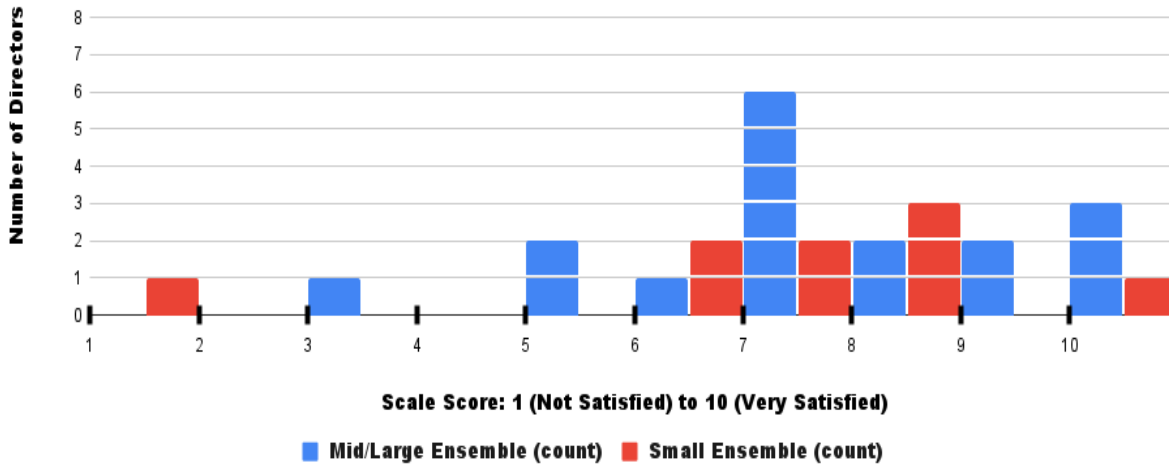
Satisfaction with School Support	
Rating	Explanation given for rating
Band Size 1 - 50	
3	Differences in philosophy with front office about the role of the band
5	Teaching 4th through 12th music and band is awkward - only help is from an auxillary coach
8	Scheduling is an issue
9	Superintendent and Principal both support
9	Very Satisfied
Band Size 51 - 100	
1	High ensemble scores that went unnoticed and no direct communication with principal
7	Administration does not understood
Band Size 101 - 150	
4	Nearby college makes it easier to find expereinced musicians
4	Hard to find musicians for private lessons
5	Personal connections makes finding experienced musicians easier
7	Smaller college nearby
10	Area/Location
Band Size 151 - 200	
8	I have great administration, but they have no music experience.
9	Administration and community are very supportive!
Band Size 201 - 250	
10	Very satisfied. They, however, have made a conscious decision to help grow the program.

Figure 10. Rating of School Support

Question thirteen asked directors to rate the level of support they had in their community, with 3.8 percent picking level one or three and none choosing levels two or four. Of the respondents, 7.7 percent indicated five or nine, 11.5 percent selected six, 30.8 percent chose level seven, 19.2 percent indicated level eight, and 15.4 percent indicated level ten. The question’s

scale was from one to ten, with one indicating “not satisfied” and ten “very satisfied.” Isolating the small ensemble response yielded higher results, with twenty-two percent at level six, twenty-two percent level seven, thirty-three percent level eight, and eleven percent level ten. Like the mid-size and large ensembles, there was one outlier, but it was a much lower ranking (level one). Community support for the music programs was generally perceived as high. Overall, eighty-two percent of mid-size and large ensembles were at a level six or higher compared to the small ensemble directors, who indicated eighty-nine percent level six or higher. Small ensembles indicated more satisfaction with their communities than the mid-size or large ensembles.

Table 7. Community Support Satisfaction



Question thirteen included a follow-up with an optional short-answer section. Five directors reported that they felt the band was not supported in the community due to athletics being deemed essential or the band previously being restarted. Three felt the band was supported, while three felt the program was semi-supported, but the nonhigh school groups were not supported. Other directors stated they were not supported in the spring, or they were not supported at the same level as the athletes. The small group director who rated community support at a one, did not feel connected with their community. They indicated the culture was not

accepting of band and they were isolated and unable to introduce what they called “progressive change.”

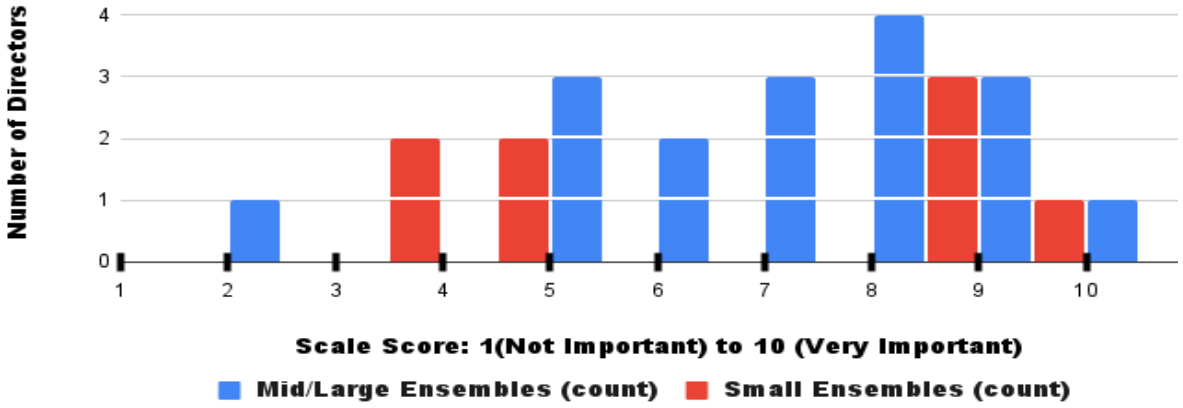
Satisfaction with Community Support	
Rating	Explanation given for rating
	Band Size 1 - 50
1	The community is uneducated in terms of band culture. The community is also extremely tightly-knit and outsiders not from the community do not last long because they do not allow for those progressive changes to take place.
6	The community loves the band, however, they only love it on Friday nights. We are never really showcased during the spring.
8	This program had closed for about 5 years. This is rebirth of the program. The community was very instrumental in supporting the summer camp, providing meals and water power aide etc through this marching season.
8	Very satisfied
10	Most people are excited about band but others prefer the idea of mainstream athletics more.
	Band Size 51 - 100
5	Football and athletics rule in our community so the support for the arts is pretty abysmal comparatively
6	They don't know what a good band program really is. Previous directors are either in prison, indicted and not prosecuted, ran off with a student when she graduated or was a complete failure and the school not able to do anything due to tenure.
	Band Size 101 - 150
7	Business and groups are giving and supportive
	Band Size 151 - 200
7	Hard to break the "sports are life" mentality.
5	The middle school program is not as visible in the community as the high school band. It is often overlooked, but the marching band requires more support.
	Band Size 201 - 250
7	Because the program was dormant (dead) for so many years, it has been difficult to reengage the community in supporting us.

Figure 11. Satisfaction with Community Support

Question eighteen asked directors to rate how they felt community support was for program success, with one being “not impactful” and ten being “very impactful.” For community support, no director picked level one; four percent chose levels one and ten; eight percent picked levels three, four, and six; twelve percent answered level five; twenty-eight percent selected level

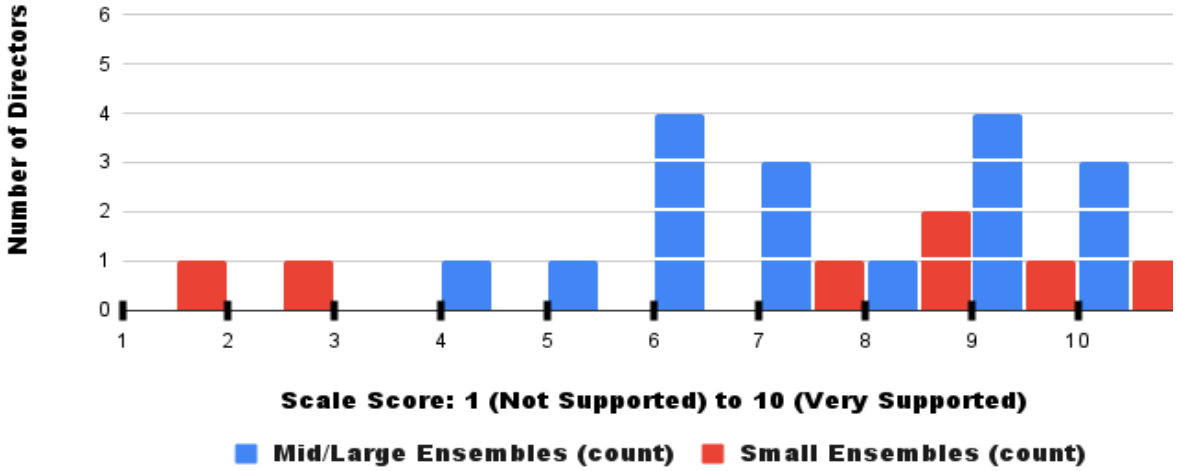
seven; and sixteen percent preferred level nine. With the small group ensembles, only eight directors answered, with twenty-five percent at level three, twenty-five percent at level four, 37.5 percent at level eight, and 12.5 percent at level nine.

Table 8. Community Support Factor



Question fourteen asked the directors how satisfied they were with the support of their booster program. The ten-question scale was from one to ten, with one being “unsatisfied” and ten being “very satisfied.” Of all the directors, 4.2 percent chose levels one, two, four, or five. No director chose level three; 16.7 percent chose levels six, seven, or ten; 12.5 percent chose level eight; and 20.8 percent chose level nine. When examining the small ensemble response, the researcher noted that one director did not answer, and another did not have a booster program. Of those responding, fourteen percent chose level one, fourteen percent level two, fourteen percent level seven, 18.5 percent level eight, fourteen percent level nine, and fourteen percent chose level ten. It was notable that while 64.7 percent of mid-size and large ensembles rated their booster support to be level seven or higher, as did seventy-one percent of small ensemble directors also did, 28.5 percent of those small ensemble directors rated their booster support was a level one or two. None of the mid-size or large ensembles placed their booster support below a four.

Table 9. Band Booster Support



This question included an optional follow-up short-answer opportunity. Upon further review of the low small group scores, the researcher noted that the director who gave their booster support a rating of one also had no booster program, while the one who awarded a score of two did not explain their rating. Four directors stated that they had no boosters, while two had recently restarted their boosters. Four directors mentioned having great boosters but explained they were few, and it was difficult for one of the four to find concession workers. One director called his booster program ineffective and noted the boosters wanted to run the band program as if they were the director. However, many directors were pleased with the support of their groups. They acknowledged the importance of these stakeholders, especially the community, and stated that a lack of support would be a significant challenge to organizational success. Perhaps it is a bigger indicator that booster support is very important for program success. However, not having a booster program, for whatever reason, is a real obstacle for some small rural programs in Georgia.

Satisfaction with Band Boosters	
Rating	Explanation of Rating
Band 1 - 50	
-	No boosters
-	No boosters
1	No boosters
9	My band boosters are great and do everything they can to make sure we have what we need. Only issues we have is finding parents to work the concession stands.
10	I am privileged to have a wonderful, yet small, group of parents who want the best music education for their students. They recognize the cognitive, social, and emotional benefits of music education on their students and continue to fight with me to establish the program.
Band 51 - 100	
4	They don't understand the function of the boosters. They want to run the program as if they are the director. They refuse to go to training.
8	I had to build a booster program due to the previous director mismanaging money and running the parents off
Band 101 - 150	
7	They are good but not many parents get involved
10	The support is great from our boosters. They have completely bought in to the program.
Band 151 - 200	
10	For HS (No Middle School Boosters)
Band 201 - 250	
6	The Booster program, just like the Band, was dormant (Non-existent) as well. They however, have reactivated and seem to be on their way to thriving.

Figure 12. Ratings/Explanation of Band Booster Satisfaction

Research Question Two Summary

Research question two focused on barriers to organizational growth. The hypothesis stated that barriers to instrumental program enrollment growth in small rural high schools in Georgia may include a lack of musical growth, insufficient financial support by the school, and declining stakeholder support. All three topics, from lack of musical growth to financial and stakeholder support, were confirmed as barriers via the survey responses. These challenges were not present in every program, but when they occured, especially with a lack of financial support,

they posed a considerable challenge to the rural program, perhaps more acutely than they would for their urban counterparts.

Research Question Three

The third research question sought common ground between rural programs in Georgia, regardless of size. It asked, "What common challenges do instrumental programs in rural Georgia experience overall?" The third hypothesis proposed that that common challenges experienced by high school band directors in rural Georgia may include recruiting, retention, and instrumentation.

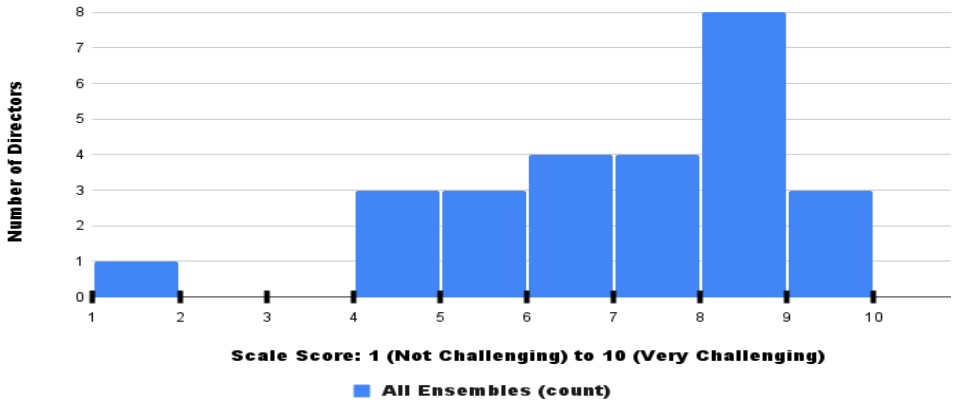
Recruiting, Retention, and Instrumentation

Most classroom teachers do not have to worry about recruiting students to their class, retaining them, or ensuring they have enough students to fill each position. For example, a student must take math class as a graduation requirement, in which all students are learning the same material at the same time. In contrast, upper-level music ensembles in high school are optional and must fit around the student's other class obligations. Therefore, the director is not guaranteed a certain number of students, as these students must be recruited. Although the students work on the same material in a whole group ensemble, each student is assigned a specific instrument, and some sections have a few people, or even only one, playing a specific part. Moreover, music instrumentation is not a one-year problem for the director, as it must be planned for as many years ahead as possible to train incoming students and monitor future instrumentation gaps.

Survey question ten asked directors to rate how challenging it is to teach at a rural school. The question involved a Likert scale from one to ten, with one being "not challenging" and ten

being “very challenging”. Of all the directors surveyed, 3.8 percent picked level one; none picked level two or three; 11.5 percent chose four, five, or nine; 15.4 percent chose level six or seven; and 30.8 percent picked level eight. It should also be noted, as mentioned in research question one, that three-quarters of directors had been in their current program for five years or less, even though that same number had six or more years of experience teaching. This is significant because the data shows that directors are not staying to teach in rural districts.

Table 10. Rural District Challenge



Survey question five asked about current enrollment to highlight the director’s recruiting and retention situation. The percentage of directors with fifty or fewer members in their program was 34.6 percent, 19.2 percent had fifty-one to one hundred members, 26.9 percent had an

enrollment of 101 to 150 members, 15.4 percent had 151 to two hundred members, and 3.8 percent had between 201 and 250.

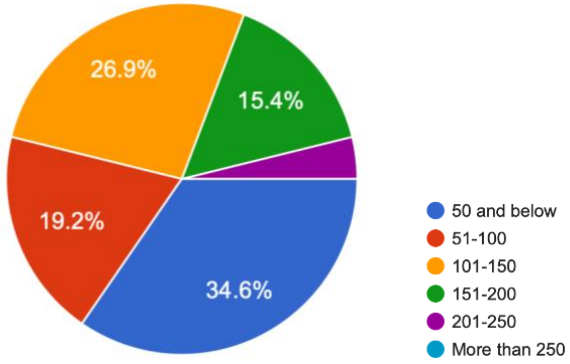


Figure 13. Number of Students

Survey question eleven addressed recruiting, retention, and instrumentation. It asked the directors what specific challenges a rural program may face. Only two directors said instrumentation problems were more likely to be rural than urban program barriers. While instrumentation is considered a well-known rural problem, perhaps rural directors simply accept this as the norm and automatically compensate for it, no longer seeing it as a barrier but as a fact. The question asked directors to identify challenges that were specific to a rural school. Fifteen directors indicated that funding was more challenging in a rural environment. Six participants indicated a lack of resources or staff. Overall, question eleven revealed that twelve directors regarded financial burdens and budget restrictions as a rural barrier.

Difficulty/ Challenges of Rural Teaching	
Rating	Explanation of Rating
Band Size 1 - 50	
1	Attendance, Scheduling, Sharing students
4	Lack of funding, Equipment, Parental Support.
5	Individual Home life, Finances, Level of support
6	Travel/Location/Family Obligations over School
7	Funding and Resources available
7	Smaller Instrumentation, Less Budget
9	Funding/ School Instrument Age/Lack of Non-Rental instruments like Bigger Low Brass Instruments
9	Small Budget for instruments/Lack of experienced musical help due to budget and location
Band Size 51 - 100	
6	Location/Proximity to resources.
8	Funding, resources, quality of student home life
8	Parent support, comradery with other programs, travel times very long to events. lack of perspective -What other band programs are doing etc.
8	Recruiting and retaining students. Scheduling due to many classes being only taught once a day.
8	Financial resources, unfamiliarity from administrators of what a healthy prosperous program looks like.
Band Size 101 - 150	
5	Lack of private lesson teachers, No local instrumental music store
7	Sharing kids with all the other clubs/sports/activities and the mindset of music small town
Band Size 151 - 200	
8	Problmes with student sharing/community education
8	Lack of money
Band Size 201 - 250	
8	Small ensemble size; Recruitment limited to a small school population; Limited parental engagement; Financial hardships with families.

Figure 14. Difficulty/Challenges of Rural Teaching

Research Question Three Summary

Research question three sought common ground for rural programs. The hypothesis assessed whether recruiting, retention, and instrumentation are common challenges experienced by high school band directors in rural Georgia. In the survey results, recruiting, retention, and instrumentation were frequently discussed. The survey respondents specifically identified barriers that seemed to be unique to high schools in rural Georgia. These included financial difficulties, the distance or condition of resources, and a lack of staff.

Chapter Summary

Results from research question one implies that small Georgian directors are overworked but not always limited in experience. Limited support staff is an obstacle for these programs, as is limited musical growth due to a lack of experienced support staff and scheduling issues. The results from research question two found that lack of ensemble musical growth, financial support from the school, and stakeholder support were barriers to small programs in rural Georgia. In some cases, these barriers could be considered more severe for these rural programs than for their urban counterparts. The results of research question three identified recruiting, retention, and instrumentation as problems, but the researcher concludes that they are more consequences than true barriers. Greater rural-specific barriers included financial difficulties, distance or condition of resources, and lack of staff.

The results from this survey expand the opportunities for future educators to explore relevant topics. Rural music programs have specific issues that can and should be addressed. The study's research questions sought to determine the organizational and musical growth challenges and everyday issues shared among rural programs. The survey responses demonstrate a wealth of knowledge among the rural directors who responded. These responses affirmed some hypotheses

while reshaping others. The information gained will aid current and future band directors, administrators, policymakers, and researchers in seeking solutions to these obstacles.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

This chapter discusses and examines the study's findings within the context of barriers to rural instrumental programs. Chapter five also provides possible solutions that may help to overcome these barriers. The topics include a survey result summary, a discussion of the significance of the results, a description of possible research limitations, recommendations for future studies, implications for practice, and a conclusion to bind the project together. The summary provides a general overview of the survey responses. The section on significance explores the importance of the survey. All inquiries have limitations, and the ones specific to this survey are discussed in the limitations section. The recommendations section suggests topics of study that others could research after reading this doctoral thesis, and the implications portion examines possible implications resulting from the current study. The conclusion summarizes the chapter and the thesis.

Survey Results Summary

The inquiry addressed the research questions by acknowledging gaps in the literature surrounding small rural organizational and musical growth in Georgia, along with common challenges amongst all Georgian rural programs, regardless of size. Although Likert scales were used, they were not the only measurement. The survey structure also allowed participants to express their viewpoints through short-answer replies.

Research question one explored barriers to the growth of small rural school instrumental programs in Georgia. The associated hypothesis predicted that barriers to students' musical growth in instrumental programs in small rural high schools in Georgia may include an overworked or inexperienced band director, limited support staff, or inadequate opportunities for individual growth as musicians.

The survey results support the first hypothesis in several areas, confirming the challenges associated with an overworked director, limited support staff, and inadequate opportunities for individual growth as musicians. This finding should be combined with the second claim in the hypothesis regarding limited support staff. Financial concerns were a barrier for rural groups across the board, and extent to which they affected the small ensembles cannot be overstated. Lack of budget to hire support staff meant the overworked director had little to no help in their job. The hypothesis was not confirmed regarding the claim of inexperienced band directors exclusively filling the positions, however, with three of the small ensemble directors having at least twenty-one years of experience. Still, the other directors had five or fewer years of experience. Inexperience seems to indicate that instrumental music educators may earn the position after spending years in the classroom and then advancing to larger music programs, either rural or urban.

Band directors may be overworked, although no director mentioned this negative aspect of the career in their short-answer opportunities. However, overwork may be one of the reasons none of the small ensemble rural directors had been in their positions for more than five years. Next, inadequate opportunities for individual musical student growth was a barrier for the small rural Georgian ensemble, but it was because these programs have difficulty finding experienced, capable staff or guest clinicians. These programs are also stifled in their musical growth through scheduling difficulties, a lack of musical lessons and access to lessons, and the long distances that musicians or students would have to travel to seek extra help on their instrument from someone other than the band director.

Research question two explored the barriers to instrumental program enrollment growth, both organizationally and structurally. The hypothesis predicted that barriers to instrumental

program enrollment growth in small rural high schools in Georgia may include a lack of musical growth, insufficient financial support by the school, and declining stakeholder support. Upon reflection, the researcher found that the survey results support the second hypothesis. According to research question one, small ensembles can have a lack of musical growth for myriad reasons, such as scheduling, distance from lessons, and lack of staff. Lack of ensemble growth for the small program can negatively impact enrollment due to an adverse effect on student mood and lack of pride in the program. Additionally, students who may score poorly at festivals or fail to blend well in the ensemble may have a negative perspective toward the program, and thus deicide to quit or discourage others from joining the band. Furthermore, financial difficulties were a major barrier, as noted by five out of the nine band directors. Lack of financial support from the school impacted everything from staffing to the instruments the programs could offer. Moreover, as the school budget often determines musical selection, instrument purchase and repair, and staff budgeting, a lack of support in this area is detrimental. Finally, a deficiency of community support or understanding, combined with a scarcity of support or a nonexistent booster program, poses a barrier to small ensemble success in an organizational sense. Community support is often visible at athletic events, but it does not support the music students financially or provide them with moral support. Sometimes, music booster groups do not operate in the best interests of the students or cannot help a group structurally, placing more strain on the small ensemble director and program than necessary.

The final research question hypothesis predicted that recruiting, retention, and instrumentation were distinctive barriers for rural bands in Georgia. The research question was, What common challenges do instrumental programs in rural Georgia experience overall? Interestingly, this hypothesis was not confirmed by the study. The hypothesized aspects were

more akin to side effects or symptoms than to real barriers. Instead, the most common barriers that surfaced among all rural Georgian programs studied included financial/budget concerns, distance or condition of resources, and lack of staff. If an organization is successful, recruitment and retention will often take care of themselves. Instrumentation problems, in terms of what the students play, can be compensated for by writing down the parts a group lacks for another instrument to cover. There were more significant rural-specific barriers than those that were hypothesized, including financial difficulties, distance or condition of resources, and lack of staff. These were issues that most rural Georgian programs faced, regardless of ensemble size.

Significance

This study's findings are meaningful for rural band directors who wish to improve their ensembles musically and organizationally. The results can also help other directors see that they are not alone in their respective teaching trenches. There is a significant lack of research on teaching instrumental music in rural school districts, specifically at the secondary level. According to author Eugenie Burkett, "The majority of research on rural music teachers and programs is more than 20 years old and predates NCLB."[136] Common problems exist in education, and this is also true of rural education. However, where there are obstacles, people will find creative ways to work around them that need to be shared.

This thesis is also significant for helping future band directors decide on a teaching environment to pursue. Professors Dan Goldhaber, Katharine O. Strunk, Nate Brown, Natsumi Naito, and Malcom Wolff state in their journal article that "85% of teachers in New York took

[136] Burkett, "A Case Study of Issues Concerning Professional Development," 52.

their first job in a district within 40 miles of their hometown."[137] Although teaching in any situation has specific benefits and challenges, not all positions will fit every person, even if the teaching position is near the educator's hometown. Several directors in this study commented about the community mentality in the area where they teach. While working to promote music and the arts is a worthwhile endeavor, teaching in a rural community may be too difficult for directors who have many other responsibilities and do not wish to devote the time to connect to the community's people and places. In *Teaching in Rural Places*, Amy Azano et al. discuss how individuals have varied experiences in the same place. The authors state, "Because place identity is multidimensional, not all people in the same place develop the same place attachments. Personal experiences, families, schooling, community events, and other factors can influence connections to place."[138] The authors note the distinct privilege and opportunity a rural teacher possesses. They write, "As a teacher, you will be a community leader, and this is even more true in a rural place. In that role, we hope that you will adopt the asset-based views of rural schools and communities and advocate for policies and actions that serve your students and improve the vitality of your communities."[139] Teaching instrumental music in a rural school is not for everyone, but it is a worthwhile endeavor that allows directors to shape communities with their students in mind.

Lastly, this study is essential for administration and policymakers because some barriers were found to be common among multiple participants. These common issues can give insight to

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[137] Dan Goldhaber et al., "Teacher Staffing Challenges in California: Examining the Uniqueness of Rural School Districts," *AERA Open* 6, no. 3 (2020): 2, https://doi.org/10.1177/2332858420951833.

[138] Amy Azano et al., *Teaching in Rural Places: Thriving in Classrooms, Schools, and Communities* (New York: Routledge Publishing, 2021), 48.

[139] Ibid., 268.

policymakers in aspects that requires change at the state and federal level because they are not isolated problems. As music professors Carlos Abril and Brent Gault state in their journal article, music educators "have experience working in education environments governed by shifting policies and mandates."[140] Now is the time for those in school district administration to recognize how the shifting policies affect their music programs. In the case of school administrators, it is essential that they can assess the best fit for a music educator position and recognize individuals with creative ideas for confronting known barriers. Moreover, they must understand how to support the person they hire, if they are serious about growing their band program.

Limitations

All inquiries have unavoidable limitations. One limitation of this study is that the questions posed were nuanced and closely related. Although a Likert scale was used, there was also an option for short-answer questions. Some directors provided specific feedback. Others regarded the questions as redundant and expressed this in the comments instead of providing specifics or justification for their scale ratings.

Another limitation of this study was the response size. As professor J. Harry Jansen states, "Response rates are a great problem in survey research."[141] While 125 directors were directly emailed and sent a reminder, only thirty-one (24.8 percent) of these directors responded to the survey. A number of responses came after posting the survey on a Georgia Band Director Facebook page. Of the thirty-one answers, five directors were not currently in a rural position;

[140] Carlos R. Abril and Brent M. Gault, "Shaping Policy in Music Education: Music Teachers as Collaborative Change Agents," *Music Educators Journal* 107, no. 1 (2020): 44, https://www.jstor.org/stable/27000819.

[141] J. Harry Jansen, "Effects of Questionnaire Layout and Size and Issue-Involvement on Response Rates in Mail Surveys," *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 61, no. 1 (1985): 139, https://doi.org/10.2466/pms.1985.61.1.139.

therefore, the total number of responses dropped to twenty-six. Inquires of this type involve a lack of reward or investment from the participants. There were no rewards for completing the survey; therefore, many potential participants likely failed to complete it due to time constraints or lack of motivation. It is necessary to ascertain whether the survey remains valid. Author Chittaranjan Andrade reports:

> Research findings are of scientific value only if they can be generalized. At the very least, it should be possible to generalize from the sample to the population from which the sample was drawn. This can happen only if the sample is representative of the population, which requires two conditions to be fulfilled. The first condition is that the population must be known; it is not possible to generalize the findings of a study to a population that cannot be defined. The second condition is that a valid method of sampling should have been adopted."[142]

Andrade goes on to note that "If the online survey is individually distributed to, say, all the members of a society whose names are listed in a membership directory, we know the population that the survey has reached."[143] While a larger number of responses would have been preferable, the answers received at least originated from the targeted population. However, Andrade expresses that a limited response to the survey may indicate respondent bias, and therefore further research is recommended.

According to the survey results, although recruiting, retention, and instrumentation functioned as barriers, they more closely resemble side effects of other issues. More specific rural barriers discovered during the study included financial difficulties, distance or condition of resources, and lack of staff. These rural barriers seem to explain the previously mentioned side effects. A limitation of any survey is that it cannot adapt to findings like these, and instead the research must point to other investigations instead of pivoting as findings start to emerge.

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[142] Chittaranjan Andrade, "The Limitations of Online Surveys," *Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine* 42, no. 6 (2020): 575, https://doi.org/10.1177/0253717620957496.

[143] Ibid., 576.

Despite these limitations, the results are valid and worth studying. Some of the hypotheses were confirmed. Some interesting and unexpected knowledge was discovered. The knowledge and experience of these rural directors contribute to the research base as a whole and fill a gap in current existing research, providing implications for further study.

Recommendations For Future Study

Having analyzed the results of the survey, read the numerous comments from directors about their programs, reviewed the sheer number of rural schools in Georgia, and assessed the inquiry's limitations, the researcher can offer the following primary recommendation for future study. It is vital to continue research into the central barrier that most rural directors noted: finances. This obstacle was a broad area, encompassing the financial hardships of the students, insufficient funds to hire staff, lack of budget to buy or fix instruments, and other financial concerns. Many of the secondary barriers mentioned were impacted by this one category, and further discussion into how much this one area inhibits rural programs is warranted.

Next, a study should be conducted on music ensembles and their ability to protect their allocated time, along with course scheduling. Students are frequently pulled for academic remediation, test make-ups, club meetings, and myriad other reasons from their designated music times. This practice is often conducted with the full knowledge of the administration, or even at their request. Additionally, scheduling issues should not be a reason that keeps a student is unable to take music courses. Future examination should explore whether block, modified block, or standard scheduling can benefit music students' scheduling. Students are having to drop out of music courses due to the pressure to take advanced placement or honors classes.

Furthermore, the survey results indicate that many directors felt their communities and school administration required education on the value of the ensemble. Shaping community

perception and demonstrating the value of school music to the school administration are essential topics for future research. As music educators Kevin Tutt and Marc Townley wrote in their article titled "Philosophy + Advocacy = Success," "Music Advocacy has long been promoted as an important skill for music educators, not only for the benefit of their individual programs but also for the specific benefit of music students and the general public."[144] The National Association for Music Education (NAfME) and other groups have advocated for music in schools in previous years, but this ongoing struggle must be continually researched to generate a modern plan of action. With many celebrities and others posting on social media coming forward to support music in schools, it is an exciting time to be a music educator.

Future studies could also compare the Georgia schools from this thesis to rural schools from other states or even countries. Do high school instrumental music educators in Oklahoma rural school districts face the same barriers discovered in this research? What about the barriers faced by rural schools in Australia? Professor Dr. Charles R. Ciorba and independent piano instructor Amy Seibert found in their research that in Oklahoma, "suburban and urban schools were likely to offer more diverse music curriculums than rural school."[145] A comparison between rural schools in different geographical areas could help start a conversation about how to reform or understand the difficulties of teaching instrumental music education in rural school districts throughout the world.

Finally, a study could investigate director longevity at a program to examine why directors switch jobs so often. Of the directors surveyed in this research, 73.1 percent had been at

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[144] Kevin Tutt and Marc Townley, "Philosophy + Advocacy = Success," *Music Educators Journal* 97, no. 4 (2011): 60, https://doi.org/10.1177/0027432111405671.

[145] Charles R. Ciorba and Amy Seibert, "Music Education in the State of Oklahoma: Perceptions from the K-12 Educational Community," *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, no. 193 (2012): 33, https://doi.org/10.5406/bulcouresmusedu.193.0031.

their current positions for five or fewer years, even though the same percentage had six or more years of instrumental music experience. Of the ten directors who had twenty-one more years of experience, only two had been at the same school. Of the respondents, 61 percent were currently in rural programs, despite having previous urban school experience. A study exploring why directors are moving from school to school could benefit administrators and band directors, both current and future, to improve retention and increase job satisfaction. As professors Sheneka M. Williams, Walker A. Swain, and Jerome A. Graham discovered, "Teacher turnover across the country presents a persistent and growing challenge for schools and districts, with the highest rates of turnover geographically concentrated in the American South."[146] Research may reveal what rural school districts can do to encourage retention.

Implications for Practice

Through the course of this doctoral thesis, a significant disparity emerged between various programs and situations. While some disadvantages were anticipated between the rural and urban programs, there seemed to be a greater proportion of smaller programs suffering from resource allocation than anticipated. The challenges ranged from a lack of private lessons to an inability to pay guest instructors to travel or to hire band camp staff. There was also a lack of resources for information sharing. Moving forward, there must be a concerted effort to link like-minded groups of music ensembles that have similar problems, conditions, and concerns so they can share the tremendous burdens they face. This practice may be the difference between the loss of a school system's music program or a flourishing ensemble.

[146] Sheneka M. Williams, Walker A. Swain, and Jerome A. Graham, "Race, Climate, and Turnover: An Examination of the Teacher Labor Market in Rural Georgia," *AERA Open*, no. 7 (2021): 1, https://doi.org/10.1177/2332858421995514.

It would be significantly beneficial for the community of rural music educators to share ideas and solicit feedback from others in their specific situation. Virginia Tech professor Cathryn Shaw Foster has started an online community on Facebook titled "Rural Band Director Alliance."[147] This group has created a great opportunity for band directors in rural school districts to share concerns and offer help to other members of the online community. Since the online community is nationwide, there are potential opportunities for opening state chapters of the organization. This networking community might allow directors to schedule time to work with other rural school districts. Directors could take turns transporting their students to each other's programs or even exchanging online private lessons as a form of barter. The nationwide program could offer virtual lessons to students whose directors belong to the online community. These lessons could be provided at a discounted rate for students who lack local directors in the program that can teach their instrument at an advanced level. By allowing directors in giving lessons to students from other bands on their specific instruments, expert instruction would be cost-effective. Such measures could also save the director time, as they could give lessons in one room while another student could take lessons in another.

Moreover, band directors could collaborate and receive online PD specific to their situations. Rolandson and Ross-Hekkel suggest that "In an attempt to connect with colleagues in similar teaching situations and content areas, some teachers have sought out opportunities through advancements in technology, such as online communities of practice."[148] Additionally, although hard work is required, it would be beneficial to establish online PLCs for these rural educators. PLCs "can provide meaningful professional development for music teachers and help

[147] Cathryn Shaw Foster, "Rural Band Director Alliance," Accessed March 18, 2024, https://www.facebook.com/groups/207618192221782.

[148] Rolandson and Ross-Hekkel, "Virtual Professional Learning Communities," 83.

to reduce feelings of isolation."[149] By connecting educators who feel isolated or need specific help with instruments they have not mastered, directors can access the knowledge they need and feel less alone.

Conclusion

There are many rural schools across America. As of 2019, according to a report from the National Center for Education Statistics, "public schools in rural areas represented 28 percent of all public schools in the United States, while they enrolled 19 percent of all public school students."[150] Georgia has a significant number of rural schools due to its agricultural heritage. Libby Stanford, reporter for *Education Week* found that "33% of public schools in Georgia are in U.S. Census Bureau classified rural areas. Georgia ranks 28th of all states in rural school percentage."[151] Teaching in a rural school district can be a rewarding but challenging journey.

This doctoral thesis surveyed secondary instrumental music directors in rural Georgia to identify the distinct obstacles they faced. The researcher discovered musical, organizational, and other challenges that were common to rural music programs. Limited support staff, scheduling issues, a lack of ensemble musical growth, and disapproval from school and community stakeholders are some of the impediments shared by small rural ensembles. Common barriers to

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[149] Rolandson and Ross-Hekkel, "Virtual Professional Learning Communities," 83.

[150] "Enrollment and School Choice in Rural Areas," Education Across America, National Center for Education Statistics, last modified August 2023, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/lcb/school-choice-rural?tid=1000#:~:text=In%20total%2C%20about%2098%2C500%20public,areas%2C%20enrolling%209.8%20million%20students.

[151] Libby Stanford, "The State of Rural Schools, in Charts: Funding, Graduation Rates, Performance, and More," EducationWeek, November 20, 2023, https://www.edweek.org/leadership/the-state-of-rural-schools-in-charts-funding-graduation-rates-performance-and-more/2023/11#:~:text=Rural%20schools%20make%20up%20a%20third%20of%20U.S.%20schools&text=Rural%20schools%20actually%20make%20up,widely%20from%20state%20to%20state.

all rural programs include financial difficulties, the distance or condition of resources, and the lack of staff.

Rural school music programs face challenges that are distinct from those of their urban counterparts. As such, awareness of these challenges can help directors manage expectations, find creative solutions, and enter situations with significant insight. Teachers often feels isolated in their profession. With a starting point to find standard solutions to these shared problems, rural music educators should be more equipped to succeed and face challenges as they grow their programs by developing young musicians and increasing their program numbers.

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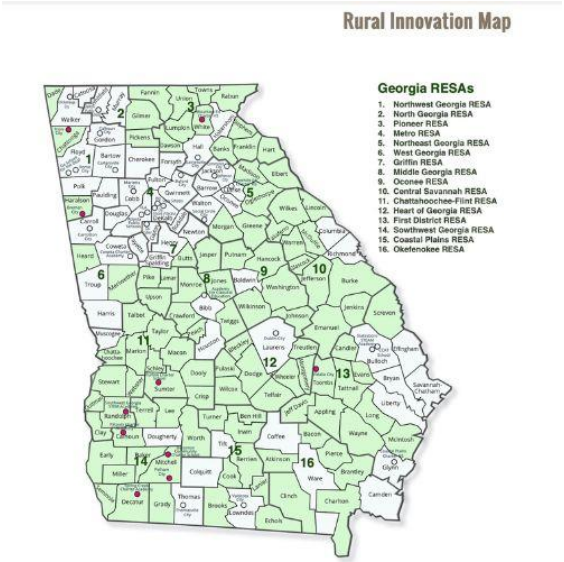
APPENDICES

Appendix A: Rural Instrumental Challenges Survey

As a student in the School of Music at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctorate in Music Education. The purpose of my research is to uncover the challenges instrumental music directors face in rural school districts in Georgia pertaining to growth and organization as well as strategies to overcome these challenges. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study. The results will be tabulated and reported, but your identity will be anonymous.

1. Do you currently teach instrumental music in one of the green districts considered rural in the state of Georgia? *



Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

2. How many years have you taught instrumental music?

Mark only one oval.

0

1-5

6-10

11-15

16-20

21+

3. How long have you been at your current job?

Mark only one oval.

0

1-5

6-10

11-15

16-20

21+

4. What is the highest degree you have obtained?

Mark only one oval.

Bachelor’s

Master’s

Specialist

Doctorate

5. How many students are in your instrumental music program?

Mark only one oval.

50 and below

51-100

101-150

151-200

201-250

More than 250

6. How difficult is it to find experienced musicians to help teach your program? (Band Camps,

lessons, guest conductors, etc.)

Mark only one oval.
Very easy

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
Very difficult

Optional follow-up: How difficult is finding experienced staff to teach in your program? (Band Camps, lessons, guest conductors, etc.)

7. Approximately how many staff work with your group over the course of a year?

Mark only one oval.

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10+

8. Have you ever taught in an urban school?

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

9. If you have taught in an urban school, do you find a rural school more challenging, less challenging, or the same? Are the challenges different?

10. How challenging is it to teach in a rural school district?

Mark only one oval.
Not Challenging

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
Very Challenging

11. What are some challenges of teaching in a rural school? Are there any challenges **specific** to a rural school?

12. How satisfied are you with the level of support you receive from your school?

Mark only one oval.
Not Satisfied

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8

9
10
Very Satisfied

Optional follow-up: How satisfied are you with the level of support you receive from your school?

13. How satisfied are you with the level of support you receive from your community?

Mark only one oval.
Not Satisfied

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
Very Satisfied

Optional follow-up: How satisfied are you with the level of support you receive from your community?

14. How satisfied are you with the level of support you receive from your band boosters?

Mark only one oval.
Not Satisfied

1
2
3

4
5
6
7
8
9
10
Very Satisfied

Optional follow-up: How satisfied are you with the level of support you receive from your band boosters?

15. How successful do you consider your program?

Mark only one oval.
Not successful

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
Totally successful

Optional follow-up: How successful do you consider your program?

16. How do you define music program success?

Factors that impact students' music program enrollment and success.

Rate each factor on how they impact your program's music student enrollment and success.

17. Scheduling

Mark only one oval.
No impact

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
Strongly impacts

18. Community Support

Mark only one oval.
No impact

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
Strongly impacts

19. Staff (Number of adults available)

Mark only one oval.
No impact

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
Strongly impacts

20. Staff (Depth of music knowledge)

Mark only one oval.
No impact

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
Strongly impacts

Appendix B: Recruitment Letter for Social Media

Dear Rural Georgia Instrumental Music Educator,

Hello! I am a doctoral student at Liberty University, and I am currently working on my dissertation. The purpose of my study is to better understand who is teaching instrumental music in Georgia and learn about the challenges and successes they have found in their respective programs. You may have received an email about this survey, but I thought I should repost it here. Secondary instrumental music teachers are invited to participate. If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete an anonymous survey which will take about 10 minutes to complete.

I would appreciate any help in gathering data for the study. Thank you for your help.

https://forms.gle/StQz1nb7PZsXyvt87

Appendix C: Institutional Review Board Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

September 27, 2023

William Garrett
Thomas Goddard

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY23-24-72 Challenges To Musical and Organizational Growth in Small Rural Community High School Instrumental Music Programs in Georgia

Dear William Garrett, Thomas Goddard,

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

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

Category 2.(i). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects;

For a PDF of your exemption letter, click on your study number in the My Studies card on your Cayuse dashboard. Next, click the Submissions bar beside the Study Details

bar on the Study details page. Finally, click Initial under Submission Type and choose the Letters tab toward the bottom of the Submission Details page. Your information sheet and final versions of your study documents can also be found on the same page under the Attachments tab.

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

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

Sincerely,

[redacted]

Administrative Chair

Research Ethics Office

Appendix D: Doctoral Thesis Defense Decision Form

Doctor of Worship Studies or Doctor of Music Education

Doctoral Thesis Defense Decision

The thesis Advisor and Reader have rendered the following decision concerning the defense for

William Kenneth Garrett, Jr.

on the Thesis

Challenges to Musical and Organizational Growth in Small Rural Community High School Instrumental Music Programs in Georgia

as submitted on April 20, 2024

_X_ **Full approval to proceed with no proposal revisions.**
The document should be prepared for submission to the Jerry Falwell Library.

_____ **Provisional approval pending cited revisions.**
The student must resubmit the project with cited revisions according to the established timeline.

_____ **Redirection of project.**
The student is being redirected to take MUSC/WRSP 889 again, as minor revisions will not meet the expectations for the research project.

[redacted] _____ [redacted]

Print Name of Advisor **Signature** **Date**

[redacted] _____ [redacted]

Print Name of Reader **Signature** **Date**